Otter Creek Cleanup Gets Started

Otter Creek and Confluence Sediment Cleanup

Toledo and Oregon, Ohio March

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, along with federal and non-federal partners, are working to remove contaminated sediment from Otter Creek in Oregon, Ohio. Sediments in the lower 1.7 miles of Otter Creek and its confluence within Maumee Bay are contaminated with elevated levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, and diesel range organics, or DROs.

Extensive investigations of the Otter Creek sediment, stream conditions, and ecological conditions were conducted by EPA from 2006 through 2019. These investigations identified the project limits based on the distribution of contaminants which then further facilitated the evaluation of cleanup alternatives.

Clean up approach

Approximately 57,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment will be removed from the creek and its confluence within Maumee Bay by hydraulic dredging. Hydraulic dredging involves using a vacuum-type device to remove sediment by suction. The dredged sediment will then be pumped through a submerged pipeline to the nearby Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority's confined disposal facility, where it will remain indefinitely.

A one-foot sand cover mixed with organic material will be placed in the creek after dredging to provide a barrier to any remaining residuals and a new surface for organisms to re-establish their populations.

Cleanup objective and goals

The cleanup objective for the site is to reduce potential harm from exposure to chemicals accumulated in the sediment. The goals are to reduce PAH and DRO exposure to organisms and fish that live and feed on the bottom of the creek, and to reduce associated toxicity below levels of concern.

Otter Creek project area

Cleanup possible through GLRI

The Otter Creek cleanup project is made possible through the **Great Lakes Restoration Initiative**, or **GLRI**.

GLRI is the largest investment in the Great Lakes in two decades. Sixteen federal departments or agencies are working together on five priorities:

- Cleaning up Great Lakes Areas of Concern.
- Preventing and controlling invasive species.
- Reducing nutrient runoff that contributes to harmful/nuisance algal blooms.
- Restoring habitat to protect native species.
- Laying the foundations for future restoration actions with education and outreach.

The GLRI's **Great Lakes Legacy Act**, or GLLA – under which the Otter Creek work is being done – provides up to 65 percent of the cost of sediment cleanup with a non-federal entity contributing the balance. Legacy Act partnerships have cleaned up 24 sites in six Great Lake states and remediated 4.3 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment.

Project Point of Contact
Ashley Binion-Zuccaro
419-726-9121
Ashley.R.Binion-Zuccaro@usace.army.mil

For more information on the project Visit: www.epa.gov/great-lakes-aocs/otter-creek-legacy-act-cleanup

Frequently Asked Questions

- **How will boaters be impacted during the cleanup? Will the hydraulic dredging pipe obstruct navigation?**
  The pipeline carrying the contaminated sediment to the confined disposal facility will be submerged or floated depending on its location. In areas where boat traffic may be present, such as going into the Walleye Power/Harbor View Channel, the pipeline will be submerged and is not expected to restrict recreational boating or any other navigation. The work areas where the pipeline is floating will be clearly marked to ensure that potential recreational boaters do not enter work zones. Dredging of the confluence is not expected to result in any navigational issues for boaters.

- **What is a confined disposal facility?**
  A Confined Disposal Facility (CDF) is a structure that is specifically engineered to contain dredged material. A dike is built above the high water level and sediment is placed behind it. CDFs can be an efficient and cost-effective way to dispose of large amounts of contaminated sediment.

- **Will disposal of contaminated sediment at the Port Authority's confined disposal facility cause an odor?**
  The contractor will comply with all local laws and ordinances as they apply to the cleanup work being performed to reduce the potential for odors in nearby areas. The City of Toledo has established local ordinances which may be applicable to construction activities on land and in waterways .

- **Will the cleanup include habitat restoration?**
  Yes. After contaminated sediment is removed, additional measures will be taken to restore and improve the habitat. Habitat improvements, including the placement of logs, large woody material, root wads and locked brush piles in the creek will further enhance the ecosystem for organisms and fish.

- **How will water quality be affected during the cleanup?**
  Containment measures like silt curtains are commonly used to prevent suspended sediment from washing downstream during dredging.

- **How was the cleanup plan chosen?**
  The cleanup plan was chosen from among a set of alternatives, or cleanup options, developed in the feasibility study. The alternatives were evaluated based on considerations like effectiveness in reducing contaminant levels, technical feasibility, and cost.

- **When are construction activities expected to begin and how much will the cleanup cost?**
  Construction activities are expected to start spring 2021 and be completed in fall 2021. This cleanup will cost approximately $12 million and will be shared between EPA and the non-federal partners.

- **How can a citizen learn more?**
  To learn more about the project, please use this link: www.epa.gov/great-lakes-aocs/otter-creek-legacy-act-cleanup.

- **Where can a citizen submit a question or comment about the project?**
  Citizens can send an email with questions or comments to OtterCreekCleanup@usace.army.mil.

Aerial view of Otter Creek, looking south.

Aerial view of Otter Creek, looking north.