

How Cleanup Works

Background

This fact sheet provides a summary of Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's site cleanup process. These stages can vary from site to site, and not all steps are necessary in every case, such as with simpler sites where the path to cleanup is clear and there is minimal risk to humans or the environment.

How does cleanup work?

Once contaminated sites enter the DEQ regulatory process for cleanup, they proceed through several stages to reach a final No Further Action determination and regulatory close out.

While there are variety of components that may be part of the process at any particular site, the following describes the most common steps and DEQ's role:

- 1. Remedial Investigation:** DEQ oversees the property owner's investigation to determine what contamination is present, how much and where it is located.
- 2. Risk Assessment:** The results of the investigation are used to confirm, or not, whether contaminants exceed the State's standards for risk for people and, if applicable, the environment.
- 3. Feasibility Study:** DEQ evaluates proposed methods for cleanup based on effectiveness, ability to implement, long-term reliability, implementation risk and reasonableness of cost.
- 4. Record of Decision:** DEQ issues this document which includes the selected cleanup method. It is finalized after public review and comment.
- 5. Cleanup:** DEQ oversees implementation and documentation of the cleanup in conformance with the Record of Decision.
- 6. No Further Action Letter:** If DEQ determines the cleanup has been performed as directed by the Record of Decision, the regulatory process is complete and DEQ issues a document to the site owner called a No Further Action letter. Sites may carry long-term requirements that are recorded on their deeds, such as ongoing monitoring and development restrictions, when necessary.

At any time during the investigation or risk assessment processes, the decision may be made to take immediate action to remove contamination if doing so is necessary to prevent, minimize, or mitigate damage to the public health, safety and welfare of people and the environment.

Frequently asked questions

What is a brownfield?

A brownfield is a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of contamination. DEQ uses federal grant funding to work with communities, organizations and other government agencies to facilitate redevelopment on these sites.

How does a site get chosen to be cleaned up?

DEQ offers three pathways for review and approval of cleanups conducted by property owners: Independent Cleanup, Voluntary Cleanup, and Site Response. Independent and Voluntary Cleanup are for property owners who decide to cleanup their property. The difference is that Voluntary Cleanup program sites are typically more complex and require more DEQ oversight than Independent Cleanup sites. In the Site Response program, DEQ requires cleanup through orders, and potentially enforcement actions, for high environmental priority sites.

What type of oversight does DEQ provide?

DEQ reviews sampling data, methodology and reporting from each of the stages listed above.

How do I know if a site near me is in the Cleanup Program?

Use DEQ's Environmental Cleanup Site Information database at: go.usa.gov/xVvWw

Who pays for sites to get cleaned up?

Sites that enter DEQ's Cleanup Program through any of the above-listed pathways are paid for by the owner or party responsible for the contamination. There are sites called Industrial Orphan Sites where the parties responsible for the contamination are unknown, unable or unwilling to pay for cleanup.

Why would a property owner choose to cleanup a site?

Cleanup of a site and the resulting No Further Action certification from DEQ allows the property to be more easily developed or sold.

Alternative formats

DEQ can provide documents in an alternate format or in a language other than English upon request. Call DEQ at 800-452-4011 or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.



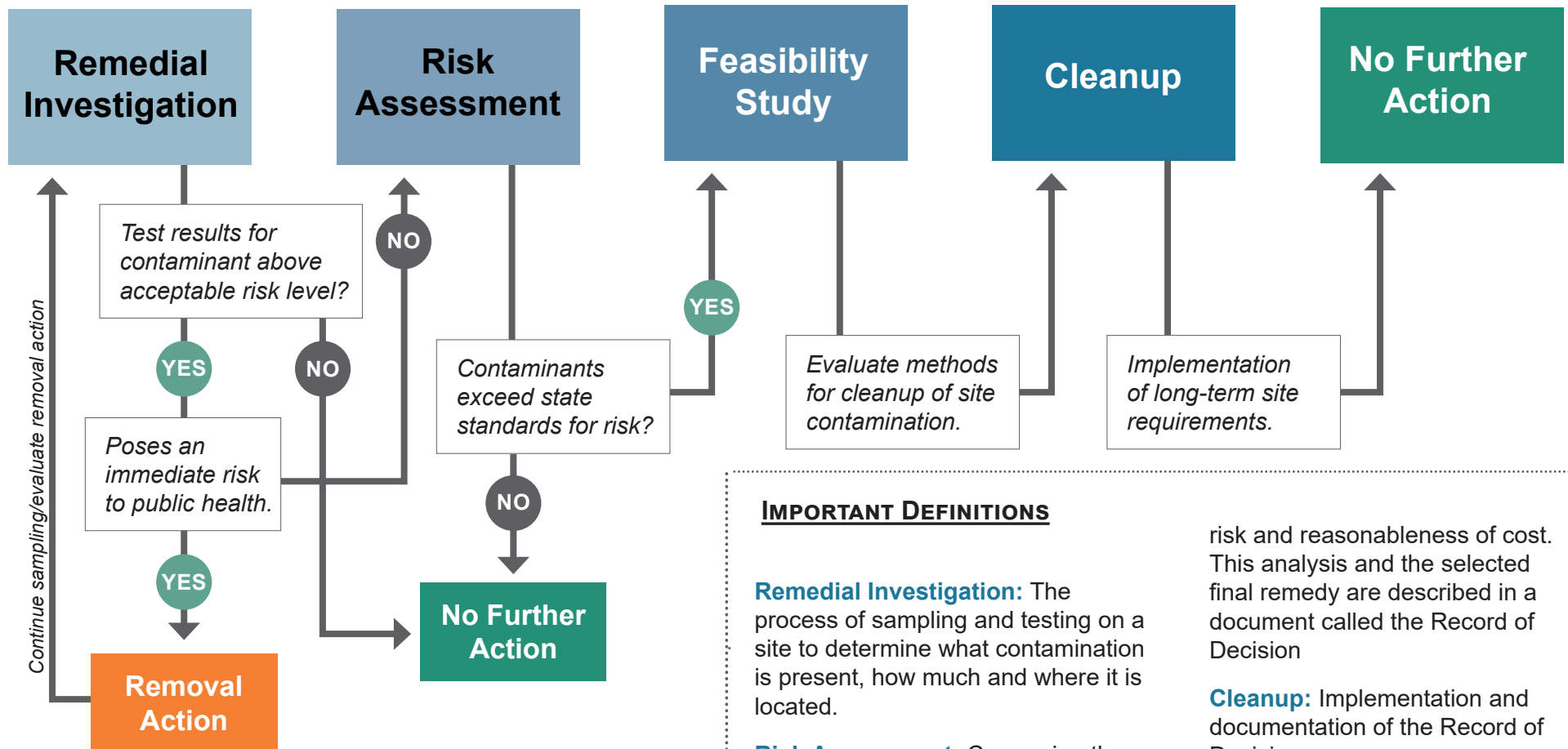
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DEQ is a leader in restoring, maintaining and enhancing the quality of Oregon's air, land and water.



IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

Remedial Investigation: The process of sampling and testing on a site to determine what contamination is present, how much and where it is located.

Risk Assessment: Comparing the results of the Remedial Investigation against the State standards for risk for people and, if applicable, the environment.

Feasibility Study: An assessment of potential cleanup options based on effectiveness, ability to implement, long-term reliability, implementation

risk and reasonableness of cost. This analysis and the selected final remedy are described in a document called the Record of Decision

Cleanup: Implementation and documentation of the Record of Decision.

No Further Action: Acknowledgment of the completion of cleanup. This may include long-term site requirements that are recorded with the deed, such as monitoring and restricted development areas.