

# Zidell begins \$20 million waterfront cleanup

## Zidell wins environmental nod on riverside cleanup plan on Portland's South Waterfront

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Oregonian Zidell, the longtime Portland barge builder, received a key environmental endorsement for one of Portland's largest river cleanup projects to date. The clean up along the Willamette River in South Waterfront will cap contaminated sediments, plant thousands of shrubs and 200 trees and set back steep stream banks.

Federal fish biologists have given the go ahead for one of the biggest Willamette River cleanup plans to date, endorsing barge builder [Zidell's](#) plan to revamp 3,000 feet of shoreline and cap contaminated river sediment.

The project should open 15 acres of prime [South Waterfront](#) land for development and set the stage for a long-awaited riverside greenway.

It's not clear if barge-building would continue or give way to more of the high-rises that mark Portland's newest central city neighborhood.

The [National Marine Fisheries Service's "biological opinion"](#), issued earlier this month, allows Zidell to

largely avoid costly dredging of sediment fouled by decades of industrial pollution, instead approving lower-cost gravel caps over the contamination.

That's encouraging news for downstream property owners in the Portland Harbor federal Superfund site, who also hope to avoid extensive dredging.

The service's opinion was silent on calls from the city of Portland and the Audubon Society of Portland for more gently sloped banks to expand space for trees and salmon-friendly beach habitat.

It concluded that Zidell's plan is not likely to jeopardize threatened wild fish or adversely modify their habitat.

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[The Oregonian's continuing coverage of Zidell Marine Corp. to clean up and restore its barge building site along Portland's South Waterfront.](#)

In a statement, Jay Zidell, president of ZRZ Companies, hailed the opinion as a "strong endorsement" of the environmental benefits of the cleanup project, 16 years in the making.

The plan includes improving and reducing the rock "armoring" of the rubble-strewn shoreline, dredging hot spots of contamination along the bank, creating more gentle riverbank slopes and capping 16 acres of contaminated sediments and soil with 194,000 cubic yards of fill, providing at least 10 inches of clean cover.

The company will replant four acres along the bank with more than 15,000 shrubs and 200 trees, with follow-up required to make sure the plants are growing and the sediment caps aren't washed away.

Dean Marriott, director of Portland's [Bureau of Environmental Services](#), said the final project fell short of what the city hope for. "But it's a heck of a lot better than what's there now."

Work is scheduled to begin this summer, assuming the Army Corps of Engineers approves Zidell's permit application.

A favorable opinion from the fisheries service, which oversees Endangered Species Act listings of wild salmon and steelhead in the Willamette, is crucial to that approval.

Last year, fisheries service officials said they preferred dredging contaminated sediment to placing rock caps over it. The caps could attract small mouth bass, pike minnow and other fish that compete with salmon for food, they said.



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Paul Fishman, Zidell's consultant, said the company addressed those concerns by agreeing to use smaller and more salmon friendly rounded rock -- sized at up to 2 1/2 inches instead of up to six inches -- to cap much of the sediment.

That modification and others could add a couple million dollars to the \$20 million project, Fishman said. Dredging the sediment would have boosted the cost to \$80 million or more, he said.

To meet the terms of a court settlement with Oregon regulators, Zidell's contractors must be working in the water by summer. The company also wants to tie the work into TriMet's construction of a light-rail bridge that will cross Zidell's land.

There were dozens of oil spills on the site from the 1960s to the 1980s. Fires burned docks and buildings.

Ship dismantling included salvaging transformers full of toxic PCBs and burning PCB-laden wire insulation to salvage the underlying copper. Workers buried debris in open pits and shored up the riverbank with scrap metal, asbestos and other debris.

Zidell completed cleanup of uplands "hot spots" last year, leaving the riverbank and sediment contamination as its last pieces of unfinished business.