



J.H. Baxter Update

Jan. 23, 2025

Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

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J.H. Baxter south of Roosevelt Boulevard in Eugene. / Google Earth image from April 2024 © Airbus 2025

Background

- J.H. Baxter operated a wood-treating facility in west Eugene from the early 1940s until January 2022.
- Produced utility poles, railroad ties, and other wood products by treating them with chemical preservatives, such as pentachlorophenol, creosote, and ammoniacal copper zinc arsenate.
- Cleanup started at the facility and expanded into neighborhood after sampling in 2020 found yard contamination.



Treated utility poles at J.H. Baxter in 2021. / DEQ photo

Facility update

- EPA started time critical cleanup in August 2024 and expects to be done in spring 2025.
- J.H. Baxter left more than 500,000 gallons of hazardous substances onsite when it closed with no plan to manage that material.
- High threat of release due to failing infrastructure and history of vandalism and theft.
- DEQ continues to regulate wastewater and hazardous waste onsite.



Ongoing cleanup at J.H. Baxter in November 2024. / EPA photo

Residential cleanup

- DEQ cleaned up seven yards from January through June 2024.
- Cleanup included removal and disposal of contaminated soil, import of clean soil, and restoration activities.
- DEQ worked with the Oregon Health Authority to prioritize yards based on the level of contamination.



Excavator removing contaminated soil from a yard near J.H. Baxter in January 2024. / DEQ photo

Community engagement

- DEQ, EPA and other agencies have connected with the community through the Community Engagement Core Team.
- Team has met 24 times since late 2020.
- Agencies keep the community and interested organizations informed.
- Community and interested organizations engage with the agencies to help coordinate with the affected community.



Core Team



Enforcement

- DEQ and J.H. Baxter agreed to a \$305,440 settlement in 2022.
 - The company has yet to pay and now owes more than \$350,000 due to interest.
 - DEQ filed the case in 2021 for hazardous waste and water quality violations.

Enforcement history

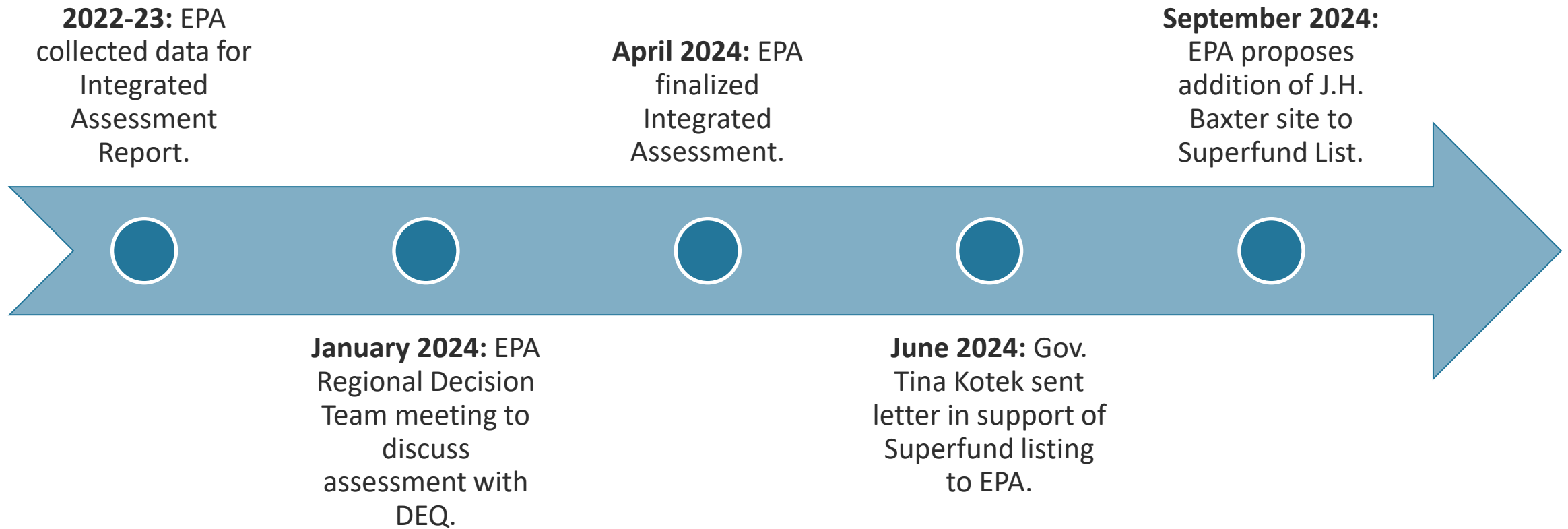
Other recent fines for J.H. Baxter include:

- \$64,000 by EPA in 2018 for hazardous waste violations.
- \$12,000 by DEQ in 2018 for water quality violations.
- \$8,000 by LRAPA in 2020 for air permit violations.

Cost recovery

- Neighborhood cleanup expenditures to date – \$2.5 million.
- DEQ cleanup and enforcement programs have liens in place for J.H. Baxter properties in Oregon, California and Washington.
- Oregon Department of Justice is pursuing collections of civil penalty and cleanup costs.
- U.S. Attorney filed a criminal case in November 2024 against J.H. Baxter and its owner.

EPA Superfund listing process



Final inclusion on the Superfund list is pending.

Takeaways

- EPA time critical cleanup will remove most of hazardous substances at the facility, but there will still be contamination on and offsite.
- Superfund listing will allow access to resources to continue cleanup on and off site.
- Due to the magnitude and type of contamination, operation and maintenance (O&M) may be necessary for years into the future. O&M costs following Superfund remedial action are typically borne completely by the state.
- Community has been supportive of DEQ and EPA's efforts and assisted with outreach.

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