

# After 80 years, Eugene's J.H. Baxter plant shutters but legal entanglements remain

KLCC | By **Brian Bull**

Published January 31, 2022 at 8:59 PM PST



LISTEN • 1:03



Brian Bull / KLCC

Thumbnail image of the J.H. Baxter plant in Eugene, January 2022

Now Playing

After 80 years, Eugene's J....

Today, the J.H. Baxter wood treatment plant in Eugene formally closes. But environmental watchdogs say the saga isn't over yet.

While the Baxter facility has operated since 1942, its last few decades have seen complaints, fines, citations, and a number of calls to have it closed. Among its most vocal critics is the environmental advocacy group, Beyond Toxics. Its executive director, Lisa Arkin, said the Baxter plant has long affected its neighbors' quality of life.

"With dioxin in people's backyard soils, also the inability of people just to enjoy their own property and their own neighborhood, due to the stench and the smells from this facility," she told KLCC.

"All of us should be partnering with our state agencies to make sure that this polluter doesn't walk away from the mess they've created."

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is just one of several agencies tasked with monitoring and enforcing compliance. Spokesman Dylan Darling said besides clean-up after the plant shuts, there's another loose end.

"The department's office of compliance and enforcement also has an ongoing enforcement case, for hazardous waste and wastewater violations," said Darling. "Settlement talks continue for that case, and a hearing is scheduled for mid-May if DEQ and Baxter do not reach a settlement."

The DEQ fined J.H. Baxter more than \$220,000 for those violations. Darling adds that Baxter is the responsible party for soil contamination at and near its 42-acre facility in Eugene.

Meanwhile, a law firm in Detroit, Michigan is seeking area residents to join its lawsuit against J.H. Baxter, alleging it discharged pollutants into the neighboring air, water, and soil. A number of people – primarily those living in the Bethel neighborhood – received letters inviting them to join their legal action.

Copyright @2022, KLCC.

Environment

Now Playing

**After 80 years, Eugene's J....**



## Brian Bull

Brian Bull joined the KLCC News Team in June 2016. In his 25 years as a public media journalist, he's worked at NPR, Twin Cities Public Television, South Dakota Public Broadcasting, Wisconsin Public Radio, and ideastream in Cleveland. His reporting has netted dozens of accolades, including four national Edward R. Murrow Awards (17 regional), the Ohio Associated Press' Best Reporter Award, Best Radio Reporter from the Native American Journalists Association, and the PRNDI/NEFE Award for Excellence in Consumer Finance Reporting.

[See stories by Brian Bull](#)

## Related Content



### Environment

## Eugene's embattled J.H. Baxter plant to shutter Jan. 31

Brian Bull, January 26, 2022

After 80 years of operation, the controversial J.H. Baxter wastewater treatment facility in Eugene is  
Now Playing  
**After 80 years, Eugene's J...**