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## **For Immediate Release – January 26, 2022**

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### **POLLUTER JH BAXTER SHUTTING DOWN**

*Discovery of dioxin-contaminated soil and intense pressure from Beyond Toxics and the West Eugene community leads to JH Baxter closure*

**EUGENE, OR.** – After intense public pressure and mounting evidence of dangerous levels of toxic pollution, JH Baxter, a creosote manufacturer and chronic polluter in West Eugene, announced it is closing its doors on January 31st. The company will keep a skeleton crew onsite to manage clean-up requirements.

Last week, **Beyond Toxics**, in collaboration with the **Active Bethel Community** organization, sent letters to Eugene's Mayor and City Council demanding that our elected officials ask Governor Brown and the DEQ to issue a Cease and Desist order. The goal of this order was to force JH Baxter to immediately halt all actions that emitted pollution or contributed to contamination.

While many questions remain about the company's accountability for the damage they have caused in terms of health, property safety, property values and environmental quality, JH Baxter's shutdown will mean that West Eugene residents will be spared the noxious and nauseating creosote fumes that neighbors have complained to agencies about for decades. The **Oregon Department of Environmental Quality** assures the public that the agency will hold JH Baxter responsible for the costs of remediating the contaminated soil in residential yards and on the facility's site.

JH Baxter, a creosote manufacturer in the heart of the Bethel neighborhood, has been found culpable of burning off 1.7 million gallons of creosote waste water, violating their air and waste pollution permits and emitting dioxin that has now contaminated multiple residential and public properties. Dioxin, a highly poisonous chemical compound that is known to cause cancer and serious illnesses, was the primary chemical that poisoned soldiers and civilians during the Vietnam War because of exposure from Agent Orange.

*“This recent news about the closing of JH Baxter is very rewarding after the hard work the community has put into demanding clean air!”* said **Arjorie Arberry-Baribeault**, the West Eugene Community Organizer for Beyond Toxics. *“We will gladly take this victory and continue to work towards holding them accountable for their damage. The saying is ‘if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen.’ Well, the community and our supporters have brought the heat and are going to keep cooking!”*

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Beyond Toxics is a statewide environmental justice organization advancing policies that ensure meaningful participation and cultivating grassroots leadership from Oregon's frontline and impacted communities. Established in 2001, we are a multicultural, inter-generational team dedicated to centering community leaders and building out the true diversity of our state's vibrant Environmental Justice movement.