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News Release - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

West Eugene Residents Get Chance for Free Soil Testing by the US EPA

EPA, Beyond Toxics and neighborhood groups collaborate for urban gardening

EUGENE, ORE. — A unique collaborative effort between the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Bethel Active Citizens neighborhood association and Beyond Toxics is taking place Sunday, October 19. Free soil testing along with fun family activities will happen at the **Bountiful Bethel Harvest Festival** in West Eugene from 2:30 to 5:30 pm at Shasta Middle School, 4646 Barger Drive.

What is happening?
The US EPA Soil Testing Mobile Laboratory will be on-site for soil testing for West Eugene residents. The mobile lab will be part of community activities, including gardening workshops, seed swap and apple juicing. Community interest in growing food and healthy lifestyles led to the My Garden–West Eugene project, a joint project of the Active Bethel Citizens, Beyond Toxics, Huerto de la Familia and the US Environmental Protection Agency. **The project will help answer the question raised by community members: *Is the soil in my yard safe for gardening?***

Why is the soil being tested?
Homes and schools in West Eugene are surrounded by historical and ongoing industrial activity, transportation corridors, the train yard, the Eugene airport and other possible sources of environmental contamination. Older buildings may also be a source of lead paint, which can contaminate soil and pose health risks. The potential impacts of pollution can sometimes impact air, water and soil. The project developed from an earlier environmental justice project initiated by Beyond Toxics and the EPA in 2010.

Background
Earlier this year the EPA sampled in public rights of way to determine baseline levels of soil pollution. EPA found lead, arsenic, chromium and cobalt, but not at levels that posed a risk to human health. Now, individual residents can bring soil samples to US EPA mobile soil analysis laboratory to test for these metals and make sure their soil is safe for urban gardening. Soil testing kits are being distributed to local residents, who will bring their prepared soils samples to the Bountiful Bethel Harvest Festival for free testing.

Anyone living in West Eugene can bring a soil sample. Residents wishing to have their soil tested should contact Beyond Toxics to get an instruction sheet. The simple instruction fact sheet can also be downloaded here:
Spanish: http://www.beyondtoxics.org/wp-content/uploads/SoilSamplingGuide_Oct19_2014WestEugeneMyGardenProject_Spanish.pdf
English: http://www.beyondtoxics.org/wp-content/uploads/SoilSamplingGuide_Oct19_2014WestEugeneMyGardenProject_English.pdf

Why is soil testing important?

According to the EPA, lead poisoning can cause a number of adverse human health effects, but is particularly detrimental to the neurological development of children. Children can come in contact with lead through contaminated soil or lead dust from house paint. To learn more about the effects of lead poisoning and EPA's role in reducing the presence of lead in the environment, visit EPA Lead.

Who has been involved?

My Garden – West Eugene represents a collaboration of local, state, and federal partners, working together with community leaders. Partners in the sampling effort include Beyond Toxics, Active Bethel Citizens Neighborhood Assoc., Bethel School District, City of Eugene, Environmental Center of Sustainability (ECOS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Huerto de la Familia, Lane Regional Air Protection Agency, Lane County Food Policy Council, Native American Youth Education and Enrichment (NAYEE), South Towne Rotary Club, the EPA Region 10, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ), and Oregon Health Authority (OHA). This project is funded in part by the Collins Foundation.

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