

Grays Harbor Historical Seaport



The Lady Washington docked at the Grays Harbor Historical Seaport.

Property Name

Weyerhaeuser Sawmill Aberdeen

ACRES ID

237023

Ecology Cleanup Site ID

4987

Property Address

500 North Custer Street
Aberdeen, WA

Assistance Recipient

Grays Harbor Historic Seaport
Authority

Special accommodations

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, contact the Ecology ADA Coordinator at: 360-407-6831 or ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov. People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

Site Background

Grays Harbor Historical Seaport Authority (GHSA) is located at 500 North Custer Street in Aberdeen, Washington (site). The site consists of upland properties and 14.48 acres of state-owned tidelands (tidelands) along the Chehalis River, also referred to as the aquatic lands lease tract. The Department of Natural Resources manages the tidelands.

From the early 1900s to 2009, the site was used for sawmills and other forest product industries. During this time, there were two sawmills, steam drying kilns, and wood refuse burners. Other activities included wood chipping and barge loading.

Weyerhaeuser Company operated sawmills at the site between 1955 and 2013. GHSA acquired the properties from them in 2013 and agreed to take responsibility for addressing any legacy environmental impacts. The site is on Ecology's confirmed and suspected contaminated sites list as Weyerhaeuser Sawmill Aberdeen.

The Chehalis River and Grays Harbor in the vicinity of the site are within the Usual and Accustomed fishing grounds of the Quinault Indian Nation. Quinault Tribal members harvest salmon, crab, and other treaty fisheries resources in this area.

Grays Harbor Historical Seaport Authority

GHSA is a municipal Public Development Authority the City of Aberdeen created in 1986. A key element of their mission is creating a local and regional recreation and tourism destination and a homeport for the Lady Washington tall ship. Acquiring the property, which includes a wharf and docks for the ship, was an important step in accomplishing that goal. Addressing environmental contamination at the site is another key part of bringing the property into full productive use. The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) has been working with GHSA since 2014 to help them take steps toward site cleanup. The U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) State Response Program grant partially funds staff time for providing technical assistance.

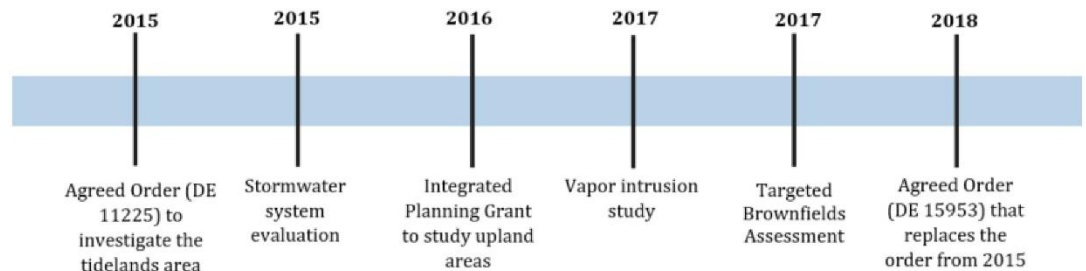
Contamination

Sawmill operations and forest product industry practices contaminated soil, sediment, and groundwater at the site. Site investigations and cleanup work have taken place since the 1980s. In 2013, testing found contamination from mill operations within the aquatic lands lease tract. Ecology reopened the investigation in 2014 for further study due to the discovery of previously unknown contamination. Later tests also found contaminated soils and groundwater in the uplands area. Contaminants include:

- Dioxins
- Mercury
- Petroleum hydrocarbons
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)
- Woodwaste in sediments beneath the former watermill structures.

The presence of these chemicals above state sediment, soil, and groundwater cleanup standards poses a risk to human health and the environment. Cleanup of contaminants will allow GHSA to move forward with site development and public use.

Figure 1. GHSA investigation timeline of the Weyerhaeuser Sawmill



GHSA Investigation Funding Summary

Year	Award	Funding Type	Task
2013	\$200,000	Integrated Planning Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess contamination in sediment and uplands. • Form a strategy for the new tidelands lease. • Design a market analysis, site plans, and funding strategies for the property.
2015	\$150,000	Remedial Action Grant for the tidelands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an investigation of the tidelands study area and describe the nature and extent of contamination. • Develop a Study Area Investigation and Alternatives Analysis Report summarizing the investigation results and evaluating cleanup options.
2017	\$149,000	EPA TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted Brownfields Assessment to further define the extent of contamination that had been identified at the site.
2018	\$2,070,000 + \$230,000 match	Remedial Action Grant for the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish tidelands work from 2015. • Conduct a remedial investigation and feasibility study. • Develop a draft Cleanup Action Plan to describe the selected cleanup methods. • Cleanup the site.

GHSA also received a grant from Washington State Department of Commerce to demolish and remove the planer building, which is where the pentachlorophenol was found.

Next Steps

Ecology held a public comment period between February 4 and March 5, 2019, for Agreed Order DE 15953. Ecology received no comments and finalized the Agreed Order. GHSA will use past investigations and close data gaps to develop a remedial investigation, feasibility study, and cleanup action plan. The Washington State Legislature appropriated an additional \$1.8 million in Remedial Action Grant funding for Washington’s 2019–2021 biennium.

The specific site cleanup actions will be determined in the future, and could include actions such as removing zones of contaminated soils or river sediments, or capping over contaminated areas with soils or pavement to limit contact by humans and animals. In some cases, the studies could determine that contamination is at low levels and will reduce to acceptable amounts over time through natural processes.

Once the site is cleaned up, GHSA will be able to move forward with developing the site without having to contend with environmental contamination. This will make it easier for GHSA to partner with other developers, create community partnerships, and provide riverfront access without having to worry about people potentially being exposed to contaminants. Cleanup will remove the stigma and financial burden of occupying a contaminated site, and allow GHSA to focus on fulfilling the goals for community development envisioned in the Aberdeen South Waterfront Integrated Cleanup and Redevelopment Plan. Plans for redevelopment include a number of public access and recreation opportunities, including access to the existing dock and a waterfront trail.

Site Vicinity

