

Response to Comments

Agreed Order and Public Participation Plan

Stewart House Cleanup Site Seattle, WA

Toxics Cleanup Program

Washington State Department of Ecology

Northwest Region Office

Shoreline, Washington

May 2025

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- Clean-up site ID: 10376
- Facility site ID: 74542995

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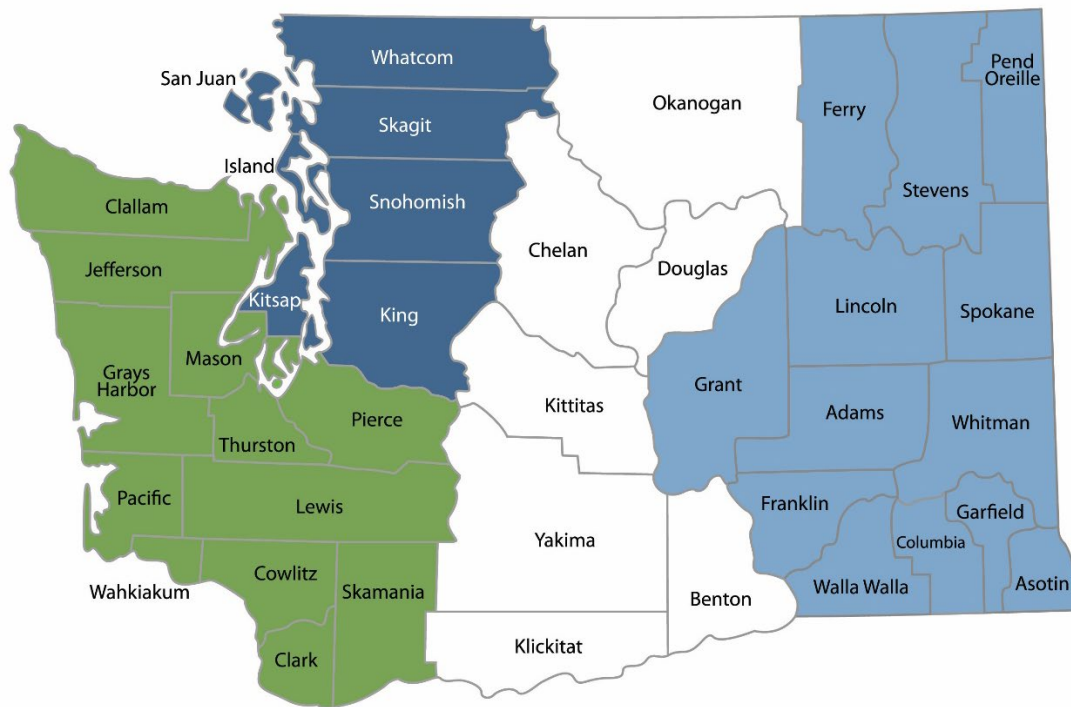
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¹ www.ecology.wa.gov/contact

Department of Ecology's Regional Offices

Map of Counties Served



Southwest Region
360-407-6300

Northwest Region
206-594-0000

Central Region
509-575-2490

Eastern Region
509-329-3400

Region	Counties served	Mailing Address	Phone
Southwest	Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Mason, Lewis, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum	PO Box 47775 Olympia, WA 98504	360-407-6300
Northwest	Island, King, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom	PO Box 330316 Shoreline, WA 98133	206-594-0000
Central	Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, Yakima	1250 W Alder St Union Gap, WA 98903	509-575-2490
Eastern	Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman	4601 N Monroe Spokane, WA 99205	509-329-3400
Headquarters	Across Washington	PO Box 46700 Olympia, WA 98504	360-407-6000

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DEPARTMENT OF
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State of Washington

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables 5

 Figures.....5

 Tables5

Public Outreach Summary 6

Comment Summary 7

Next Steps 8

Comments and Responses 9

 Comment from: Chad Anonymous9

 Comment from: Sai Yerra10

 Comment from: Cal Abhti10

 Comment from: Miles Partman11

 Comment from: Ian Funderburk.....12

 Comment from: Samuel Wolfson13

Appendices 14

List of Figures and Tables

Figures

Figure 1: Washington's formal cleanup process.....	8
--	---

Tables

Table 1: List of Commenters	7
-----------------------------------	---

Public Outreach Summary

The Stewart House Cleanup Site (Site), located in Seattle is continuing Washington State's [formal cleanup process](#)² as directed under the Model Toxics Control Act ([MTCA](#)³). Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) is addressing contamination at the Site under a legal agreement called an Agreed Order with Ecology. The Agreed Order requires DESC to address contamination at the Site.

Ecology invited input on the following documents:

- **Agreed Order (AO):** a legal agreement that directs the involved parties to carry out cleanup at the Site under Ecology's supervision.
- **Public Participation Plan:** a document that explains how people can participate in the cleanup process.

The Department of Ecology's public involvement activities related to this Site's 30-day comment period (April 7, 12:00 a.m. – May 6, 11:59 p.m., 2025) included:

- **Postcard and Fact Sheet:**
 - US mail distribution of a fact sheet providing information about the cleanup documents and the public comment period, to approximately 9732 addresses including neighboring businesses and other interested parties.
 - Email distribution of the fact sheet to 101 people, including interested individuals, local/county/state/federal agencies, neighborhood associations, and interested community groups.
 - The fact sheet was available digitally through Ecology's [cleanup site webpage](#)⁴.
- **Legal Notices:**
 - Publication of one paid display ad in *The Seattle Times*, dated April 11, 2025
- **Site Register:**
 - Publication of 4 notices in Ecology's Toxics Cleanup Site Register:
 - Comment Period Notice:
 - April 3, 2025
 - April 17, 2025
 - May 1, 2025
 - Response Summary Notice:
 - May 29, 2025
 - Visit [Ecology's Site Register website](#)⁵ to download PDFs.
- **Online and In-Person Open House:**

² <https://ecology.wa.gov/Spills-Cleanup/Contamination-cleanup/Cleanup-process>

³ <https://ecology.wa.gov/mtca>

⁴ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/14787>

⁵ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/UIPages/PublicationList.aspx?IndexTypeName=Program&NameValue=Toxics+Cleanup&DocumentTypeName=Newsletter>

- Ecology hosted an open house at [The Seattle Public Library - Capitol Hill Branch](https://www.spl.org/hours-and-locations/capitol-hill-branch)⁶ on Tuesday, April 15th, 2025 at 5:00 p.m., with an accompanying [online presentation](https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/document/154942)⁷ through the Zoom meeting application. Interpretation was available in Spanish and Chinese. Ecology and DESC presented details on the Site and the review documents, and then answered questions.
- **Websites:**
 - Ecology announced the public comment period, posted the fact sheet, and made the review documents available on Ecology's [Stewart House webpage](https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/14787)⁸ and Ecology's [Public Inputs & Events webpage](https://ecology.wa.gov/Events/Search/Listing)⁹.
- **Document Repositories:**
 - Ecology made the documents available at the Capitol Hill Branch of the Seattle Public Library at 425 Harvard Ave E, Seattle, WA 98102. Documents were also available at the Northwest Region Office in Shoreline, WA.

Comment Summary

From April 7, 12:00 a.m. – May 6, 11:59 p.m., 2025, Ecology solicited public comments on an Agreed Order and Public Participation Plan for the Stewart House Cleanup Site.

Ecology received 7 comments during the 30-day comment period.

Table 1: List of Commenters

	First Name	Last Name	Agency/Organization/Business	Submitted By
1	Chad	Anonymous	N/A	Individual
2	Sai	Yerra	N/A	Individual
3	Cal	Abhti	N/A	Individual
4	Miles	Partman	N/A	Individual
5	Ian	Funderburk	N/A	Individual
6	Samuel	Wolfson	N/A	Individual
7	C	Anonymous	N/A	Individual

⁶ <https://www.spl.org/hours-and-locations/capitol-hill-branch>

⁷ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/document/154942>


⁸ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/14787>

⁹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/Events/Search/Listing>

Next Steps

Ecology has reviewed and considered the public comments received on the Agreed Order and Public Participation Plan. Based on Ecology's evaluation of the comment, no changes were necessary in the documents, and they are being finalized.

Ecology will finalize the documents and proceed with the cleanup for this site. See graphic below and visit Ecology's [cleanup process webpage](https://ecology.wa.gov/Spills-Cleanup/Contamination-cleanup/Cleanup-process)¹⁰ to learn more about Washington's formal cleanup process.

 Public input opportunity

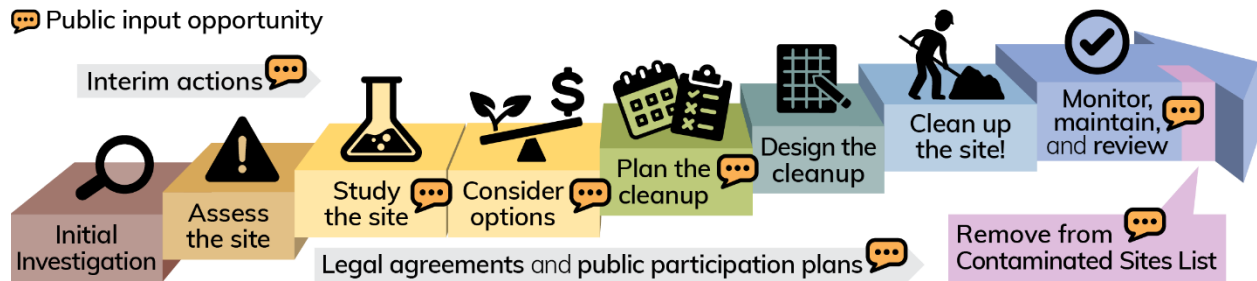


Figure 1: Washington's formal cleanup process

¹⁰ <https://ecology.wa.gov/Spills-Cleanup/Contamination-cleanup/Cleanup-process>

Comments and Responses

The public comments are presented below, along with Ecology's responses. Appendix A, page 14 contains the comments in their original formats.

Comment from: Chad Anonymous

How dangerous is it to live near the contaminate site of Stewart House? My girlfriend and I live right across from the burned down buildings. I did not realize there were possible toxins on the site until I received the "Toxic Clean Up" mail from the Dept. of Ecology this week.

Is there any reason for concern for people like us who frequently walk past / live around these buildings?

Response:

Hi Chad,

Thank you for your comment! I understand how unsettling it must be to learn about potential contamination near your home, especially without much prior notice. I'll try to provide some clarity based on what we know so far about the Stewart House cleanup site.

Is there a health risk to people living nearby or walking past the site? At this stage, based on previous environmental investigations, we know that soil at the Stewart House site is contaminated from historical heating oil tanks used at the old apartment buildings. These heating oil contaminants were found at levels above what the state's cleanup law (the Model Toxics Control Act) considers safe for people to come into direct contact with, which is why the Department of Ecology is requiring a cleanup.

That said, the current risk to neighbors and people walking by is expected to be low. Here's why:

- The contamination is from one or more leaking heating oil storage tanks, which are commonly installed underground.
- The contamination is currently in the soil beneath the building foundations and/or paved surfaces, and there's no evidence at this point that it has spread into the air or to nearby properties.
- No active construction or soil disturbance is happening right now that would release those contaminants into the air.
- Ecology will be conducting a Remedial Investigation to better define the extent of the contamination. This includes checking for any potential risks to surrounding properties.

However, if you're frequently walking very close to the site or if you have concerns about air quality or soil exposure, it's understandable to want more information. I'd recommend attending the open house on April 15th at the Capitol Hill Library or online, where Ecology and DESC will be present to answer questions. You can also check out the [What's in My Neighborhood](#) website, which details all the cleanup sites around the state.

In the meantime, if you're feeling uncertain or want to discuss this more, I'd be happy to help get your questions to the site manager at Ecology. You can also contact him directly: Zak Wall, Site Manager – zak.wall@ecy.wa.gov / 425-758-5231

Thank you again for reaching out. Let us know if you have more questions!

Best regards,

Augie Nuszer

Community Outreach & Environmental Education Specialist

Washington State Department of Ecology

[Northwest Regional Office](#) | Toxics Cleanup Program

Cell: 425-533-5537 | augie.nuszer@ecy.wa.gov



Comment from: Sai Yerra

We need more housing in Washington state. I would like to make sure that there is as few roadblocks as possible to building more housing. Please allow this clean up to occur as fast as it can, so the lot can be used for future housing.

Response:

Thank you for your comment and for recognizing the importance of both environmental cleanup and addressing Washington's housing needs. Our agency is committed to moving this cleanup forward efficiently while ensuring it meets cleanup standards. We appreciate your support as we work toward these goals.

Comment from: Cal Abhti

There are already far too many of these units on the street and on Summit as well. It makes it an extremely dangerous neighborhood. Please reconsider.

Response:

Thank you for your comment. We understand your concerns about neighborhood safety and the concentration of housing or services in the area. This agreed order is focused solely on addressing environmental contamination to protect public health and the environment and does not include decisions about future land use; those decisions are led by the landowner. [DESC](#) already owns the land in question, so we will share your concerns with them as part of this public feedback process.

Comment from: Miles Partman

need immediate federal help.

Seattle police confidential informants

have burned down or caused fires at 4 locations and 6 fires in 9 months.

for downtown service center- please do not demolish building until federal ATF CONTACT has been made

most recent one was at old grandberg apts - started in back of building it seems
1737 Belmont Ave Seattle WA 98122.

WHITE TRIM

Fire

burning towards roof/ ceiling

They always seem to be spelling W.I.C IN SURVIVAL CIPHER. LAW ENFORCEMENT CALL SIGN.

fire similar was halla market fire in tukwila wa

The Seattle police are doing this during a sting operation in which method they are doing stuff I do not approve off and The Law enforcement Call sign is W.I.C for any damage caused by Police

Transform at Sunnydale elementary school - April 18th 2024

warm coats W Fire I Coats C

WIC

ITS obvious someone broke a window was standing or kneeling on trash can and put flaming materials on the Coat rack that they could see through window - police admitted to doing it

Tukwila Hala Market - November 23rd 2023

Put some kind of ignition source under the deck to reach ceiling above them based on striation pattern of fire

white paint W Fire I Ceiling off Deck W.I.C

823 Madison St Seattle WA IN Seattle - January 1st 2024

person seen in second story window but everyone got out alive seems like ...
window W.

Fire I

Ceiling C

WHICH EXPECTED TO REACH THE CEILING BASED on how fire look like it spread

November to january 2024 - 2 months

January 2024 TO APRIL 2024 - 3 MONTHS

APRIL TO AUGUST 2024 - 4 MONTHS.

I PREDICT next one based on pattern to be in January 2025 unless a letter presence be known and tell law enforcement to knock it off

anyways - I know there petrol there now but still need federal ATF TO CHECK IT OUT AND SEE if its arson as undetermined by Seattle fire department - soil samples and wood of building that burned to see non historical accelerant DEPOSITS - Clean up this site could be obstruction of justice related to disability hate crime.

Response:

Thank you for your comment. We understand that you have serious concerns about recent fires and potential criminal activity, including allegations involving law enforcement. Please note that Ecology's role in this project is limited to overseeing the environmental cleanup of this contaminated site. We do not have investigative authority related to suspected criminal acts, including arson.

The [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives](#) (ATF) and the [Seattle Fire Department's Fire Investigation Unit](#), both have jurisdiction to investigate suspected arson. We appreciate your input and will document your comment.

Comment from: Ian Funderburk

My name is Ian Funderburk, I live at 600 E Olive St. On the corner of Belmont that these buildings are located. I live in Low Income Housing and value it. That said there are many pitfalls in the LIH system that can make it inhospitable for some and downright torture for others. There are many levels to this but one of them I believe is that frequently these buildings and spaces are not invested in at the people level. Frequently the buildings go up and then the overseeing organization moves on from the LIH residents beyond having a building manager that may or may not respond to problems. One thing that I believe should be involved in this discussion around these spaces is the amenities that the developer intends to include to make the building a positive place for residents and the local community. To that end I am curious about any intentions to include green spaces and interactive spaces for residents to commune, entertain, and generally socialize. These can be indoor spaces but I'd be curious if the subject of onsite gardens would be included too, the properties combined make for a large floorplan, I think it would be very easy to include some spaces like these on such square footage.

Response:

Thank you for your comment and for sharing your perspective as a resident of the neighborhood and someone with lived experience in low-income housing. Your insights about the need for deeper investment in residents and the importance of amenities are important.

This cleanup project is focused solely on addressing environmental contamination to ensure the property is safe for future use. While Ecology does not make decisions about future building design or amenities, we recognize the value of your input and will share your comment with [DESC](#), the property owner and future developer.

Comment from: Samuel Wolfson

Seattle is desperately in need of more affordable housing. I am strongly in favor of this plan to redevelop the properties, and I urge you to see it through with as little delay as possible.

Response:

Thank you for your comment and your support for the redevelopment of these properties into affordable housing. We agree that addressing the need for more affordable housing in Seattle is a priority. Ecology is committed to moving the environmental cleanup forward while ensuring it meets all required standards to protect human health and the environment. Your input is appreciated.

Comment from: C Anonymous

I hate to be "that lady," but... These properties were shelter services for people experiencing homelessness before they shut down. For months after shutting down, people seeking services kept coming. They would live in the doorways, behind the garbage bins, or in the bushes. They would urinate and defecate in the grass. They would pull garbage out of the bins and leave it strewn on sidewalks, along with charred square pieces of foil and used needles. The smells were awful. I was often harassed, cat called, and one man threatened to kill me as I walked alone one early morning. Eventually they broke into the vacant buildings and started living there too. I'm not sure if the fire that started in one building was the result of a person's negligence or the building deteriorating.

If these buildings are to be redeveloped into shelter and program services again, I would like to see measures taken to: 1) Protect passersby from harassment by residents of these buildings; 2) Employ security staff; 3) Clearly indicate alternative services on the exterior of the building in the event these buildings close again, in a weather-proof fashion. When the buildings closed, there was a paper taped to the front door that might have listed some helpful information, but as you can imagine, printer paper taped to the front of a door doesn't last long in the elements.

I believe housing is a human right. I also believe safety at home is a human right. I'm low-income myself and felt lucky to snag affordable housing nearby after divorcing my husband. So I get it. Hope everything shakes out in everyone's favor. Thanks for reading.

Response:

Thank you for your comment. We appreciate you sharing your personal experience living near these properties and your support for both housing and safety. While Ecology is focused on the environmental cleanup of this site, we recognize the relevance of your concerns to future site use and operations. We will share your comments with [DESC](#), the property owner and future developer, so they can consider the measures you are suggesting. Thank you again for your input.

Appendices

Appendix A. Public comments in original format

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