



Public Participation Plan

**Cosmo Specialty Fibers
1701 First St, Cosmopolis WA 98537**

Industrial Section

Washington State Department of Ecology
Lacey, Washington

July 2025

Publication Information

This document is available on the Department of Ecology's Cosmo Specialty Fibers [cleanup page](#).¹

Related Information

- Cleanup site ID: 2375
- Facility site ID: 32

Contact Information

[Industrial Section](#)²

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The Department of Ecology offers free translation and interpretation services. If you need help in your preferred language, please call our Language Access Coordinator at 360-870-1689 and request an interpreter, or email language@ecy.wa.gov.

¹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2375>

² <https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Permits-certifications/Industrial-facilities-permits>

³ <https://ecology.wa.gov/ADA>

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DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

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Public Involvement in Contamination Cleanup

The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) developed this Public Participation Plan. The goal of this plan is to ensure meaningful community involvement throughout the cleanup of the Cosmo Specialty Fibers site (Site).

This plan outlines how Ecology will keep the public informed about contamination investigations and cleanup options at each stage of the process. Please review Appendix A for more information about the cleanup process. The plan also details when and how the community can participate in the cleanup process. We encourage the public to engage with the decision-making opportunities and provide input.

Site contacts

To be included in the site record, comments about the cleanup process must be submitted during comment periods. Questions and informal comments or information about the site's history are welcome anytime.

Ecology

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If you are unable to reach these contacts, please visit the cleanup site page⁴ for up-to-date contact information.

⁴ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2375>

Public Participation Activities

Members of the public may ask questions, submit informal comments, or share site information at any time. Interested parties do not need to wait for a formal public comment period to contact Ecology.

However, to be included in the formal site record, comments about the site investigation, cleanup alternatives, or cleanups must be submitted during formal comment periods. In addition, the public is invited to review site documents before they become final. This is the most direct and influential way to learn more about the site and be involved in the cleanup's decision-making.

How we share information with the community

During specific stages of the cleanup, Ecology will mail notices about public comment periods to addresses surrounding the site. The mailing list area will vary depending on the type of contamination and where it's located. However, the list will at least include addresses within a 1/4-mile radius of the site and other interested organizations and individuals. These notices will provide general information about the site, contact information for submitting comments, and times and locations of public meetings or hearings, or how to request one if not yet scheduled.

Comment period notices will be available online and at document repositories (for example at the library closest to the site). Notices may also be posted in various locations throughout the community (for example, local businesses, schools, or post offices).

Ecology may also develop documents outside of comment periods to keep the community updated on the site's status. These informational documents will be available online and print copies may be mailed to the nearby community if we feel the message warrants the associated cost and resources.

Postal mailing list

Ecology maintains a mailing list that includes addresses within a one-mile radius of the site and relevant local, state, and federal government contacts.

People on the mailing list receive public comment notices when draft documents are available.

We will add additional individuals, organizations, and other interested parties to the mailing list as requested. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for this site, please contact Tara Roberts at 360-280-4325 or tara.roberts@ecy.wa.gov.

Contaminated Site Register

Public comment periods, events, and other cleanup notices are published in Ecology's [Contaminated Site Register](#).⁵ To receive the *Contaminated Site Register* by email, please [subscribe online](#),⁶ or contact Sarah Kellington at sarah.kellington@ecy.wa.gov or 360-280-3167.

Newspaper display ads or legal notices

We announce public comment periods and events for this site in ads or notices published in The Aberdeen Daily World. We will also publish notice on our [Public Input & Events Listing](#).⁷

Email lists

Ecology maintains an email list to update interested persons about this site. If you would like to be added to the email list for this site, please contact Tara Roberts at 360-280-4325 or tara.roberts@ecy.wa.gov.

Ecology's website and social media platforms

We maintain a website for Cosmo Specialty Fibers⁸. The website provides site information. You may also view information and download cleanup documents at the cleanup page⁹.

We may also share information about cleanup sites through [news releases, our blog, and social media](#).¹⁰

Places to see print documents

During public comment periods, you can find print documents at the following locations:

Timberland Regional Library
Aberdeen Branch
121 E. Market Street
Aberdeen, WA 98520
360-533-2360

Washington Department of Ecology
300 Desmond Dr SE
Lacey, WA 98503

To schedule an appointment at the Washington Department of Ecology, please contact Connie Naotsuka at 564-669-4474 or connie.naotsuka@ecy.wa.gov.

⁵ <https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Guidance-technical-assistance/Site-Register-lists-and-data>

⁶ <https://ecology.wa.gov/site-register>

⁷ <https://ecology.wa.gov/Events/Search/Listing>

⁸ <https://ecology.wa.gov/regulations-permits/permits-certifications/industrial-facilities-permits/cosmo-specialty-fibers>

⁹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2375>

¹⁰ <https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Get-to-know-us/News>

Signs around the cleanup site

We may also install signs displaying information about project status, traffic impacts, and health risks around the cleanup site.

How you can share information with us

We hold public comment periods and sometimes public events to learn your thoughts, opinions, and concerns about cleanup at a site. We may also identify public concerns and cleanup goals by meeting with and soliciting information from interested community members and organizations. To collaborate with us about this site, please contact Tara Roberts at 360-280-4325 or tara.roberts@ecy.wa.gov.

Public comment periods

At a minimum, the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA, see page 8 for more information) requires 30-day comment periods to allow interested members of the public to comment on draft documents, legal agreements, and proposed cleanup actions. If there is significant interest, Ecology may extend the public comment period.

When Ecology oversees the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) determinations (see page 9 for more information), we hold comment periods for at least two weeks and may extend to 30 days or more when other cleanup documents are concurrently available for review.

Following a comment period, we publish all the input we received and respond to significant comments and questions, as appropriate. If the comments result in significant changes to the cleanup documents, then the documents will be revised and re-issued for public review. If the comments do not result in significant changes, the documents will become final.

Public events

We hold public meetings, workshops, open houses, and hearings based on community interest. At meetings, workshops, and open houses, attendees can ask questions, learn more about the site, and submit written comments when a comment period is open. At a public hearing, verbal comments are transcribed for the record, and Ecology responds to them after the comment period in our response to comments.

If we have not scheduled an event, we will hold one if 10 people request it. This may cause us to extend a public comment period, so the event occurs during it.

Events are held at locations close to the site that meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Public events are always announced in advance using a variety of methods.

Public Participation Grants

Grants may be available to neighborhood committees, non-profits, and other groups interested in the site. For contaminated sites, these funds can be used to:

- Hire an expert to help interpret technical information
- Conduct activities that enhance the public's understanding of, and participation in, the cleanup process

For more information about public participation grants, please contact Laura Busby at 360-280-5088 or laura.busby@ecy.wa.gov. You may also visit the [Public Participation Grant webpage](#).¹¹

Site Information

Historical use

The Site is in Cosmopolis, Washington and the main mill portion is located on the south bank of the Chehalis River. Weyerhaeuser constructed the pulp mill at the site in 1957. The mill made paper grade products until 1962, when Weyerhaeuser converted production to dissolving and specialty grade pulp. The mill made pulp by using magnesium sulfite to cook wood chips, then bleached the pulp using chlorine dioxide and other chemicals.

Weyerhaeuser operated the mill until September 2006, when production shut down. The company mothballed the facility the following year in preparation of selling the mill. In May 2011 the mill resumed operation as Cosmo Specialty Fibers (Cosmo), owned by Gores Group, LLC. In December 2022, Cosmo shut down its production and transferred ownership to Charlestown Investment. The mill has remained shut down while the new owner pursues investors to re-start mill operations. However, chemicals used for the pulping process remain stored at the site. Staffing at the site has significantly reduced during that time and both power and water were shut off in the fall of 2024. As of the date of this document, there are about 800,000 gallons of chemical stored onsite as the current owner plans to use them during future startup.

¹¹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/PPG>

Figures



Figure 1. Site Map (Main Mill)



Figure 2. Site Map (Westport Pond Area)

How the site became contaminated

Constructed in 1957, the facility predates environmental laws and regulations, including the 1976 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the 1989 Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA). Over the years, there have been documented releases, including the following:

- Liquid chlorine leak from a chlorine car on October 27, 1979.
- Release of magnesium oxide dust from a recovery bypass valve on December 1, 1979 for a duration of 5 hours.
- Spill of about 1,000 gallons of red liquor to the stormwater system on February 6, 1980. Red liquor is a mixture of spent pulping chemicals and organics specific to the sulfite pulping process.
- Spill of sodium hydroxide from a railcar off-loading in February 1995, resulting in groundwater exceeding the pH 12.0.
- Spill of acidified water to the ponds on January 6, 1998, resulting in pH measurements as low as 1.0 in the adjacent ditches.
- About 16 leaks in the wastewater pipe over the last 10 years, with the most recent leak discovered on September 12, 2023 at the residential area. The pipe is made of wood stave and runs about 2.5 from the mill through the town of Aberdeen and Cosmopolis.

In addition to documented spills, the November 2017 Sediment Study found elevated levels of dioxin and furans in the vicinity of the mill's outfalls.

Contamination

Contamination at the site has not been fully investigated. Future remedial investigation (RI) will provide additional information on the location and types of contaminants at the site (see Appendix A for more information on the RI with respect to the cleanup process).

Cleanup plans

The steps in the cleanup process is summarized in Appendix A. Ecology has named the current owner, Cosmo Specialty Fibers, and the former owner, Weyerhaeuser, as potentially liable persons (PLPs). We issued separate MTCA Orders to each PLP to begin the cleanup process. Under both Orders, the PLPs must conduct the RI, prepare a feasibility study (FS), draft a cleanup action plan (CAP), and perform interim actions, as necessary. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the Orders and other steps in the process as shown in Appendix A.

Area community

The Site consists of two non-continuous properties: the main mill and the Westport ponds areas.

The main mill is located in Cosmopolis and next to the Chehalis River. The Westport ponds area is about 2.5 miles to the west of the main mill in Aberdeen and borders Grays Harbor. Both

properties are zoned for industrial/manufacturing uses and next to areas zoned for residential or mixed uses.

The population in Cosmopolis is 82% white, 8% Hispanic, 3% Native American, and 2% Asian. The employment rate is 53.4% with a median income of \$80,132 and poverty rate of 6.3%. The population of Aberdeen is 68% white, 19% Hispanic, 4% Native American, and 2% Asian. The employment rate is 50.4% with the median income of \$52,181 and poverty rate of 22.2%.

Ecology will reach out to cultural community organizations as part of our outreach and provide information in other languages according to federal guidance.¹² The non-English language most widely spoken in the Cosmopolis and Aberdeen area is Spanish. When appropriate, Ecology will provide outreach in Spanish and other languages. To request information in another language, call Tara Roberts at 360-280-4325 or email tara.roberts@ecy.wa.gov¹³.

We strive to make our public participation efforts as inclusive as possible and welcome your input about how to best reach the nearby community.

Tribal engagement

The Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis, the Quinault Island Nation, and the Squaxin Island Tribe rely on resources that could be affected by the contamination. The cleanup process may also uncover cultural resources.

We have reached out to Tribes to offer opportunities to engage in the cleanup process that are separate from the public involvement process. This engagement is described in a site-specific Tribal Engagement Plan, as required by [WAC 173-340-620](http://wac.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=173-340-620).¹⁴ We invited Tribal members and other indigenous peoples to engage in the public involvement process as well.

Washington's Cleanup Laws

Ecology uses the [Model Toxics Control Act \(MTCA\)](http://www.ecology.wa.gov/mtca)¹⁵ and accompanying regulations for cleanup activities. Passed in 1989, MTCA provides guidelines for contaminated site cleanup in Washington state. This law sets standards to ensure the cleanup protects people and the environment. MTCA requires the creation of this plan.

¹² <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2004/06/25/04-14464/guidance-to-environmental-protection-agency-financial-assistance-recipients-regarding-title-vi>

¹³ If not available, contact Language Access Coordinator at 360-870-1689 or language@ecy.wa.gov.

¹⁴ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=173-340-620>

¹⁵ <https://www.ecology.wa.gov/mtca>

Model Toxics Control Act

MTCA began in 1988 as a citizen-led effort to clean up contaminated sites in Washington state. The law holds property owners or operators responsible for cleaning up contamination on, or coming from, their property.

Ecology carries out MTCA, making sure cleanups happen according to state rules and regulations. These rules are found in [Chapter 173-340 Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\)](#).¹⁶ Ecology investigates reports of contamination, and the property is placed on the [Contaminated Sites List](#)¹⁷ if the pollution is determined to pose a serious risk to human health or the environment. This starts the cleanup process at the site.

The cleanup process under MTCA includes several steps (Appendix A). Public involvement is a key part of MTCA's [cleanup process](#).¹⁸ Nearby residents, businesses, community groups, and other interested parties can review and comment on documents related to steps that make crucial decisions or plans about the cleanup.

State Environmental Policy Act

MTCA cleanups also require evaluation under the [State Environmental Policy Act \(SEPA\)](#).¹⁹ Under SEPA, the potential for significant adverse environmental impacts from a project or action must be evaluated by state and local agencies when making decisions. This evaluation is subject to public review and comment in parallel with cleanup documents.

Plan Amendments

Ecology developed this plan following MTCA regulations (WAC 173-340-600). We review it as the cleanup progresses and amend it as necessary. You may suggest amendments to Tara Roberts at 360-280-4325 or tara.roberts@ecy.wa.gov.

We intend for this plan to provide the public with information on opportunities for public involvement and comment. The outreach activities discussed reflect Ecology's current plans to keep the public informed. It also provides ways for those interested in the site to communicate their concerns and questions to us.

If you feel the planned outreach activities and mechanisms found in this plan are insufficient or would like to modify them in some way, please contact us. We will work to find solutions. We can implement new activities or outreach tools right away, with or without amending this plan.

¹⁶ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=173-340>

¹⁷ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/reports/cleanup/contaminated>

¹⁸ <http://www.ecology.wa.gov/MTCA-process>

¹⁹ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=197-11>

Appendix A. Steps in the MTCA cleanup process

Washington's Cleanup Process

Public participation plans and comment periods are only required for cleanups under a legal agreement with Ecology. Otherwise, all cleanups follow the same steps. The steps are defined by Washington's cleanup law, the Model Toxics Control Act.

