

• SHARP reSHARP results		v2024.04.29	Ecology Info	
• SHARP rating	Low		ERTS	S503554
• SHARP date	03/19/2025		CSID	144
• EJFlagged?	✓ – No Override		FSID	1375
• LD confidence level	low		VCP	none
• Cleanup milestone	post-cleanup controls & monitoring		UST ID	none
• SHARPster	John Kirkpatrick		LUST ID	none

◆ Historic SHARP first SHARP results		◆ SHARP Tool version	
◆ SHARP rating	medium		
◆ SHARP date	45538		
◆ EJFlagged?	EJFlagged - No Override		
◆ LD confidence level	high		
◆ Cleanup milestone	initial investigation		
◆ First SHARPster	Val Chu		

SHARP Media	Scores	Confidence	Additional Factors	
Indoor air	D4	medium	multiple chemical types	✓
Groundwater	D4	medium	risk to off-site people	✓
Surface water	C2	medium	climate change impacts	✓
Sediment	B3	low	plant/animal tissue data	⊘
Soil	C3	medium		

Location and land use info	
401 E 15th St, Tacoma, Pierce County, 98421	
Primary parcel	0320041054
Land use	industrial
Responsible unit	SWRO

Sources reviewed
2008, Year 2 Monitoring Report, Environmental Protection Agency
2000, Correspondance to Mr. Lang at J.M. Martinac Shipbuilding, Department of Ecology
1999, Environmental Report Tracking System Incident History S503554, Department of Ecology
1996, Memorandum: Excavation of sandblast grit from beach area, Department of Ecology
1996, Intertidal Bank Sampling (lab results), City of Tacoma
1995, Results of Intertidal Sediment Sampling at the J.M. Martinac Facility, Dept. of Ecology

Primary census tract	Associated census tracts
53053060200	

Local demographics comments

A zero was applied to all EJscreen parameters because the EJscreen website was not available at the time of rating.

Source/source area description

JM Martinac operated a shipbuilding yard at the site, which included sandblasting and metalworking. These activities contaminated site soils with metals and other substances.

Soil comments

The original cleanup was well documented, but the length of time that has elapsed reduces confidence in assessment of the current nature and extent of contamination at the site. The contaminated soils identified were at or near the mean higher high water level at the time (1996). Known Contaminants of Concern (COCs) were arsenic, zinc, and copper.

Groundwater comments

no comments

Surface water comments

2023 monitoring by the EPA indicated that site copper and zinc were not above SQOs in nearby surface sediment. Signs were in place around Thea Foss waterway to warn people not to eat fish.

Sediment comments

Metal contaminated sediment at the site was capped with geotextile fabric on the upland side, and sand down the rest of the intertidal zone to roughly mean lower low water (MLLW). The current state of sediment at the site of the 1996 cleanup is not well defined. In 2023 EPA conducted a review including the section of property adjacent to the 1996 cleanup. They inspected area sediment caps, and conducted sampling. The area associated with the Martinac shipyard was determined to be in compliance at the time, with metals and PAHs below SQOs. PCBs were shown to be below SQOs in 2008.

Indoor air comments

Known COCs at the site of the 1996 sediment cleanup are not volatile.

Additional factors comments

no comments

Site history[Go to top](#)

JM Martinac began operations in 1924. The business had multiple interactions with various programs at the Department of Ecology (Water Quality, Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction, etc.). This assessment focuses on records pertaining to interactions with the Toxics Cleanup Program at Ecology.

By 1993, the company had a history of making a variety of vessels, and over the years large amounts of sandblasting grit and metal filings had come to be located at the intertidal areas in the northwest corner of the property. Ecology first visited the site in 1993, and over the next 3 years worked with the company owner and local agencies to help design a cleanup plan. Sampling by Ecology in 1995 showed that concentrations of copper, zinc, and arsenic in intertidal sediments were above the Sediment Quality Objectives (SQOs) of the time. Sample results covering the entire intertidal area of the property was provided by the City of Tacoma in April 1996. These results showed elevated levels of PCBs, phthalates, and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), in addition to metals. These contaminants were the focus of different site and cleanup action (see EPA notes below).

After substantial discussion, an Agreed Order was signed by all parties involved in July 1996. In August, an interim action (cleanup) at the intertidal area was conducted. Working at low tides, an excavator was used to remove the mound of sandblast grit and metal fines at the northwestern corner of the property. From the upland side down toward the waterway was roughly 80 feet (i.e. east-west). The excavation was approximately 122 feet wide, from the edge of the property extending under the outfitting dock (i.e. north-south). 2200 tons of material was removed, bringing the site down to pre-industrial sediments. Excavation extended to roughly minus 2 feet mean lower low water. Confirmation samples were taken. On the upland edge of the site, geotextile fabric was emplaced as a cap and covered with riprap. In the rest of the excavated area, clean sand was used.

Confirmation samples showed that the limits of excavation still contained metals above SQOs. Ecology concluded that arsenic, copper, and zinc had likely leached from the pile into the original sediment layers of the site. Further remediation was planned for the in-water portions of the waterway (i.e. below mean lower low water) under a separate, large-scale cleanup of the Thea Foss waterway with EPA as the lead.

In 1999, Ecology received a complaint that grit and paint were being dumped into the waterway at the site. This report was not verified due to a lack of agency resources.

Overflow - Site contamination and cleanup history

In January 2000, Ecology wrote a letter to the company stating that they had satisfied the requirements of the Agreed Order.

From 2003 to 2006, EPA lead an area-wide cleanup of Commencement Bay, including Thea Foss waterway (Ecology contaminated site ID 3032). Extensive dredging and capping was completed all along the waterway, including the rest of the shoreline at the Martinac Shipbuilding property that had not been cleaned up in 1996. It does not appear that EPA conducted activities at the site of the 1996 cleanup, likely in order to preserve the cap that had been emplaced. EPA did place a cap on the adjacent Martinac intertidal areas that were part of their clean up. Metals, PCBs, PAHs, and phthlates were a major focus of this action.

In 2007, four restrictive covenants were signed regarding the site to protect the newly emplaced sediment caps. There was one covenant each for the four parcels involved: 0320041054, 0320041017, 8950001590, and 8950001560. Based on the maps included with the covenants, they do not appear to include the portion of the property cleaned up in the 1996 action.

J.M. Martinac Shipbuilding went bankrupt in 2014, and the site properties were sold. The properties have subsequently been resold several times, but based on map photography no substantial redevelopment has taken place.

EPA continues to monitor the section of the Martinac property that they cleaned up, as well as sediment conditions in Thea Foss waterway. While they do not monitor the location of the 1996 cleanup, sediment sampling is adjacent to it. Cap monitoring at the EPA portion of the property indicated, as of 2023, that sand had generally stayed in place (+/- 6 vertical inches) such that no intervention has been required. Sediment samples in the waterway in front of the property tested below SQOs for metals. Taken together, while not focused on the original site, their proximity to it suggests that the contamination left in place in the 1996 cleanup has likely not recontaminated the area.



Assessment scores by environmental medium

