



Pilot Pulse

An update on Bellingham Bay Demonstration Pilot Work Group activities

August 2003

INTRODUCTION

In October 2000, the Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy was finalized via issuance of the Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy Final Environmental Impact Statement. The Comprehensive Strategy integrates sediment cleanup, control of pollution sources, habitat restoration and aquatic/shoreline land use on a bay-wide scale.

The Work Group for the Bellingham Bay Demonstration Pilot, including representatives from 12 different federal, state, local and tribal agencies, is moving forward to implement various elements of the Comprehensive Strategy under a broad framework of jurisdictional authorities. The Work Group also functions as a board of directors, tracking implementation activities and providing a forum to address policy issues and areas of disagreement.

Work Group meetings are typically held on a quarterly basis and are advertised to encourage public participation. The next Work Group meeting is scheduled for **September 11, 2003**. The Pilot Pulse is published periodically, usually in between Work Group meetings, to provide an update to Work Group members and interested citizens regarding ongoing activities. Additional information on the project can be found at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/blhm_bay/blhm_bay.htm.

SEDIMENT CLEANUP AND SOURCE CONTROL

Investigation at Georgia-Pacific's Aerated Stabilization Basin – Georgia-Pacific's Aerated Stabilization Basin (ASB) was constructed in the mid-seventies on tidelands potentially impacted by mercury-laden discharges from the mill. To assess this potential contamination, Georgia-Pacific, under an addendum to a legal agreement with the Department of Ecology (Ecology), sampled soil in the ASB in July 2003. The results of the investigation will be issued for public review in a draft supplement to the Whatcom Waterway remedial investigation/feasibility study. The draft document is expected to be completed in October 2003. Preliminary results will be presented at the September 11th Work Group meeting.

Whatcom Waterway Draft Consent Decree and Cleanup Action Plan – Using the evaluations presented in the Whatcom Waterway Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study and the Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy Environmental Impact Statement, including all supplemental documents, Ecology will preliminarily select a remedy for the Whatcom Waterway cleanup site. The selected remedy and the basis for selection will be presented in a draft Cleanup Action Plan (CAP) for public review. The CAP will be an exhibit to a Consent Decree, the legal instrument that ensures the CAP is implemented. The draft Consent Decree and CAP are expected to be completed in October 2003.

Harris Avenue Shipyard – The Port of Bellingham (Port) and Ecology have signed an agreed order under which the Port, in coordination with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), will complete a study of contaminated sediments to prepare a remedial investigation/feasibility study. The study is expected to be available for public review by winter 2003. In addition, Ecology's Water Quality and Toxics Cleanup Programs have met to discuss and coordinate NPDES permitting and MTCA cleanup activities at the site. The programs are working to resolve questions about low-levels of contamination in a permitted mixing zone and the long-term effect this might have on sediments.

Weldcraft Steel and Marine/Gate 2 Boatyard – Sampling has been performed at the site over the past several years and the main contaminants of concern include metals, tributyltin, and mercury in the sediment and diesel, gasoline constituents, and lead in upland areas. The Port and Ecology signed an agreed order on July 15, 2003 to perform an interim cleanup action and a remedial investigation/feasibility study at the site located at Squalicum Way and Harbor Loop Drive. Interim cleanup actions are scheduled to begin in September 2003 and will include the cleanup of contaminated marine sediment and the removal of an inactive marine railway and creosote pilings. In addition, clean sediments dredged from the nearby Squalicum Waterway by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will be used to construct a new marine habitat bench on the outside face of the breakwater for Squalicum Harbor. The interim action will be performed in conjunction with redevelopment activities at the site. Coordination of redevelopment and cleanup is planned so as to prevent the further spread of contaminated sediments and minimize the amount and duration of in-water activity. The remaining upland portion of the site will be addressed separately by the final site cleanup at a later time.

Other Sites –

- The Chevron, Colony Wharf, Olivine, and Roeder Avenue Landfill sites have overlapping groundwater contamination concerns. Due to the co-mingled groundwater plume, Ecology is proposing to combine all of these sites into one site called the Central Waterfront site. Ecology will begin negotiations with the involved parties this fall towards a legal agreement to conduct a remedial investigation/feasibility study of the single site.
- Holly Street Landfill cleanup is moving into the design and permitting phase, with cleanup construction activities beginning fall of 2004.

HABITAT RESTORATION

The Bellingham Bay Boat Tour – A Networking Success! – The purpose of the boat tour was to explore opportunities for collaboration among groups with a common interest in understanding and restoring ecosystem functions in Bellingham Bay. The tour highlighted various sites in Bellingham Bay to illustrate ongoing restoration projects, show the accomplishments of past habitat projects, and view proposed nearshore restoration sites. Each of the stops included in the tour was designed to show the integration of habitat restoration, site cleanup, and land use that has occurred under the Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy - demonstrating the concept that comprehensive nearshore restoration cannot be done in isolation.

Feedback from Boat Tour participants is that the tour was a great success in helping members of the various invited groups to identify common missions and common hurdles. Follow-up discussions have already occurred between members of the Habitat Action Team (HAT) and of the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP) (one of the invited groups) to help figure out how the two might collaborate to pursue some of the proposed nearshore restoration opportunities identified

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in the Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy. The tour made it clear that further discussions and collaboration will be very important to the successful implementation of these proposed projects.

Thanks to the Port of Bellingham, members of the Puget Sound Action Team, and the Habitat Action Team for showcasing the Bay! And special thanks to members of the Waterfront Futures Group, the Whatcom Marine Resources Committee, and the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project for attending and for contributing substantively to the discussions.

Inner Bellingham Bay Juvenile Chinook Study (Baseline Fish Study) – In May, Alan Chapman from Lummi Nation provided the Work Group with an overview of the Inner Bellingham Bay Juvenile Chinook Study. Representatives from NOAA and the Lummi Nation have been out in the Bay collecting data. At the September 11, 2003 Work Group meeting, the researchers will describe what they have discovered about fish baseline conditions in inner Bellingham Bay.

Invasive Species – The HAT continues to follow the work of EPA, USACE, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to evaluate the risk of spreading spartina, and invasive aquatic plant, through the beneficial reuse of dredged sediments from the Swinomish Channel. Given the Pilot's interest to potentially import dredged sediments from the Swinomish Channel or other sites as part of a strategy to cap contaminated sediments or conduct habitat restoration in Bellingham Bay, the evaluation of the Swinomish Channel sediments is an integral part of the HAT's efforts to ensure that different dredged sediment sources are evaluated for the potential risk of importing invasive species into Bellingham Bay.

Information Sharing – Follow this link to the new habitat section of the Bellingham Bay website: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/blhm_bay/bb_habitat/bb_hab_Part1.htm.

LAND USE

Waterfront Futures Group – The *Waterfront Futures Group*, appointed by the City and the Port of Bellingham, is off and running, with numerous active subcommittees and upcoming work products to be released. The September 11, 2003 Work Group meeting will welcome Patricia Decker, WFG Project Director, who will present an overview of WFG activities. Additional information regarding WFG activities can be found at www.waterfrontfutures.org.