

Interim Action Amendment to Agreed Order No. 23840
Cosmo Specialty Fibers
Public comment period: January 8 – February 19, 2026

This document addresses questions and comments received by the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) during the public comment period for the Interim Action Amendment to Agreed Order 23840 with Cosmo Specialty Fibers.

We published notice of an opportunity to comment in the Daily World and distributed the notice to people living or owning property within a 1-mile radius of the main mill site and the Westport ponds area. Residents whose properties are along Cosmo's wood stave pipeline also received the notice. In the notice, we invited public review of the documents and provided a 42-day public comment period. We also held an online hearing on February 11, 2026.

During the comment period, we received comments from 22 parties/persons. This document includes all of the comments Ecology received and the agency's response.

Ecology also received comments from the Quinault Indian Nation. The comments and Ecology's response letter is included in Appendix A of this document.

Comment #1 from Friends of Grays Harbor

Thank you for this opportunity for Friends of Grays Harbor (FOGH) to submit these comments regarding the proposed Agreed Order for the Cosmo Specialty Fibers site in Cosmopolis. As a 100% volunteer organization of fishers, oyster growers, and concerned residents, our mission is to protect the biological uniqueness of the Grays Harbor estuary. The current state of the Cosmo mill is not just a regulatory lapse; it is a direct threat to the aquatic life and human health that define our community. While we support Ecology's decision to move forward with a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/ FS), the proposed Order falls short of providing the immediate and long-term protections required for a site of this volatility. FOGH urges Ecology to incorporate the following improvements:

1. Immediate "Critical Staffing" and Safety Requirements

The Order focuses heavily on future study while the facility currently sits in a state of dangerous decay. With 800,000 gallons of corrosive chemicals on-site and a history of power and water shut-offs, we cannot wait for the RI/FS to conclude before securing the facility. The Order must include enforceable interim actions requiring 24/7 on-site security, functional fire suppression, and a minimum level of technical staffing to prevent a catastrophic release into the Chehalis River. This should also include the South Aberdeen "Westport" ponds.

Response to Comment #1

The work prescribed in the Interim Action Amendment to the Agreed Order is in addition to the RI/FS tasks. The work schedule for the Interim Actions is independent of the development of the RI/FS documents. Under the Interim Action Amendment, Cosmo must provide 24-hour security by Jan 5, 2026 (fourteen days after the effective date of the amendment to the order) and submit a Site Stabilization Interim Action Work Plan by January 21, 2026.

While the Interim Action Amendment does not directly specify the exact number of staff needed to secure and stabilize the site, it identifies work needed to secure the site and minimize the risk of chemical release. Cosmo must have sufficient staffing to complete the work.

Comment #2 from Friends of Grays Harbor

2. Mandatory Financial Assurance

Cosmo Specialty Fibers' history of unpaid penalties (\$2.3 million) and failure to comply with the Climate Commitment Act demonstrates a pattern of financial unreliability. We are deeply concerned that the public will be left with a "zombie" site if the current owners default. Ecology must require a dedicated financial assurance bond or escrow account specifically for this cleanup to ensure that remediation is not halted by corporate insolvency.

Response to Comment #2

Under MTCA regulations, WAC 173-340-440(11), financial assurance is required for sites "where the cleanup action selected includes engineered and/or institutional controls." Financial assurance will be considered in the future when the site reaches the cleanup action selection phase.

MTCA provides a number of legal options to prevent a company's insolvency from delaying the cleanup. An example of this is working with other PLPs to carry out or pay for the cleanup.

Comment #3 from Friends of Grays Harbor

3. Expansion of the Contaminant Suite

The RI/FS must go beyond traditional metals and PCBs. We request that the Order explicitly mandate sampling for:

- PFAS and Dioxins/Furans: Long-term staples of pulp mill operations that persist in the environment.
- 6PPD-quinone: Crucial for protecting our dwindling salmon, Bull Trout, and steelhead populations in the Chehalis Basin.

Response to Comment #3

Comment noted. Sampling will be conducted as part of the site's Remedial Investigation (RI) phase to determine the nature and extent of contamination. This phase is a separate process from the Interim Action Amendment.

For sampling, the contaminant suite/list will be developed specific to the site, taking into account the site history, past and current activities, chemical usage, known spills, and other relevant information. This will be detailed in the Remedial Investigation Work Plan (RIWP), which will be shared with the public. This list may be expanded as Ecology obtains additional information during implementation of the RIWP.

Comment #4 from Friends of Grays Harbor

4. Climate Resiliency and Flood Risk

The mill sits on a vulnerable shoreline. Any cleanup plan that does not account for sea-level rise and the increasing frequency of "100-year floods" is a temporary fix. We request that the Feasibility Study include a 50-year climate vulnerability assessment to ensure that containment measures do not fail during a storm surge, washing toxins into our shellfish beds.

Response to Comment #4

Comment noted. The Feasibility Studies must consider the long-term effectiveness of each of the cleanup options/alternatives in selecting the final cleanup method. The Feasibility Study will be provided to the public for review and comment.

Please note that, if selected, containment measures (i.e. engineered controls) would typically include institutional controls as well. MTCA requires a periodic review every 5 years of these types of long-term cleanup actions. This is to ensure that the controls do not fail over time and remain protective of human health and the environment (see [WAC 173-340-420](#)).

Comment #5 from Friend of Grays Harbor

5. Community Oversight and Technical Assistance

The people of Cosmopolis and South Aberdeen have lived under the shadow and smell of this mill for decades. We ask that Ecology facilitate the creation of a Community Advisory Group (CAG) and provide technical assistance grants. This will allow FOGH and our neighbors to engage with the data on equal footing with the Potentially Liable Parties.

Grays Harbor has already paid the price for industrial "intelligent growth" that turned out to be anything but. We ask Ecology to finalize an Order that prioritizes the health of the estuary over the convenience of a non-compliant owner.

Response to Comment #5

Ecology is not involved in the creation of CAGs. We do work with a CAG, once it is established. Ecology's site manager would also be available as a resource to the CAG.

With respect to technical assistance grants, Ecology does administer Public Participation Grants (PPG). Ecology has a website about Public Participation Grants :

<https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/payments-contracts-grants/grants-loans/find-a-grant-or-loan/public-participation-grants>. The application period is closed at this time. The website provide resources and guidance for the next application period.

Please note that the Interim Action Amendment is in effect and enforceable by Ecology.

Comment #6 from Michael Bergey

If the current owners of this site are unable or unwilling to put together a reputable scientific team to make a timely report on the actual status of this site, I believe Washington State representatives should do the job for them.

Response to Comment #6

Comment noted. It is the responsibility of the owner(s) of a facility to implement and pay for the requirements under the Agreed Order, including the Interim Action Amendment. At this time, Ecology will continue to pursue compliance by the owner.

However, Ecology recognizes that the Interim Action Amendment to Cosmo's Agreed Order alone may not be sufficient to address the risks. We are currently reviewing other options to secure the site and stabilize the conditions.

Comment #7 from Greg Dinnen

I am very much in favor of finding a way to help the Cosmopolis Pulp Mill restart as soon as possible. I feel the Department of Ecology should not be fining the mill while it is down, as long as there are no major environmental issues, as this only impedes startup. The fines levied by ecology have also spurred articles in the press that are written by people who do not understand the mill facility and filled with exaggerations, lies about Richard Bassett, and are counterproductive to actually fixing the environmental issues at the facility. These articles, along with the environmental orders by ecology and the EPA have combined to scare off multiple investors that could have restarted the mill and which would result in the ability to address the environmental issues that are of concern. The best way for the ownership of the mill to address the environmental issues is to restart the mill.

The other critical need is the financial benefit seen by the City of Cosmopolis and Grays Harbor County. Cosmopolis just had to close their police department and GHC is seeing massive budget issues that are likely to lead to large cutbacks in all departments. The Cosmo mill most directly affects the City of Cosmopolis financially but also GHC. GHC has also been affected financially in the last 15 years by the loss of the Weyco lumbermill,

Weyco log sorting yard, Grays Harbor Paper, and the many supporting businesses in the area.

We need a plan of environmental repairs prior to startup that is reasonable and stop fining a mill that is down. Let's get Cosmo running.

Response to Comment #7

Comment noted. The Interim Action Amendment does not prevent the mill from re-starting operations.

Comment #8 from Margaret Berry

It is very clear that Charlestown Investments and Mr. Bassett have no intention of complying with Ecology's edicts or ever doing any clean up of the Cosmo site. From articles I have read, he is sure the felonious US president will give him what he wants. And all he wants is to make money. It's obvious we can never expect the federal government to take any action against him or Cosmo. The environment, people and every living thing in this beautiful state mean nothing to him. There is a wonderful park, Makarenko, in Cosmopolis that is comparable to the Hoh Rainforest, although much smaller. I love to walk there but when Cosmo was in operation the stench from their smokestacks made me so ill I could not walk there, in fact, I could not even go outside my home on the hill in north Aberdeen. Cosmo pollutes the air, river, groundwater, earth and all who reside here. Ecology needs to immediately take every action possible to completely shut down and clean up this blight on our city, county and state.

Response to Comment #8

Comment noted. Ecology's role is to implement and enforce Washington's environmental regulations. Ecology has initiated the cleanup process for the site through the issuance of the original agreed orders in 2025 to Cosmo and Weyerhaeuser. This amendment to Cosmo's agreed order is intended to prevent additional contamination from occurring.

Comment #9 from James Berry

I am writing to express my deep concern concerning the reopening of the Cosmo Specialty Fibers plant. And the lack of any progress on Mr. Bassett's part. It seems obvious he has no intention of performing the requested work. I would ask you look at what he has actually accomplished and NOT what he says he will do. It would appear this is a VERY polluted area which would seem to require a GREAT deal of work to make anything close to safe. I don't simply don't trust anyone who has a financial stake in the outcome and could/would be gone at moments notice. Thank you for consideration.

Response to Comment #9

Comment noted. Ecology's role is to implement and enforce Washington's environmental regulations. This amendment to Cosmo's agreed order requires specific actions that must be implemented immediately to prevent additional contamination at the site.

Cosmo will be required to comply with all applicable environmental regulations should they re-start operations, including implementation of Agreed Order 23840.

Comment #10 from Vanessa LaValle

I am incredibly concerned about the leakages happening and want to see the company held responsible and fund the clean-up rather than Washington taxpayers. These leaks are a threat to our community and our rivers. We can't be healthy without healthy waterways.

Response to Comment #10

The Interim Action Amendment to Cosmo's Agreed Order requires Cosmo to address any active leaks before they reach the waterways and further contaminate the site and take steps to prevent future leaks. By taking these measures under the Amendment, Cosmo can also help prevent a more costly cleanup in the future.

Comment #11 From Douglas Wrigley

I am a resident of Cosmopolis, Washington.

Federal and state regulators have already made this clear: the conditions at the Cosmo Specialty Fibers site pose a serious and escalating risk. The EPA's acting regional administrator warned last January that conditions give rise to the risk of a "potential catastrophic release." At the same time, the Washington State Department of Ecology has acknowledged that it does not yet know how polluted the site is.

That combination — catastrophic risk and unknown contamination — makes continued delay indefensible.

Despite this, the current approach still relies on future planning, self-reporting, and owner-prepared work plans. That would be concerning under the best circumstances. It is unacceptable here, especially given the owner's public statements minimizing the danger, including: "How can there be anything significant to clean up when it hasn't been running for two years?"

Anyone familiar with industrial facilities knows the opposite is true. When sites sit idle, maintenance is deferred, corrosion accelerates, staffing disappears, and systems fail. The visible deterioration alone makes clear this facility is a ticking time bomb, not a stable site awaiting paperwork.

These facts give residents zero confidence that voluntary compliance or additional planning will protect the community. This is no longer a question of intent — it is a question of oversight and urgency.

At a minimum, the interim action must require immediate containment and independent testing now, not later. Specifically I am asking for the following:

1. Independent third-party testing of air, surface water, stormwater, sediment, and groundwater, starting immediately.
2. Real-time public access to monitoring data so residents are not left guessing about their own safety.

When regulators warn of catastrophic risk while admitting contamination is unknown, delay is itself a decision — one that puts the public in harm's way. Interim action must therefore require immediate containment and independent testing now, not after another owner-written plan.

Response to Comment #11

Ecology recognizes the community's concerns about the current status of the facility. Ecology does not have any information indicating current threats to the public from historic contamination. However, the Interim Action Amendment is intended to address concerns about the potential for the release of chemicals currently stored onsite. Ecology is coordinating with other agencies to respond if a release of chemicals to the environment does occur off-site. Ecology will continue to compel Cosmo to comply with all applicable environmental rules and requirements.

Comment #12 from Craig Zora

This document is an update to an agreement (Agreed Order No. DE 23840) between Cosmo Specialty Fibers, Inc. and the State of Washington Department of Ecology. The update, which started on December 22, 2025, makes Cosmo take steps right away to fix problems with dangerous waste at their site. These problems include not following rules for storing waste and letting the public get into the site easily, which is unsafe for people and the environment. The main goal is to stop or lower the risk of people or the environment coming into contact with harmful chemicals.

The amendment lists what Cosmo must do to keep the site safe. This includes adding security, checking and fixing problems, taking care of the area, and sending reports to the state. Cosmo has to keep doing these things until more permanent clean-up actions are decided.

1. Are key deadlines being met?

December 22, 2025 (effective date of the amendment)

By January 5, 2026 (14 days after the effective date) - security measures to be in place

By January 21, 2026 (30 days after the effective date) - submission of the Interim Action Work Plan (IAWP)

Within 14 days after IAWP approval - implementation of the IAWP.

Response to Comment #12

Cosmo has not met any deadlines in the Interim Action Amendment and is therefore subject to enforcement actions under section 10.0 of [Agreed Order No. 23840](#).

Comment #13 from Craig Zora

2. What are the specific hazardous substances involved at the Cosmo Specialty Fibers site, and what are their potential health and environmental impacts? What is the risk of pollution migrating off-site via storm drains or flooding due to lack of power and water?

Response to Comment #13

Chemicals being stored at the site include magnesium bisulfite, red liquor, sodium hypochlorite, methanol, sodium hydroxide, sulfur (solidified), sulfuric acid, and sodium hydroxide. Hazards associated with the chemical are available in NIOSH website (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npg/default.html>) and also through published Safety Data Sheets (SDS) online.

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of chemicals that could be present at the site. There may be other chemicals in the subsurface from historical spills and activities. One example is the detection of dioxin in the sediments by the mill's outfalls. The list of chemicals will be expanded during the site investigation phase of the cleanup (see response to [Comment #3](#)).

The risk of these chemical releases going offsite will continue to increase if Cosmo does not take the preventative measures described in the Interim Action Amendment.

Comment #14 from Craig Zora

3. What were the original violations documented by Ecology, and what is the history of compliance efforts by Cosmo Specialty Fibers?

Response to Comment #14

Since the mill shut down in December 2022, there has been a number of violations. The most significant violations are described in the fines published on Ecology's website here: <https://ecology.wa.gov/regulations-permits/permits-certifications/industrial-facilities-permits/cosmo-specialty-fibers>. The fines are unpaid and still under the appeals process. Cosmo has paid part of the air permit fees.

Violations of Cosmo's water quality permit is also publicly available and searchable on Ecology's PARIS database here: <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/paris/ComplianceAndViolations/ViolationsAndPermitTriggers.aspx>

Comment #15 from Craig Zora

4. How does the interim action fit into the broader remedial investigation and feasibility study timeline mandated by the original Order?

Response to Comment #15

The original Order (Agreed Order no. 23840) remains in effect. The Interim Action Amendment is essentially an added list of tasks for Cosmo; it does not alter the timeline or the tasks set forth in Agreed Order no. 23840. The tasks described in the Interim Action Amendment to the Order are intended to address known risks that could result in impacts to the environment, further contamination, and more costly cleanup in the future.

Comment #16 from Craig Zora

5. What are the community and stakeholder perspectives or concerns regarding the contamination and remedial actions at this site?

Response to Comment #16

The comments Ecology received and published here reflect some of the concerns from the community. While other stakeholders have not provided formal comments, they are welcome to reach out to Ecology with concerns and questions about the site. Ecology expects further communication with the public and stakeholders as more data is collected about the site.

Comment #17 from Craig Zora

6. What technologies or methods will be used for leak detection, secondary containment, and air monitoring at the site?

Response to Comment #17

The Interim Action Amendment to Cosmo's Agreed Order requires visual inspections of leaks and maintain existing secondary containment (e.g. berms with liners). Instead of requiring air monitoring, the Amendment tasks Cosmo with maintaining seals on the tanks as necessary.

The Amendment does not require Cosmo to install new leak detection technologies, as the mill is currently not active.

Comment #18 from Craig Zora

7. Has there been any prior vandalism or unauthorized access incidents reported, and what were their consequences?

Response to Comment #18

Ecology is aware of a number of incidents of trespassing, vandalism, and burglary reported to the local police. Ecology has also been informed of and have observed damage at both the Main Mill and the Westport ponds area. Due to the damage, some systems (e.g. electrical system, pumps, meters) are now inoperable even if the mill gets power back.

In addition to damages to mill property, the EPA discovered and contained a release of sodium hydroxide in November 2025. This release seemed to be the result of tampering by trespassers.

Comment #19 from Craig Zora

8. What are the long-term plans for site remediation and eventual closure? What is the historical context of the site's contamination, including past industrial and waste practices?

Response to Comment #19

Ecology plans to continue with the formal cleanup at the site, starting with investigating the contamination. Formal cleanups can be conducted whether the site is operating or closed.

The contamination at the site is unknown at this time. Areas of potential contamination will be identified based on historical information. Historical context is often used to develop a plan for the site investigation and would be included in the upcoming RI work plan. Ecology expects a draft work plan in the spring of 2026.

Comment #20 from Craig Zora

9. Effective December 22, 2025, mandates an interim remedial action at the Cosmo Specialty Fibers Site to address violations of dangerous waste regulations and to secure the site from public access and environmental risks. Just how serious is this risk?

Response to Comment #20

Please see response to [Comment #11](#) regarding site risks.

Comment #21 from Craig Zora

10. The IAWP must include logs, inspection schedules, containment maintenance, leak repair protocols, and pond maintenance procedures. Will IAWP records be accessible by the public in real time? Has Cosmo started following these rules, especially the IAWP?

Response to Comment #21

See response to [Comment #12](#). Cosmo has not provided any documentation related to the Interim Action Amendment. If the records are provided in the future, the public can request to view the records. You can make a records request online here:

[https://ecologywa.govqa.us/WEBAPP/_rs/\(S\(efayw4ik0nndpx4ajlr31lp\)\)/support/home.aspx](https://ecologywa.govqa.us/WEBAPP/_rs/(S(efayw4ik0nndpx4ajlr31lp))/support/home.aspx)

Comment #22 from Craig Zora

Please include outfall pipe(s), the outfall footprint, and the outfall Sediment Impact Zone as contaminated areas that will need to be monitored and cleaned up.¹

Response to Comment #22

Currently, there is no Sediment Impact Zone established at the site. Refer to Section 5.13 of the Agreed Order for how sediments at the outfall are covered as part of the cleanup.

Comment #23 from Conner D

It is my understanding that the Ecology Department has ordered Cosmo Specialty Fibers and its owner, Richard Bassett, to perform a remedial investigation/feasibility study and to carry out interim actions at the site. Those actions include maintaining power and water, logging and inspecting hazardous chemicals, providing secondary containment, inspecting tanks, and securing the site so the public cannot access it.

On paper, these requirements sound reasonable. In reality, they depend entirely on the owner taking the situation seriously and acting in good faith. Based on Mr. Bassett's own public statements, that assumption is deeply flawed.

In a September article by the Seattle Times, Mr. Bassett pushed back on the idea that remediation is even necessary. As reported:

"In a series of text messages, he pushed back on the notion of site remediation. 'There is no clean up,' Bassett wrote."

Those are not the words of an owner preparing to responsibly carry out a cleanup, maintain hazardous systems, or proactively reduce risk. They are the words of someone who does not believe there is a problem to fix.

Expecting an owner who publicly denies the need for cleanup to faithfully execute a long list of safety-critical interim actions is unrealistic. Every requirement in this order — inspections, monitoring, containment, security — requires money, staffing, and sustained attention. If the owner does not believe cleanup is necessary, there is no reason to trust that these obligations will be treated with the urgency they demand.

My confidence in Mr. Bassett taking real ownership of this situation is extremely low. I am also concerned by reports circulating locally that workers tied to this site have experienced delayed or missing pay. I am not making an allegation — I am pointing out that if an operator struggles to pay people to do the work, or fails to keep the lights on, it raises serious doubts about their ability to fund and maintain safety systems at a hazardous industrial facility. I am shocked that I have to point this out.

¹ Attached to the comment is a copy of Cosmo's 2011 Application for Use of State-owned Aquatic Lands

Continuing to rely on owner-directed action under these circumstances is not caution — it is a gamble with the health and safety of nearby residents.

Interim action is supposed to reduce risk immediately, not depend on trust where trust has already been undermined. I urge the Department to reconsider whether reliance on this owner is appropriate, and whether stronger, independent oversight is necessary to protect the community.

Response to Comment #23

Comment noted. It is the responsibility of the owner(s) of a facility to implement and pay for the requirements under the Agreed Order, including the Interim Action Amendment. At this time, Ecology will continue to pursue compliance by the owner.

The Interim Action Amendment to Cosmo's Agreed Order is a way for Ecology to formally communicate the issues we observed with Cosmo's owner, as well as giving Cosmo's owner the opportunity to correct these issues. It also provides the public with the opportunity to review and comment on the issues.

Ecology recognizes that the Interim Action Amendment to Cosmo's Agreed Order alone may not be sufficient to address the risks. We are currently reviewing other options to secure the site and stabilize the conditions.

Comment #24 from James P

In September of 2024, we were told that the EPA and Washington Department of Ecology have been working with the facility's owner to ensure the large quantities of hazardous chemicals on site pose no threat to nearby residents or the environment in and around Cosmopolis and Aberdeen.

A full year later, in September 2025, Ha Tran of the Department of Ecology said they were still "in the early stages of understanding the scope and severity of contamination," adding that "if this turns out to be an immediate threat, the cleanup could be expedited."

Why are we still in the early stages?

I agree with Bobbak Talebi, the State Ecology's Southwest Region director when he says, "We need the owner to take this situation seriously and immediately address the threats stemming from a lack of maintenance and oversight." "These urgent safety issues cannot wait. It's too dangerous and there's too much at risk."

Mr. Talebi is right — it is too dangerous and there is too much at risk. But here's the reality: history shows we cannot rely on the owner to fix this. He has publicly downplayed and resisted the problem, and beyond that, the situation is simply too complex and too hazardous to be handled through owner-led compliance alone.

This problem spans decades and multiple owners. We have a long record of reports and data warning of catastrophic risk, but quite literally, nothing has been done outside of 'making plans'. Nothing.

The warning signs are not subtle. They include long-standing resident concerns and documented hazards such as a leaking wooden pipeline, recorded outflows from ponds into the Chehalis River showing elevated levels of dioxins and furans, and a clear failure to maintain the facility. Taken together, these conditions make one thing clear: this site has exceeded the limits of routine enforcement and requires additional help.

This is not about pointing fingers or assigning blame. When a site shows documented catastrophic risk, an uncooperative owner, and years of stalled state action, the only intervention that has ever worked is decisive federal takeover — contain it, test it, and clean it up before people pay the price with their health.

Response to Comment #24

Please see response to [Comment #11](#) regarding site risks.

Comment #25 from Twin Harbors Waterkeeper

The mission of THW is to protect and improve water quality and marine and freshwater habitats on the Washington Coast including Westport and the watersheds of the Hoh, Quillayute, Queets and Quinault and Chehalis Rivers and the Chehalis River Estuary and Willapa Bay Watershed. Twin Harbors Waterkeeper works to address environmental health disparities that are driven by legacy and current pollution and systemic inequities that disadvantage communities of color and lower income populations on the Washington Coast. When we prioritize clean water, we are also prioritizing the health and well-being of our community, especially our youth and elders. We submit these comments on behalf of our members.

For work to be performed:

- Please add a requirement to maintain a photographic log of all tanks and process units; to be accomplished during weekly site inspections.
- Please require a photographic log of all totes, drums, and containers; to be accomplished during weekly site inspections.
- For the wood stave pipe inspections, please require that a photographic log be accomplished in the event of discovery of leaks or stained soil.

Response to Comment #25

Additional recordkeeping would be a part of Ecology's review of the Site Stabilization Interim Action Work Plan (IAWP), per section 7.1.c. Cosmo has not submitted the IAWP for Ecology's review and has not complied with the inspection requirements. Failure to follow the Agreed Order and its Amendment (i.e. Interim Action) is subject to enforcement actions described in section 10.0 of the [Agreed Order No. 23840](#).

Comment #26 from Twin Harbors Waterkeeper

For the Westport Ponds:

- Please require that all bushes and trees be removed around the perimeter of the ponds.
- Please require weekly inspections, including photographic logs, of the outside (river) side of all ponds and berms. In the event of floods or king tides, please require this inspection to occur immediately after these events.

Response to Comment #26

Comment noted. Similar to above, Ecology will consider these suggestions when reviewing the IAWP, once it is received.

Comment #27 from Siobhan Peterson

It's very important for businesses to act with integrity. It's imperative that this waterway gets cleaned up, and for good. Not just little segments and hotspots, but actually all the way done and clean. Not just for the birds and the fish, but for future businesses that want to come in and be able to start fresh and know that they're not going to be held liable for the mistakes of those with little foresight from 100 years ago.

Response to Comment #27

Ecology plans to proceed with the formal cleanup of the site under the MTCA regulations. In general, sites can still operate while the cleanup activities are occurring, provided that measures are taken to prevent exposure to human health and the environment. The MTCA process also has provisions for new businesses to come in and participate in the cleanup as a “prospective purchaser” (see [RCW 70A.305.040](#)).

Comment #28 From Michael Chiavario

My wife grew up in Cosmopolis. The health of her family and environment are important. The potential of huge toxic spills needs to be eliminated ASAP.

Response to Comment #28

Comment noted.

Comment #29 from Mitch Friedman

Please inventory this site and take remedial action to protect the river.

Response to Comment #29

This Interim Action Amendment is part of Ecology's efforts to stabilize the site and prevent potential releases to the Chehalis River and nearby waterbodies.

Comment #30 from Ron Figlar-Barnes

Subject: Immediate Action Required on Hazardous Chemical Storage at Cosmo Specialty Fibers, Cosmopolis

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express deep concern regarding the hazardous conditions at the former Cosmo Specialty Fibers mill in Cosmopolis. As documented by the Washington State Department of Ecology, more than 800,000 gallons of industrial chemicals remain stored onsite in deteriorating tanks, totes, and containers, many of which are located directly adjacent to the Chehalis River and are impacted by tidal influence.

Ecology's own inspections have confirmed that several tanks are actively leaking, that containment systems are failing, and that the facility's environmental controls have steadily deteriorated since the mill ceased operations in 2022. The proximity of these chemicals to a tidal river system creates a clear and immediate risk of discharge into the Chehalis River and downstream into Grays Harbor, threatening fisheries, shellfish beds, tribal resources, and the broader estuarine ecosystem.

Additional facts of concern include:

- Ecology has issued over \$2.3 million in penalties for dangerous waste violations, air quality violations, and failure to comply with regulatory requirements.
- The company has repeatedly failed to meet obligations under Washington's Cap-and-Invest program, becoming the only regulated entity in the state to ignore compliance requirements in 2024.
- The site is now an active cleanup site under the Model Toxics Control Act, indicating that contamination is already present.
- The owner has a documented pattern of unpaid fees, discharge violations, and unaddressed spills, demonstrating long-term noncompliance.
- Ecology leadership has publicly stated that these conditions represent "urgent safety issues" that "cannot wait."

Given the severity of the situation, I respectfully request the following actions:

1. Immediate stabilization and secure removal of all hazardous chemicals remaining onsite.
2. Mandatory secondary containment and emergency protections for any tanks located within tidal or flood-influenced areas.
3. Rapid implementation of an emergency cleanup plan under MTCA to address existing contamination.
4. Full cost recovery from the responsible party to ensure taxpayers are not burdened with cleanup costs.
5. Transparent, frequent public updates on the status of the site, risks, and mitigation timeline. This situation represents a preventable environmental disaster. The longer

these chemicals remain in failing tanks beside a tidal river, the greater the likelihood of a spill that would impact communities across the Chehalis Basin and Grays Harbor.

I urge Ecology, local officials, and state leaders to act swiftly and decisively. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Response to Comment #30

Please see response to [Comment #11](#) regarding site risks.

Comment #31 from Lee First

I visited the site on February 15th, and took photos from the public right of way, during a high tide. Many areas of the plant were inundated with water. Are storm drains and ditches plugged? Is maintenance required to prevent river water at high tide from inundating the site? Please take steps that prevent high tide waters from inundating the site, and/or, require the owner to move materials that might contribute to pollution to higher ground.



Response to Comment #31

Ecology has observed at least one plugged pipe in the stormwater system. This plugging is about ¼ mile upstream of the location shown in the photo and appeared to be due to excessive material in a culvert. Cosmo staff are also aware of this issue and have not scheduled the repair.

Maintenance of the stormwater system is a requirement of Cosmo's NPDES permit. Failure to properly maintain the piping, including timely repair, is subject to further actions from Ecology.

Comment #32 from Betsy Norton

Please take effective action as quickly as possible to secure contaminants at this site and properly dispose of them. Spring migration is underway, and this site poses danger to the all wildlife and people along the chehalis and gray's harbor. As a birder, i especially am concerned about the birds I go to see at Gray's harbor nwlr and along Preacher's Slough trail.

The evidence is overwhelming that preventing environmental disasters is much less costly than cleaning up after a disastrous event. Please act asap.

Thank you.

Response to Comment #32

Comment noted. It is the responsibility of the owner(s) of a facility to implement and pay for the requirements under the Agreed Order, including the Interim Action Amendment. At this time, Ecology will continue to pursue compliance by the owner.

Ecology recognizes that the Interim Action Amendment to Cosmo's Agreed Order alone may not be sufficient to address the risks. We are currently reviewing other options to secure the site and stabilize the conditions.

Comment #33 From George Watland

I am writing to express deep concern regarding the hazardous conditions at the former Cosmo Specialty Fibers mill in Cosmopolis which present urgent safety issues that cannot wait.

As documented by the Washington State Department of Ecology, more than 800,000 gallons of industrial chemicals remain stored onsite in deteriorating tanks, totes, and containers, many of which are located directly adjacent to the Chehalis River and are impacted by tidal influence.

Ecology's own inspections have confirmed that several tanks are actively leaking, that containment systems are failing, and that the facility's environmental controls have steadily deteriorated since the mill ceased operations in 2022. The proximity of these

chemicals to a tidal river system creates a clear and immediate risk of discharge into the Chehalis River and downstream into Grays Harbor, threatening fisheries, shellfish beds, tribal resources, and the broader estuarine ecosystem. This situation represents a preventable environmental disaster. The longer these chemicals remain in failing tanks beside a tidal river, the greater the likelihood of a spill that would impact communities across the Chehalis Basin and Grays Harbor.

Additional facts of concern include:

- Ecology has issued over \$2.3 million in penalties for dangerous waste violations, air quality violations, and failure to comply with regulatory requirements.
- The company has repeatedly failed to meet obligations under Washington's Cap-and-Invest program, becoming the only regulated entity in the state to ignore compliance requirements in 2024.
- The site is now an active cleanup site under the Model Toxics Control Act, indicating that contamination is already present.
- The owner has a documented pattern of unpaid fees, discharge violations, and unaddressed spills, demonstrating long-term noncompliance.
- Ecology leadership has publicly stated that these conditions represent "urgent safety issues" that "cannot wait."

Given the severity of the situation, I respectfully request the following actions:

1. Immediate stabilization and secure removal of all hazardous chemicals remaining onsite.
2. Mandatory secondary containment and emergency protections for any tanks located within tidal or flood-influenced areas.
3. Rapid implementation of an emergency cleanup plan under MTCA to address existing contamination.
4. Full cost recovery from the responsible party to ensure taxpayers are not burdened with cleanup costs.
5. Transparent, frequent public updates on the status of the site, risks, and mitigation timeline.

Response to Comment #33

See response to [Comment #30](#).

Comment #34 from George Watland

Additional points:

- Please require that the owner of the site be required to maintain drainage, so that high tides in the river inundate the contaminated portions of the property as little as possible.
- Require that any stored chemicals that may be inundated by high tides be categorized, and safely relocated to areas of the property that do not flood.

Response to Comment #34

See response to [Comment #31](#) regarding site drainage.

In September 2024, EPA removed a portion of chemicals from areas prone to flooding (see EPA new release [here](#)). The majority of the chemicals in larger tanks and process units remain on site. Section 7.1.b.a of the [Interim Action](#) Amendment requires Cosmo to address the remaining chemicals with respect to the potential for flooding at the site.

Comment #35 From George Watland

For work to be performed:

- Please add a requirement to maintain a photographic log of all tanks and process units; to be accomplished during weekly site inspections.
- Please require a photographic log of all totes, drums, and containers; to be accomplished during weekly site inspections.
- For the wood stove pipe inspections, please require that a photographic log be accomplished in the event of discovery of leaks or stained soil.

Response to Comment #35

For additional recordkeeping requirements, see response to [Comment #25](#)

Comment #36 From George Watland

For the Westport Effluent Ponds:

- Please require that all bushes and trees be removed around the perimeter of the ponds to insure integrity of the pond berms during storms and floods.
- Please require weekly inspections, including photographic logs, of the outside (river) side of all ponds and berms. In the event of floods or king tides, please require this inspection to occur immediately after these events.

I urge Ecology, local officials, and state leaders to act swiftly and decisively. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Response to Comment #36

See response to [Comment #26](#) regarding issues with the Westport Ponds.

Comment #37 From Annie Cubberly

To Whom It May Concern,

I have driven by this sight for several years and worried that it is a serious environmental hazard about to happen. I am deeply concerned that the Cosmo Specialty Fibers mill in Cosmopolis is a disaster in the making. As documented by the Washington State Department of Ecology, more than 800,000 gallons of industrial chemicals remain stored onsite in deteriorating tanks, totes, and containers, many of which are located directly adjacent to the Chehalis River and are impacted by tidal influence.

Ecology's inspections have confirmed that several tanks are leaking, containment systems are failing, and that the facility's environmental controls have steadily deteriorated since the mill ceased operations in 2022. The proximity of these chemicals to a tidal river system creates a clear and immediate risk of discharge into the Chehalis River and downstream into Grays Harbor, threatening fisheries, shellfish beds, tribal resources, and the broader estuarine ecosystem. This situation represents a preventable environmental disaster. The longer these chemicals remain in failing tanks beside a tidal river, the greater the likelihood of a spill that would impact communities across the Chehalis Basin and Grays Harbor.

- Ecology has issued over \$2.3 million in penalties for dangerous waste violations, air quality violations, and failure to comply with regulatory requirements.
- The company has repeatedly failed to meet obligations under Washington's Cap-and-Invest program, becoming the only regulated entity in the state to ignore compliance requirements in 2024.
- The site is now an active cleanup site under the Model Toxics Control Act, indicating that contamination is already present.
- The owner has a documented pattern of unpaid fees, discharge violations, and unaddressed spills, demonstrating long-term noncompliance.
- Ecology leadership has publicly stated that these conditions represent "urgent safety issues" that "cannot wait."

Thank you for your immediate attention to this urgent looming preventable environmental hazard.

Response to Comment #37

See response to [Comment #30](#).

Comments #38 through #39 below are from the testimonies received during the virtual public hearing held on February 11, 2026.

Comment #38 From Lee First

Hello, thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am Lee First, Twin Harbors Waterkeeper. I am very concerned about the structural integrity of the Westport Ponds. If I am not mistaken, they are about 50 years old. Their location next to the Chehalis River is very concerning as this place in the landscape is an exposed to floods winds and erosion. I recently paddled by the ponds along the river and noticed areas of erosion and a lot of large driftwood, like huge logs. I also noticed bushes and trees growing on the pond wall berms.

Will the integrity of the pond walls be compromised in storms, and will with huge driftwood and logs being battered around in in storms and floods? Does anyone ever check for the integrity of the pond walls on the river side? I didn't see that that was required in the Agreed Order, and please add it.

Does anyone know if the ponds leak? Will the owner have to sample the sludge in the ponds? Has anyone ever done any sampling of Charlie Creek or the other ditches or drainages that are in very close proximity to the ponds. I've seen people fishing there in Charlie Creek and in other little and and crayfishing. Is it safe for people to eat the fish from there? Um. That's all I have for tonight. Thank you so much for the opportunity to comment.

Response to Comment #38

The Westport Ponds area is considered part of the site. The ponds will be studied as part of the site investigation and, if contamination is found, included as part of the cleanup action.

We are working with subject matter experts within Ecology regarding the structural integrity of the ponds.

Comment #39 from Jon Harwood

My name is Jon Harwood. I'm a resident out near Westport, about 12 miles from those Westport Ponds which I am also very concerned about the state of those ponds and their exposure to the open bay and the flooding and the and the water that flows by there. I am also concerned about the wood stave pipeline that flows through south Aberdeen, although you said it doesn't currently carry any materials in it.

Over the past 60 years, I have to imagine that those wood staves didn't always contain what they were carrying and there probably are contaminated soils for the length of that and, I hope that the testing is thorough and adequate and then that people living near that wood stave pipeline are notified if contaminants are found so that they can get involved in this process and have something to say about what is going on.

Finally, I'm fairly concerned, although I'm not sure this is part of the actions that are currently being taken, I'm pretty concerned that the current owners have been very unresponsive to the fines from the Department of Ecology and from and that they are not really they don't seem to be concerned at all for the conditions of their facility and the threat that it poses to the local environment, and I'm afraid that being that they are a large corporation, they probably have a team of lawyers they are going to wind up trying to point the finger at previous owners when somebody comes along and tries to hold them to account for the mess that is there in Cosmopolis. I think that is all I've got for now. Thank you very much.

Response to Comment #39

The wood stave will be part of the site investigation. Any contamination found will be covered in the cleanup action.

The results of the investigation, including sampling data, will be in a Remedial Investigation (RI) report and shared with the public in accordance with the Public Participation Plan (PPP) for the site. The formal cleanup, from beginning to end, may take

many years. However, MTCA also has processes (i.e. interim actions) should we find contamination that needs to be addressed to prevent exposure.

Comment #40 from Mayor Linda Springer, City of Cosmopolis

Protecting the Chehalis River. The City of Cosmopolis appreciates the efforts of US Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology to address the risks posed by large quantities of hazardous chemicals that are reportedly stored at the closed Cosmo Specialty Fibers facility. This large industrial property includes surface flow and piped conveyance of stormwater runoff to the Chehalis river. It also includes connections to the City's sanitary sewer system that sends uncontrolled flows to the City of Aberdeen Wastewater Treatment Plant where flows are treated before discharge to the Chehalis River. Failure to properly manage flows leaving this industrial site risk impacts to Chinook salmon, steelhead, and other important aquatic species that are vital to the region's economy. Safe water in our community is critical for our community now and for future generations.

Response to Comment #40

The Interim Action Amendment requires the owner to take measures to stabilize the site, including proper management of chemicals and stormwater to prevent pollution from migrating off-site.

Risks to the Chehalis River have been communicated to local, state, and federal emergency responders. Potential pathways to the Chehalis will be considered in the MTCA cleanup. Stormwater runoff to the Chehalis River is also regulated under Cosmo's NPDES permit.

Comment #41 from Mayor Linda Springer, City of Cosmopolis

Flows from the site that enter the City's wastewater system are illicit flows that must be stopped. The facility's water was shut off on **10/08/2024** when the facility's water account was closed. Despite the lack of water service, the facility continues to discharge to the sanitary sewer system. From the time when the water was shut off to **12/31/2025**, the facility has discharged **4,577,106** gallons of wastewater to the sanitary sewer system. The source of this wastewater is unknown. Given that the facility has had its water and power shut off, and there is measured wastewater flow leaving the site, it must be concluded that stormwater is entering the sanitary sewer system. City Code 13.24.030 prohibits discharge of "any storm water, surface water, ground water, roof runoff water, surface drainage water, cooling water or unpolluted industrial process water." The lack of stormwater controls on the property suggests the possibility of flooding of industrial areas that contain chemicals. Such flooding risks release of those chemicals to the sanitary sewer system that may not be designed to handle the types of contamination present in the wastewater. City Code 13.24.020 prohibits discharge of "any acid or substance injurious to said system". Such discharges also place risk on the City of Aberdeen's treatment plant, itself, and the critical function of that plant in protecting the Chehalis River.

Response to Comment #41

As mentioned in the response above, the Interim Action Amendment requires the owner to stabilize the site to prevent pollution from migrating off-site. Cosmo has not submitted the Interim Action Work Plan as required by the Amendment., If Ecology receives a draft plan, Ecology will ensure that the connection to the sanitary sewer is addressed in the plan.

For additional information, under normal operations, Cosmo's stormwater collects in "the sweet sewer" that directed the stormwater to the Chehalis River. This stormwater flow to Chehalis River, via a designed outfall 002, is allowed under Cosmo's NPDES permit with Ecology.

The mill designed the sweet sewer to be a separate system from the sanitary sewer. Under normal operating conditions, the sweet sewer does not comingle with the sanitary sewer. Given the current site conditions, the source of the flow to the sanitary is uncertain. Potential sources include stormwater, groundwater seepage, flow from the filter plant that has not been completely shut off, or a combination of these.

Comment #42 from Mayor Linda Springer, City of Cosmopolis

Uncontrolled stormwater may impact the Chehalis River. The lack of stormwater controls on the property suggests the possibility of contaminated stormwater from flowing by sheet flow or piped conveyance to the Chehalis River. There are observed stormwater flows leaving the site through piped conveyance that discharges through a stormwater outfall at the end of E Street into the Chehalis River. Given the size of the property, it is expected that there are more outfalls along the river. It is also possible that there are overland flows directly into the river. If there are stormwater treatment or flow control facilities located on the property, lack of maintenance of those facilities presents additional risk.

Response to Comment #42

Please refer to Response to Comments #40 and #41 for how the Interim Action Amendment is intended to address concerns regarding pollution migrating off-site.

In addition to the Interim Action Amendment, both EPA and Ecology have taken actions to mitigate of the risks of contamination to the stormwater. These actions include:

- EPA's removal of the chemicals containers and totes from areas prone to flooding in September 2024.
- Regular site visits to monitor for spills.
- Preparedness planning with emergency responders.

Ecology recognizes that additional actions may be needed to further reduce or eliminate the risks. We are reviewing options to address stormwater and flooding at the site.

Comment #43 from Mayor Linda Springer, City of Cosmopolis

Ecology should take action to manage stormwater. Given that Ecology has access to the site, the City of Cosmopolis is requesting that Ecology perform a full investigation of the site to determine how stormwater is being managed, and to determine if there are conditions that warrant emergency actions. This study should be completed ahead of the proposed interim action to determine if emergency actions are needed to protect the community and the environment. At a minimum, this study should include:

- a mapping of site topography and drainage basins including any pipes, ditches, ponds or other stormwater facilities on the property;
- the location of any outfalls to the Chehalis River;
- maintenance records for any private stormwater facilities on the property;
- the location of any connections to the sanitary sewer system;
- the presence of any wells or drain fields that may discharge stormwater to the ground; and
- any other pathways where hazardous substances might be released to the environment including overland flow.

The study should include recommendations to:

- validate or enhance chemical storage,
- stabilize the soils on the site,
- isolate and protect receiving waters from site contaminants, and
- prevent discharges of stormwater to the sanitary sewer.

Response to Comment #43

As mentioned in previous responses, it is the responsibility of the owner(s) of a facility to implement and pay for the requirements under the Agreed Order, including the Interim Action Amendment. At this time, Ecology will continue to pursue compliance by the owner. Please refer to response to [Comment #42](#) regarding actions that have been taken by Ecology and the EPA.

Information about Cosmo's stormwater system is in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). A copy of the plan is publicly available at the downloadable link [here](#). The plan also contains a site map and location of outfall to the Chehalis River. Cosmo has not updated this plan and has not been implementing the plan, which is in violation of their NPDES permit. Ecology's July 21, 2025 penalty to Cosmo included these violations.

Based on recent site inspections and visits, Ecology noted that there appears to be plugging in the stormwater system, specifically at a Middle Road Culvert as identified in the SWPPP in the above paragraph. This plugging appears to be due to a beaver dam, resulting in stormwater backing up behind the culvert and flooding at the site. As of the date of this response, Cosmo has not cleared the plugging. Ecology sent an NPDES inspection report to Cosmo on April 13, 2026 notifying Cosmo that the current flooding at the site is a violation of their NPDES permit and must be corrected as soon as possible.

Comment #44 from Mayor Linda Springer, City of Cosmopolis

The proposed RI Work Plan's identified potential interim remedial actions should include additional measures.

- Sanitary Sewer: Given that there is no water supply to the Cosmo site, there should be no sanitary sewer discharge. However, sanitary sewer discharge continues. The RI Work Plan identifies potential pathways of contamination. Until those illicit discharges from the site to the sanitary sewer system are suspended, they should be included as a pathway for contamination since the discharges represent a risk to function of the treatment plant and discharges from the plant enter the environment.
- Source Control: In the list of interim actions for source control from the site, disconnection of stormwater from the sanitary sewer system should be listed and prioritized.
- Treatment Facility: Interim actions listed include the potential to construct a treatment facility. There should also be a requirement for maintenance of that facility.

Response to Comment #44

Please see response to Comments [#41](#), [#42](#) and [#43](#). For clarity, the Interim Action Amendment does not include the potential to construct a treatment facility. The Main Mill and the West Port Ponds are existing facilities associated with the site.

Appendix A: Comments from Quinault Indian Nation



Quinault Indian Nation

POST OFFICE BOX 189 • TAHOLAH, WASHINGTON 98587 • TELEPHONE (360) 276-8211

February 19, 2026

Bobbak Talebi
Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 477775
Olympia, WA 98504-7775

RE: Cosmo Specialty Fibers Cleanup

Dear Bobbak Talebi:

The Quinault Indian Nation ("QIN" or "Nation") provides the following comments regarding the Cosmo Specialty Fibers cleanup under the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) and Interim Action Order.

The former pulp mill in Cosmopolis, Washington, was originally built by Weyerhaeuser in 1957 and later operated by Cosmo Specialty Fibers, Inc. ("Cosmo"). The facility is currently inactive and under new ownership seeking investors to restart operations. While staffing has been reduced and utilities disconnected, approximately 800,000 gallons of hazardous pulping chemicals remain on site under dangerous conditions. Over the last several decades, numerous chemical spills and leaks, including chlorine, caustic substances, wastewater, and pulping byproducts, have contaminated the site and surrounding areas. Studies have also detected elevated levels of dioxins and furans in sediments near the mill's discharge points.

The Nation supports the Washington State Department of Ecology's efforts to require formal cleanup at the site under MTCA. The comments provided are in response to the Interim Action Order Comment Period, and we also have included general comments and concerns related to the site investigation, and future cleanup.

Quinault Indian Nation Treaty Interests

The Nation is signatory to the Treaty of Olympia (1856) by which it reserved, among other things, the right of "taking fish, at all usual and accustomed fishing grounds and stations" and the privilege of hunting and gathering on open and unclaimed lands, among other rights, in exchange for ceding lands it historically roamed freely.

QIN has a vested interest in protecting the fish and the habitats within the Chehalis River Basin that support them, to exercise its federally reserved treaty fishing rights, as well as the protection of traditional areas used for gathering plants for cultural use. Because the Cosmo Fiber Specialty environmental violations are within the usual and accustomed Treaty fishing area of the Nation, the aquatic species and their habitat that have been impacted must be fully considered and addressed.

While the Nation supports the cleanup efforts set forth in the Interim Action Order, it has concerns that these efforts may interfere with QIN's ability to exercise its fishing treaty rights within the Chehalis River, upstream, downstream, and adjacent to the Cosmo facility including the Main Mill and the Westport ponds. QIN fishers use set-nets (tied to the bank and anchored in the channel) and driftnets that spool out from small vessels to harvest salmon and steelhead throughout the year during regulated fisheries. We want to ensure that tribal members continue to have full access to their treaty fishing rights, including the F Street Boat Launch and fishing areas along the Chehalis River.

QIN Participation

We appreciate your outreach in 2025, and we are interested in engaging. To ensure that QIN's treaty rights are protected from interference, directly or indirectly, we wish to engage directly with Ecology through a site-specific Tribal Engagement Plan. With that said, QIN staff have been heavily engaged in other large state environmental reviews, which have limited our ability to engage in this matter as much as we would like. Since staff capacity is a concern, we would like to discuss whether any tribal capacity funding is available to support more effective engagement on this matter, as well as on other ongoing toxic cleanup projects in the area.

Technical Comments

Interim Action Order

QIN supports including the Westport ponds in this action, and we would like to learn more about the historic and current use of this site. We have significant concerns regarding the storage of hazardous materials at a site that remains open and accessible. All contaminants need to be fully contained and cannot enter the Chehalis River, Grays Harbor Estuary, any adjacent other surface waters, the ground water and soils. These ponds require 24-hour security and locked gates to prevent access, limit vandalism, and contain contamination.

Study Area & Fish Habitat

There is a concern that contaminants may extend beyond the property boundaries, potentially reaching the Chehalis River, Grays Harbor Estuary, nearby stream systems, and connected groundwater aquifers. For future remedial investigations and cleanup activities, we want to ensure that the study area is comprehensive and appropriately defined, and the full extent of contamination is thoroughly identified and assessed. Attention should also be given to the Main Mill outfalls, which have documented elevated levels of dioxin and furans, as well as the outfalls for the Westport ponds.

Additionally, it is critical that the streams, watercourses, groundwater, and ditches associated with the Westport ponds, as well as the wastewater pipeline connecting the ponds to the Main Mill, are

thoroughly investigated, given the history of spills and leaks in the area. This history of leaks from the mill infrastructure necessitates a time certain schedule when the antiquated piping and other infrastructure will be replaced. Current observations indicate that the streams and ditches adjacent to the Westport ponds exhibit poor water quality, and the fish habitat appears significantly impaired, with low biological productivity. The tidal stream systems that drain into the Chehalis River and Grays Harbor Estuary provide essential habitat for juvenile salmonid rearing and should be carefully evaluated and restored. Any direct or indirect negative impacts to treaty fishery resources and the habitats that supports those resources is unacceptable to the Quinault Nation.

Climate Change

The Interim Action Order should address climate change, including extreme precipitation events, severe flooding, sea level rising, increased erosion, wildfire, and drought. This area is disproportionately impacted, and it is anticipated that these events will continue and worsen. Both the Main Mill and the Westport ponds are located within flood hazard areas and should be considered in the Site Stabilization Interim Action Work Plan with appropriate erosion and contaminant control measures. A long-term plan should be implemented to remove these hazards from the floodplain.

The process should include a site-specific vulnerability assessment to identify if adaptation measures that increase climate resilience are adequate or if the facilities need to be relocated to higher ground to avoid future environmental disasters that are exacerbated by climate change. Green remediation best management practices should be utilized to increase the environmental benefits and reduce the environmental impacts from the cleanup.

Thank you for considering these comments. For questions and future coordination please reach out to Dave Bingaman at DBINGAMAN@quinault.org and Tonya Pelach at Tanya.Pelach@quinault.org. We look forward to engaging with you on the Tribal Engagement Plan for this cleanup action and future MTCA discussions.

Sincerely,



David Bingaman, Director
Quinault Division of Natural Resources
Quinault Indian Nation

CC: Ha Tran, Environmental Engineer - Department of Ecology ha.tran@ecy.wa.gov



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

PO Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600 • 360-407-6000

March 19, 2026

Dave Bingaman
Natural Resource Director
Quinault Island Nation
PO Box 189
Taholah, WA 98587

Re: MTCA Cleanup: Cosmo Specialty Fibers (Cosmo) Site

Dear Director Bingaman:

Thank you for engaging with the Department of Ecology (Ecology) on the Cosmo Specialty Fibers (Cosmo) Site. This letter is in response to the February 19, 2026 letter from Quinault Indian Nation regarding the cleanup at site.

The purpose of the Interim Action Amendment to Cosmo's Agreed Order is to require Cosmo to secure and stabilize the site to prevent releases to the environment. This Interim Action is necessary due to the chemicals being stored at the site, the loss of power and water, and the deterioration of the conditions at the site. It is an additional action to the cleanup of the site under MTCA's formal cleanup process.

The formal cleanup will proceed at the same time as the Interim Action. The site is currently under the "Study the Site" step that is shown in the enclosed diagram of the formal cleanup process. This step will begin with the development of the draft Remedial Investigation (RI) Work Plan, due in the spring of 2026. The plan will include a review of the site history and available data, as well as proposed sampling locations and parameters to fill in any data gaps. Information collected during this phase will be used to form a site conceptual model, evaluating different exposure pathways and impacts including impacts to the Chehalis River, Grays Harbor estuary, and other receptors. The RI Work Plan is a document that can be shared with you for review and feedback.

The formal cleanup process also has a built-in SEPA review at future steps in the process and includes long-term effectiveness when considering the different options for cleaning up the site.

Impacts to the Quinault Indian Nation's fishing rights and climate change will be considered throughout the cleanup process.

Ecology will reach out to you to coordinate our future engagements on the site cleanup. We understand that you have limited staff capacity, unfortunately Ecology does not have any funding available to help support your engagement. You are welcome to reach out to Ha Tran at ha.tran@ecy.wa.gov or (360) 790-6276 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



James DeMay, P.E.
Industrial Section Manager
Washington Department of Ecology

Enclosure: MTCA Cleanup Process

cc: Honorable Chairperson Guy Capoeman, Quinault Indian Nation
Tanya Pelach, Natural Resource Deputy Director, Quinault Indian Nation

Diagram of the MTCA Formal Cleanup Process

