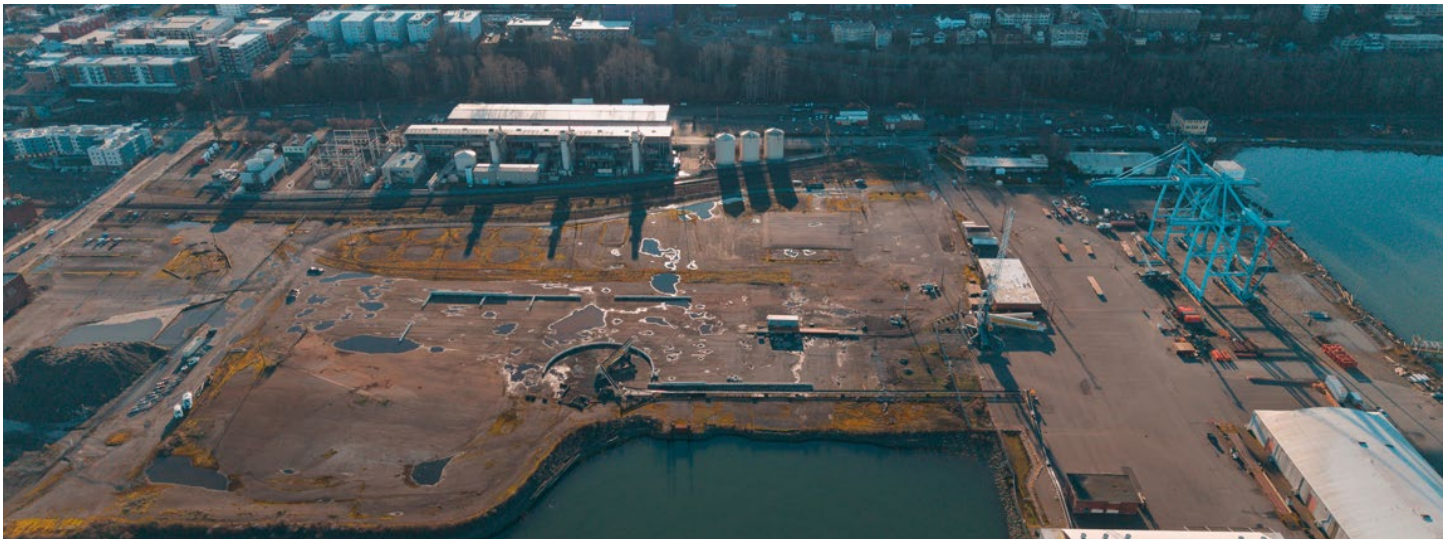
Georgia-Pacific West Cleanup Site, Chlor-Alkali Area



Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site Chlor-Alkali Area, 2026 – Photo: Port of Bellingham

Comments accepted

12:00 a.m., June 1 –
11:59 p.m., July 1, 2026

Submit comments

Online:
www.go.ecology.wa.gov/GPWestComments

By mail or email:

John Rapp, Site Manager
WA Department of Ecology
913 Squalicum Way, Unit 101
Bellingham, WA 98225
206-247-3242
John.Rapp@ecy.wa.gov

Document review

www.go.ecology.wa.gov/GPWest

Bellingham Library
210 Central Avenue
Bellingham, WA 98225

Site info

Facility Site ID: 14
Cleanup Site ID: 2279

Public Outreach Contact

Kristen Forkeutis,
Outreach Specialist
Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov
425-240-4353

Documents ready for public review and comment

We invite you to review and comment on the following documents for the Chlor-Alkali Area of the Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site at 300 West Laurel Street along the Bellingham waterfront.

- **Consent Decree:** A legal agreement between Ecology and the Port of Bellingham. It requires the port to carry out the cleanup action plan, Ecology's plan to address contamination at the Chlor-Alkali Area of the site. It also settles the port's liability.
- **Updated Public Participation Plan:** Describes how Ecology will inform the community about the site activities and ways to become involved.

Join us for two public events: Wed, June 10, 2026

RE Sources, a local nonprofit organization, will host a walking tour of the site, followed by an open house hosted by Ecology. Staff from Ecology and the port will be available to answer questions.

Walking Tour: 3:30–5 p.m.*
Please prepare for a 1-mile unpaved loop.
Register: www.re-sources.org/2026/05/gp-west-tour/

Open House: 5–7 p.m. *(with snacks)*
Stop by to talk with us and learn about the site.

Location: Find us at the white tent at the Portal Container Village on West Laurel St.
Details: www.go.ecology.wa.gov/GPWest

*The walking tour is funded by an Ecology Public Participation Grant.

Language services: see page five

Site background

The 74-acre Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site operated as a pulp and tissue mill from 1926 through 2007. In 2005, the port acquired the property from the Georgia-Pacific Corporation and took on the responsibility of cleaning it up.

Contamination of the site is divided into two separate areas—the Pulp and Tissue Mill Area and Chlor-Alkali Area. The Pulp and Tissue Mill Area was cleaned up in 2016, the Lignin Operable Unit within the Chlor-Alkali Area was cleaned up in 2022, and the remainder of the Chlor-Alkali Area will be cleaned up next.

As the name suggests, the 36-acre Chlor-Alkali Area included a chlor-alkali plant that operated from 1965 to 1999. Mercury was used to produce chlorine and sodium hydroxide for mill operations, and petroleum was also stored there. These actions contaminated soil and groundwater.

Aerial view of the Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site


Georgia-Pacific Corporation, September 1958
Photo: WA State Archives


Georgia-Pacific Corporation, September 1981
Photo: WA State Archives

Contamination

Environmental investigations confirmed the following contaminants in soil and groundwater:

- **Soil:** mercury, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and petroleum hydrocarbons
- **Groundwater:** mercury, PAHs, petroleum hydrocarbons, elevated pH, and miscellaneous dissolved metals (arsenic, chromium, copper, and nickel)

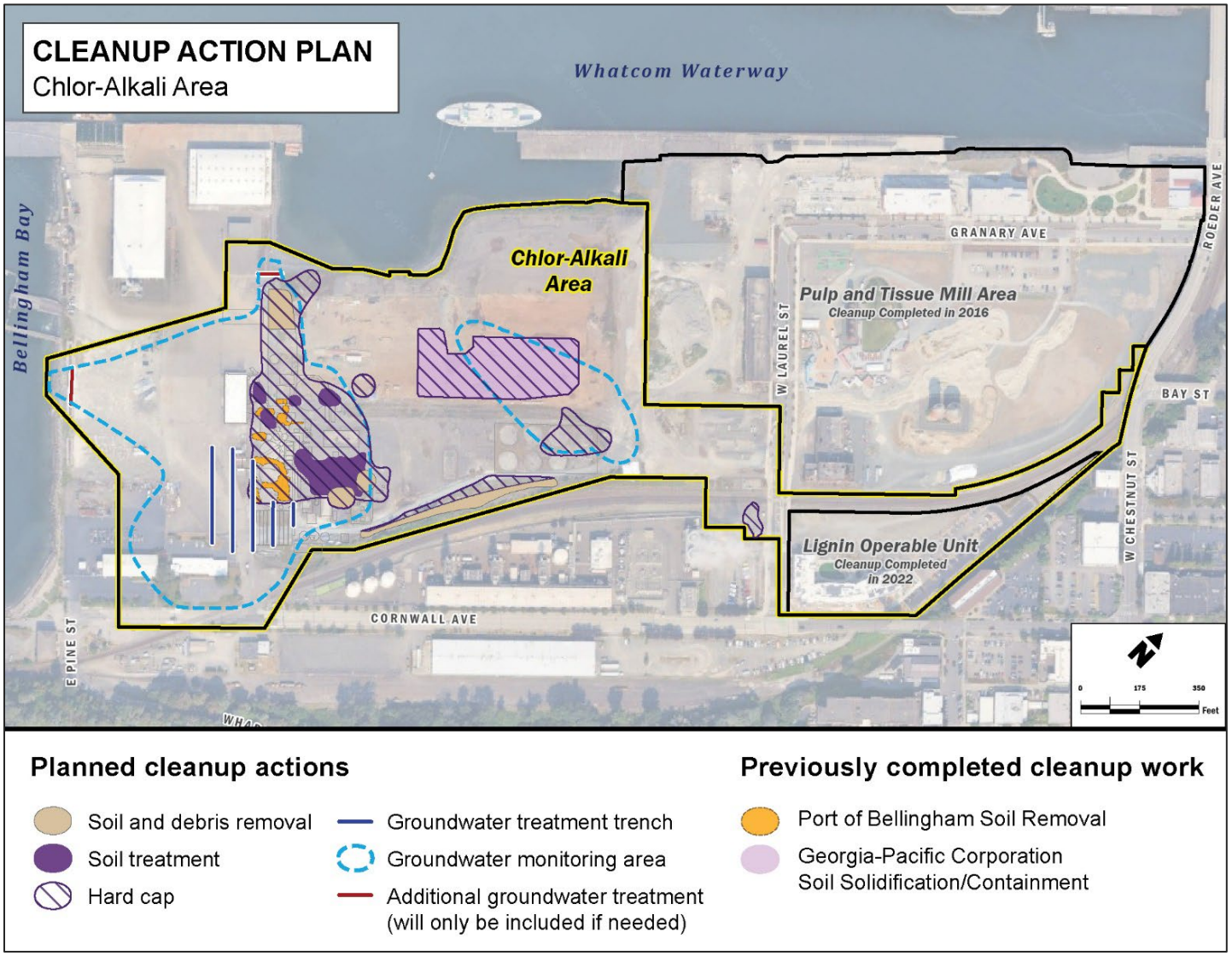
These contaminants are above cleanup levels and must be addressed to protect human health and the environment.

Cleanup Action Plan - required under the consent decree

The consent decree requires the port to implement Ecology's cleanup action plan, which was finalized after a previous public comment period. This plan includes the following actions that address contamination in the Chlor-Alkali Area of the Georgia-Pacific West site:

- Removing underground concrete beams, wooden piles, and other obstructions.
- Treating mercury-contaminated soil on site to reduce the possibility of mercury moving through the soil into groundwater and escaping as gas into the air.
- Removing and disposing of mercury-contaminated soil on the shore and shallow petroleum-contaminated soil.
- Placing a hard cap (or physical barrier) on top of any remaining contaminated soil above cleanup levels. This will prevent soil contact with people, plants and animals, limit rainfall from seeping into the soil, and prevent contaminants from reaching groundwater and Bellingham Bay.
- Treating groundwater to lower the high pH to prevent mercury from dissolving in and moving with groundwater.
- Monitoring groundwater to ensure natural processes reduce levels of contamination over time.
    - If needed, treating on-site groundwater to prevent contamination from reaching Bellingham Bay.

Ecology will also require site use controls that restrict certain activities and uses of the property to protect people and the environment.



Previously completed cleanup work

Over the years the Georgia-Pacific Corporation and the port cleaned up the following contamination in the Chlor-Alkali Area. These actions are included in the cleanup action plan.

Georgia-Pacific Corporation:

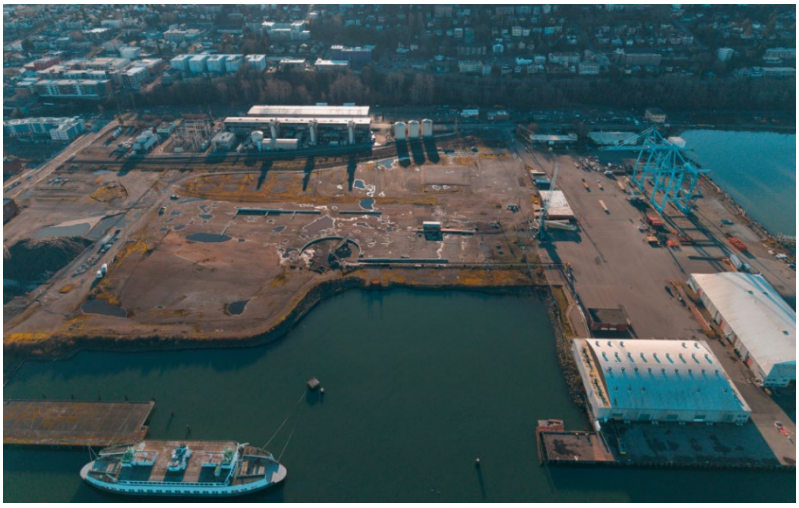
- **1976–1977:** 8,000 cubic yards of mercury-contaminated sludge from the wastewater settling basin was treated in place and contained in a 2-acre area.
- **1980:** The wastewater settling basin was decommissioned. Remaining mercury-contaminated sludge was removed, treated, and disposed of at a landfill. The basin was then filled with clean material.
- **1993–2002:** Several projects removed and disposed of mercury- and petroleum-contaminated soil.

Port of Bellingham:

- **2013–2014:** 4,410 tons of mercury-contaminated soil and structural debris was removed. The soil was treated on site, and all material was disposed of at a landfill.
- **2017:** 570 tons of mercury-contaminated soil and debris were treated on site and disposed of at a landfill.

What happens next?

Ecology will consider all the comments received during this public comment period and may make changes to the consent decree and public participation plan. If the documents require significant changes, we will hold another public comment period. If not, Ecology will finalize the documents. The next step includes cleaning up the remaining Chlor-Alkali Area of the site, which will happen in phases and take about three to five years.



Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site, Chlor-Alkali Area, 2026
Photo: Port of Bellingham

Cost and funding

The remaining cleanup work is expected to cost about $20 million.

The port is eligible for reimbursement of up to half of their costs from Ecology through the state's Remedial Action Grant Program,[1] which helps pay for the cleanup of publicly owned sites. The Legislature funds the grant program with revenues from a tax on hazardous substances.

Bellingham Bay Cleanup

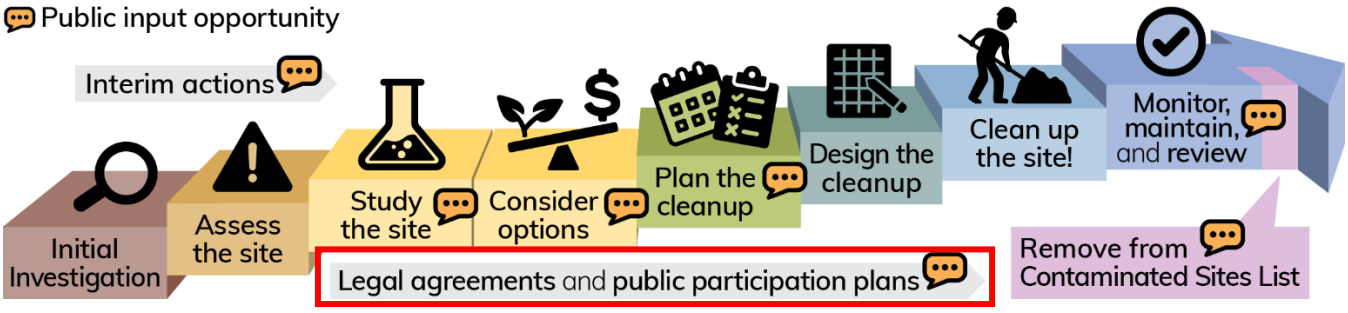
The Georgia-Pacific West site is one of 12 Bellingham Bay Cleanup sites[2] coordinated through the Bellingham Bay Action Team (BBAT). BBAT is a bay-wide multi-agency effort to clean up contaminated sediment, control sources of sediment contamination, and restore habitat, with consideration for land and water uses.

[1] https://ecology.wa.gov/grants-ORAG
[2] https://www.ecology.wa.gov/BellinghamBayCleanup

Ecology's cleanup process

The Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA)[3] is Washington's environmental cleanup law. It provides requirements for contaminated site cleanup and sets standards that protect human health and the environment. Ecology is responsible for administering MTCA, including the oversight or management of cleanups. The MTCA cleanup process[4] is completed in steps (see graphic below) over a variable timeline.

After the proposed legal agreement (consent decree) and updated public participation plan—both outlined in red below—are finalized for the Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site, the "clean up the site" step can proceed.



Washington's formal cleanup process

Automatic site updates

You can subscribe from the site's webpage.[5] You'll receive a weekly email if we change the site's status, add documents to the site's webpage, or open a comment period.

Language services

A translated copy of this material may be available in other languages at no cost. To request it, email Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov or call 425-240-4353. If you call, ask for an interpreter to be connected with one.

Español: Una copia traducida de este material podría estar disponible en otros idiomas sin costo. Para solicitarla, envíe un correo electrónico a Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov o llame al 425-240-4353.

[3] https://ecology.wa.gov/mtca
[4] https://ecology.wa.gov/mtca-process
[5] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2279

Toxics Cleanup Program
913 Squalicum Way, Unit 101
Bellingham, WA 98225

Georgia-Pacific West
Cleanup Site in Bellingham

Provide your feedback on documents about the cleanup.

Información en español incluida

Scan for details

Public Comment Period
12 a.m., June 1–11:59 p.m., July 1, 2026
www.go.ecology.wa.gov/GPWest

Join a Walking Tour & Open House
See details inside and online.

Aerial view of the Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site

ADA accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, email Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov, call (425) 240-4353, or dial 711 to call through the Washington Telecommunications Relay for services like text telephone (TTY). Visit Ecology.wa.gov/ADA for more accessibility information.