

Response to Comments

Consent Decree & Updated Public Participation Plan

Westman Marine Cleanup Site
Blaine, WA

Toxics Cleanup Program
Washington State Department of Ecology
Northwest Region Office
Shoreline, Washington

June 2026

DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY
State of Washington

Publication Information

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Cover photo credit

- Port of Bellingham

Related Information

- Cleanup Site ID: 2205
- Facility Site ID: 66519819

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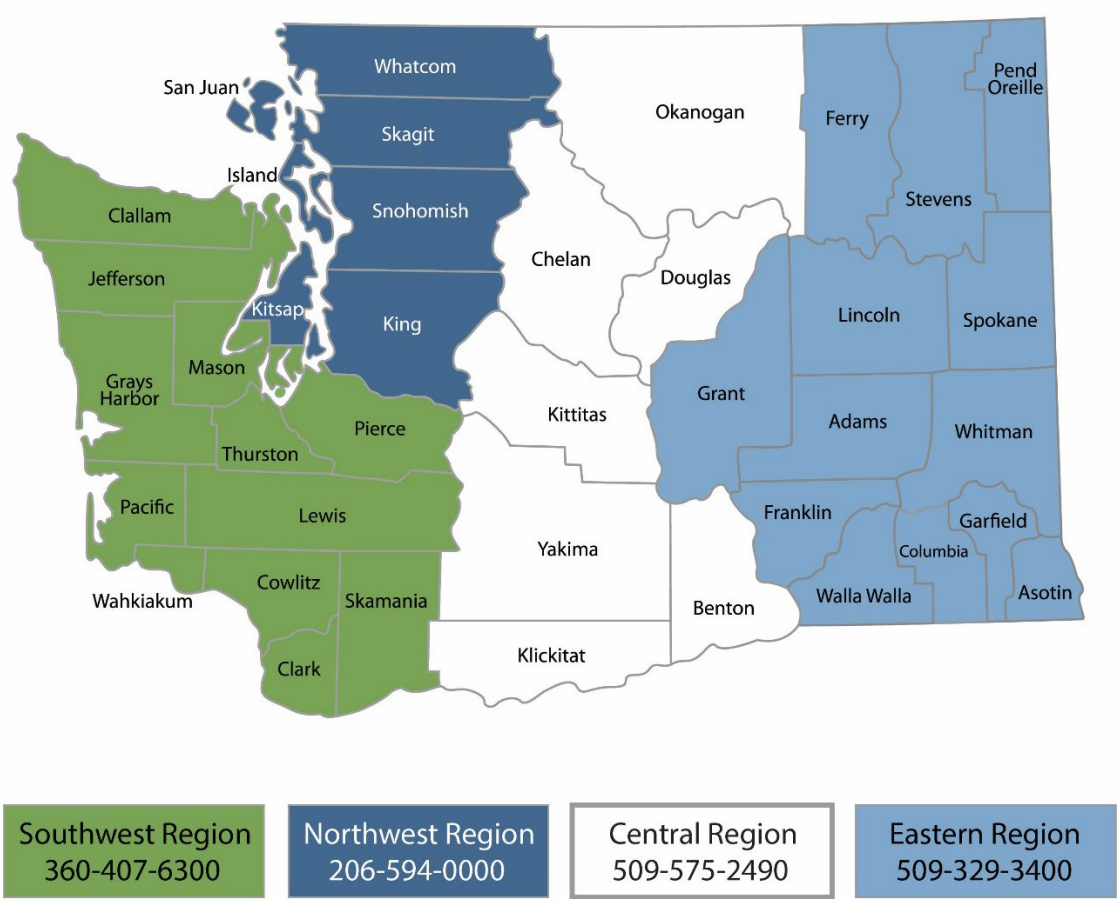
Language Access

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[1] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2205
[2] https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Who-we-are/Our-Programs/Toxics-Cleanup
[3] https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/accessibility-equity/accessibility

Department of Ecology's Region Offices

Map of Counties Served



Southwest Region 360-407-6300	Northwest Region 206-594-0000	Central Region 509-575-2490	Eastern Region 509-329-3400

Region	Counties served	Mailing Address	Phone
Southwest	Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Mason, Lewis, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum	PO Box 47775 Olympia, WA 98504	360-407-6300
Northwest	Island, King, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom	PO Box 330316 Shoreline, WA 98133	206-594-0000
Central	Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, Yakima	1250 W Alder St Union Gap, WA 98903	509-575-2490
Eastern	Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman	4601 N Monroe Spokane, WA 99205	509-329-3400
Headquarters	Across Washington	PO Box 47600 Olympia, WA 98504	360-407-6000

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Outreach Summary

The Westman Marine cleanup site, at 218 McMillan Avenue in the Blaine Harbor industrial area of Blaine, WA, is undergoing Washington State's formal cleanup process[4] as directed under the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA[5]). The WA State Department of Ecology is addressing contamination at the site.

Ecology's outreach activities related to this site's 30-day comment period (12:00 a.m., March 23 –11:59 p.m., April 21, 2026) included:

- **Fact Sheet:**
  - U.S. mail distribution of a fact sheet providing information about the cleanup documents and the comment period to 2,955 addresses including neighboring residents, businesses, and other interested parties.
  - Email distribution with links to the fact sheet (and documents) to over 200 people, including interested individuals, local/county/state/federal agencies, neighborhood associations, and interested community groups.
  - The fact sheet was available digitally through Ecology' cleanup site webpage[6] in English. Language access information was available in Spanish.
- **Legal Notices:**
  - Publication of one print legal ad in *The Bellingham Herald*,[7] dated Sunday, March 22, 2026.
  - Publication of a print and digital legal ad with *The Northern Light*,[8] dated Thursday, March 19, 2026.
- **Contaminated Site Register newsletter:**
  - Publication of three notices about the comment period in Ecology's *Contaminated Site Register*:[9]
    - March 19, 2026
    - April 2, 2026
    - April 16, 2026
  - Visit Ecology's Contaminated Site Register website[10] to download PDFs.
- **Media Notification:**
  - Ecology sent a media notice on Thursday, March 19, 2026, to *The Bellingham Herald*, *The Northern Light*, *Cascadia Daily News*, *My Bellingham Now*, *Whatcom Watch*, *The Planet Magazine* and *The Front* newspaper at Western Washington University, *Whatcom Watch*, *Whatcom News*, *Whatcom Talk, Northwest Citizen,*

[4] https://ecology.wa.gov/MTCA-process
[5] https://ecology.wa.gov/mtca
[6] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2205
[7] https://www.bellinghamherald.com
[8] https://www.thenorthernlight.com
[9] https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Guidance-technical-assistance/Site-Register-lists-and-data
[10] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/UIPages/PublicationList.aspx?IndexTypeName=Program&NameValue=Toxics+Cleanup&DocumentTypeName=Newsletter

KGMI radio, and KMRE radio.

- **Media Coverage:**
  - *My Bellingham Now* news article: March 20, 2026
  - *KGMI News/Talk 790* Facebook post: March 23, 2026
  - *The Northern Light* news article: March 25, 2026
  - *KPUG* radio, news article: March 2026 (no date)
  - *Working Waterfront Coalition, Waterfront Wednesday News* article: April 1, 2026
  - *Cascadia Daily News, Weekly Watchdog* listed under *Opportunities to Comment:* April 9, 2026

- **Video:**
  - Ecology posted a video[11] about the Westman Marine site on March 23, 2026, created and hosted by RE Sources, an Ecology Public Participation Grant[12] recipient.

- **Websites**:
  - Ecology announced the comment period, posted the fact sheet, and made the review documents available at the following webpages:
    - Ecology's cleanup site webpage[13]
    - Ecology's Public Inputs & Events webpage[14]

- **Document Repositories:**
  - Copies of the review documents and fact sheets were available for review at the Blaine Library.
  - Outreach materials also directed the public to contact Kristen Forkeutis, Outreach Specialist, for document review assistance.

[11] https://ecology.wa.gov/blog/october-2025/cleaning-up-planning-early-actions-to-manage-pfas-at-eastside-fire-rescue-headquarters
[12] https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/payments-contracts-grants/grants-loans/find-a-grant-or-loan/public-participation-grants
[13] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2205
[14] https://ecology.wa.gov/events/search/listing

Comment Summary

From 12:00 a.m., March 23 to 11:59 p.m., April 21, 2026, Ecology solicited comments on the Consent Decree and updated Public Participation Plan. The consent decree is a legal agreement between Ecology and the Port of Bellingham, requiring the port to carry out Ecology's Cleanup Action Plan to address contamination at the site. It also settles the ports' liability. The updated Public Participation Plan describes how Ecology will inform the community about the site activities and ways to become involved.

Ecology received three formal comments during the 30-day comment period.

Table 1: List of Commenters

	Date	First Name	Last Name	Agency, Organization, or Business	Submitted By
1	4/15/26	Anonymous	Anonymous		Individual
2	4/15/26	Derek	Benedict		Individual
3	4/20/26	Zdenek and Kathleen	Capson		Individual

Next Steps

Ecology has reviewed and considered the comments received on the consent decree and updated public participation plan. Based on Ecology's evaluation of the comments, no significant changes to the documents were necessary.

Ecology will finalize the documents and proceed with the cleanup for this site. See the graphic below and visit Ecology's cleanup process webpage.[15] to learn more about Washington's cleanup process.

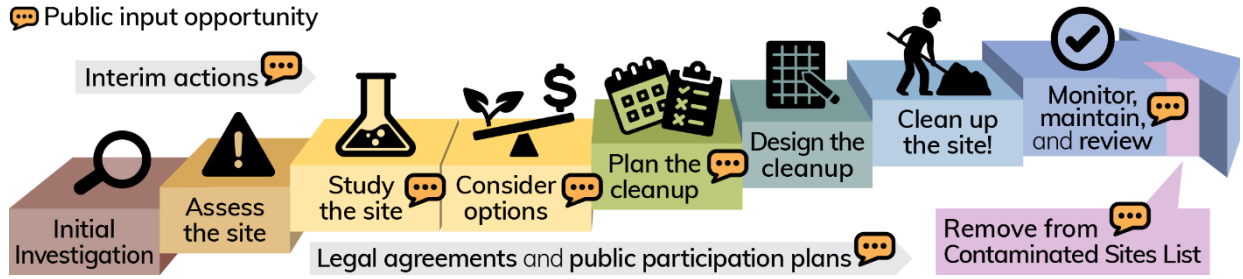


Figure 1: Washington's cleanup process

Public Comments and Responses

The public comments are presented below, along with Ecology's responses. The Appendix contains the comments in their original format.

Comment from: Anonymous, 4.15.26

Until very recently, this industrial development also resulted in the central waterfront area being largely off-limits to the public ever since, despite the fact that the City and Port of Bellingham currently own the land. While it's easy to feel separated from this legacy, it affects places Whatcom residents know and love. Even local favorite Boulevard Park was home to a coal-fired gas plant that left heavy metals and fossil fuel byproducts.

The toxic contamination and heavily modified shoreline make the waterfront hazardous to young salmon, which need clean, protected, and connected nearshore habitat to grow and make it to the open ocean. The decline of eelgrass beds and gravel beaches which act as nurseries for forage fish (which salmon need to eat) have put an additional stress on our dwindling salmon populations.

[15] https://ecology.wa.gov/MTCA-process

Bellingham's waterfront gives our community a unique opportunity to make something positive from former industrial areas. As we've seen from the completed cleanup at Waypoint Park in 2018 — complete with some young salmon habitat, new businesses, and a playground — it can and should be done.

Response:

Thank you for your comment. If we understand correctly, you may be referring to the Weldcraft Steel & Marine[16] cleanup site along the Bellingham Bay. This comment period was focused on the Westman Marine Inc[17] cleanup site in Blaine Harbor. These site names are similar and can be easily mixed up.

We do appreciate your feedback about the Bellingham Bay cleanup[18] and we're glad you are pleased with the completed cleanup at Waypoint Park. We recognize the challenges associated with a working waterfront, like Bellingham Bay, and are collaborating with all parties involved to ensure these cleanups protect people, wildlife, and the environment.

Comment from: Derek Benedict, 4.15.26

We MUST keep our pocket of NW America as healthy as we can --- and even improve the Eco-Enviro-system that the Evergreen State is renowned for!

Response:

Thank you for your comment. We agree that prioritizing the health of our pocket of Northwest America is imperative. We are working to do that through not only the Toxics Cleanup Program,[19] but all Ecology programs.[20]

Comment from: Zdenek and Kathleen Capson, 4.20.26

We support the Cleanup Action Plan for the Westman Marine cleanup site in the Blaine WA Marine Industrial Area as identified in the summary below. We understand that after the Department of Ecology considers public comments and finalizes the documents, the next step is cleaning up the site. This is an important project which should be completed as soon as possible. Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Zdenek and Kathleen Capson, Blaine residents since May, 1990.

Upland Cleanup Unit (upland)

[16] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/1785
[17] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2205
[18] https://ecology.wa.gov/spills-cleanup/contamination-cleanup/cleanup-sites/puget-sound/bellingham-bay
[19] https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/who-we-are/our-programs/toxics-cleanup
[20] https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/who-we-are/our-programs

- Remove the top 2 feet of contaminated soil and replace it with a cap (or cover) such as clean soil, asphalt, or concrete
- Remove upland marine side rails, sheds, and foundations to access contaminated soil
- The cleanup action plan incorporates an early partial cleanup (interim action) from 2014 when the Port removed and disposed of approximately 420 tons of contaminated soil.

Sediment Cleanup Unit (in-water)

- Install a new sheet pile bulkhead (retaining wall) to support sediment dredging along the shoreline and prevent erosion of contaminated soil into the marine areas
- Temporarily remove marine infrastructure to provide access for sediment dredging
- Dredge and dispose of contaminated sediment
- Perform compliance monitoring to ensure the cleanup continues to meet standards over time

Cost and funding

The remaining cleanup work is expected to cost about $28 million.

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

Response:

Thank you for your comments. Once the consent decree is finalized, the next step is cleaning up the site. This work will begin once funding is secured and will take about seven months. The upland work will begin after the majority of in-water work is completed. The upland work is expected to take approximately six months.

We appreciate your interest and concern in your community.

Appendix – Comments in Original Format

I-1:

Submit Date: 04/15/2026 3:05 PM
Submit Method: Website

Comment I-1-1

Until very recently, this industrial development also resulted in the central waterfront area being largely off-limits to the public ever since, despite the fact that the City and Port of Bellingham currently own the land. While it's easy to feel separated from this legacy, it affects places Whatcom residents know and love. Even local favorite Boulevard Park was home to a coal-fired gas plant that left heavy metals and fossil fuel byproducts.

The toxic contamination and heavily modified shoreline make the waterfront hazardous to young salmon, which need clean, protected, and connected nearshore habitat to grow and make it to the open ocean. The decline of eelgrass beds and gravel beaches which act as nurseries for forage fish (which salmon need to eat) have put an additional stress on our dwindling salmon populations.

Bellingham's waterfront gives our community a unique opportunity to make something positive from former industrial areas. As we've seen from the completed cleanup at Waypoint Park in 2018 — complete with some young salmon habitat, new businesses, and a playground — it can and should be done.

I-2: Derek Benedict

Submit Date: 04/15/2026 8:39 PM
Submit Method: Website

Comment I-2-1

We MUST keep our pocket of NW America as healthy as we can --- and even improve the Eco-Enviro-system that the Evergreen State is renowned for!

I-3: Zdenek and Kathleen Capson

Submit Date: 04/20/2026 9:39 PM
Submit Method: Website

Comment I-3-1

We support the Cleanup Action Plan for the Westman Marine cleanup site in the Blaine WA Marine Industrial Area as identified in the summary below. We understand that after the Department of Ecology considers public comments and finalizes the documents, the next step is cleaning up the site. This is an important project which should be completed as soon as possible. Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Zdenek and Kathleen Capson, Blaine residents since May, 1990.

Upland Cleanup Unit (upland)

- Remove the top 2 feet of contaminated soil and replace it with a cap (or cover) such as clean soil, asphalt, or concrete
- Remove upland marine side rails, sheds, and foundations to access contaminated soil

The cleanup action plan incorporates an early partial cleanup (interim action) from 2014 when the Port removed and disposed of approximately 420 tons of contaminated soil.

Sediment Cleanup Unit (in-water)

- Install a new sheet pile bulkhead (retaining wall) to support sediment dredging along the shoreline and prevent erosion of contaminated soil into the marine areas
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Cost and funding

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