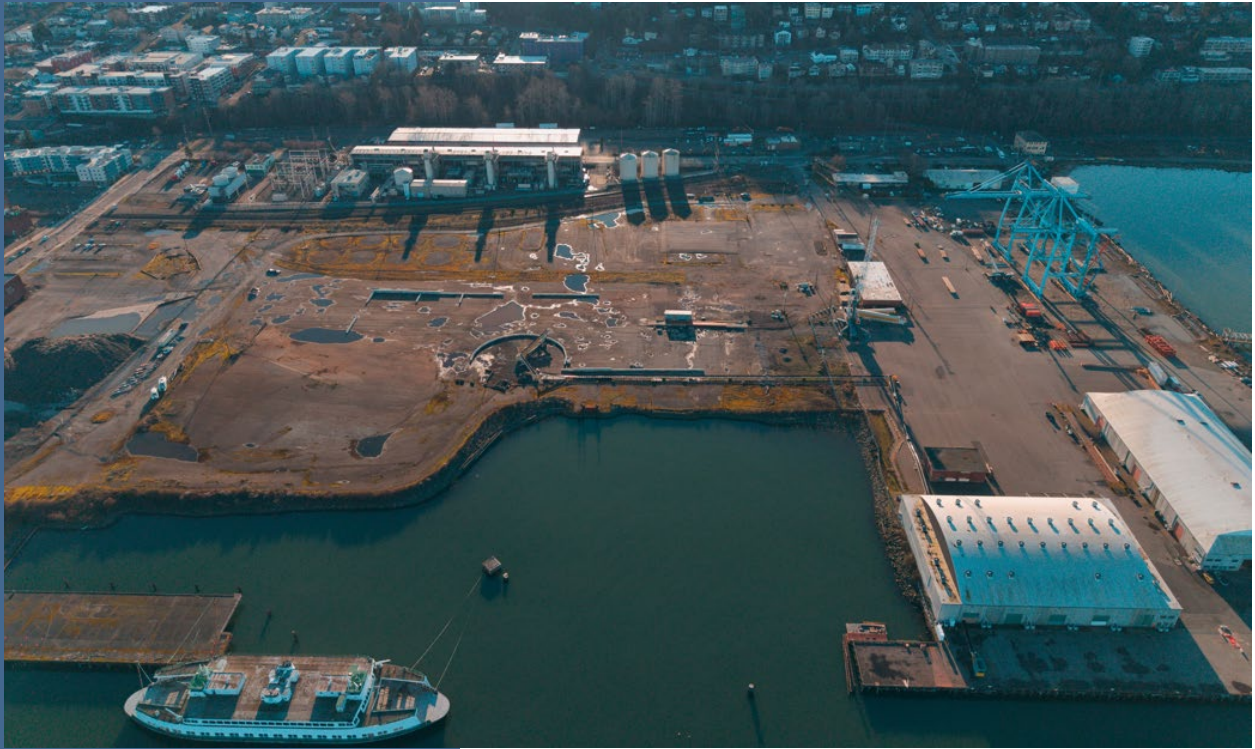




Response to Comments

Consent Decree & Updated Public Participation Plan

Georgia-Pacific West Cleanup Site Bellingham, WA

Toxics Cleanup Program

Washington State Department of Ecology
Bellingham Field Office
Bellingham, Washington

October 2026



DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

Publication Information

This document is available on the Department of Ecology's [Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site webpage](#).¹

Cover photo credit

- Port of Bellingham

Related Information

- Cleanup Site ID: 2279
- Facility Site ID: 14

Contact Information

[Toxics Cleanup Program](#)²

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ADA Accessibility

The Department of Ecology is committed to providing people with disabilities access to our information and services by meeting or exceeding the requirements of state and federal laws.

To request an ADA accommodation, email Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov, call (425) 240-4353, or call Ecology through the Washington Telecommunication Relay for services including text telephone (TTY) at 711 or through your preferred relay service provider. Visit [Ecology.wa.gov/ADA](https://ecology.wa.gov/ADA)³ for more accessibility information.

Language Access

The Department of Ecology is committed to providing language services, including translation and interpretation, for people whose primary language is not English. To request these services, email Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov or call (425) 240-4353. If you call, ask for an interpreter to be connected with one.

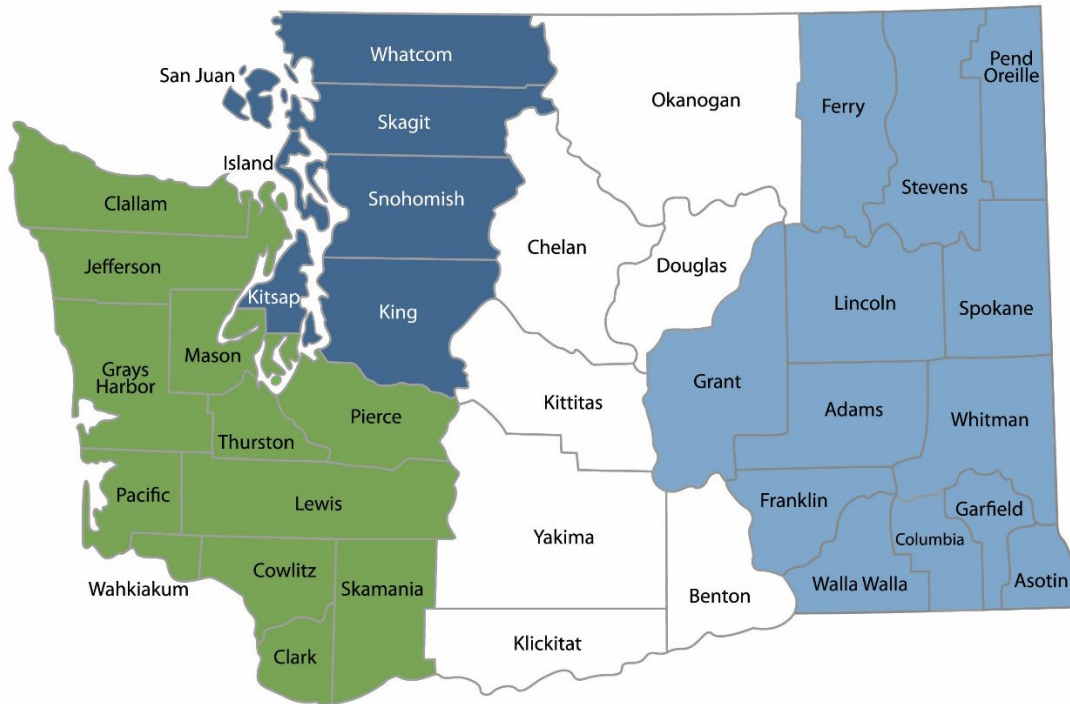
¹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2279>

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 Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site, at 300 West Laurel Street along the Bellingham waterfront, is undergoing Washington State's [formal cleanup process](#)⁴ as directed under the Model Toxics Control Act ([MTCA](#)⁵). The WA 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., June 1 – 11:59 p.m., July 1, 2026) included:

- **Fact Sheet:**
 - U.S. mail distribution of a fact sheet providing information about the cleanup documents and the comment period to 5,269 addresses including neighboring residents, businesses, and other interested parties.
 - Email distribution with links to the fact sheet (and documents) to over 350 people, including interested individuals, local/county/state/federal agencies, neighborhood associations, and interested community groups.
 - The fact sheet was available digitally through Ecology's [cleanup site webpage](#)⁶ in English. Language access information was available in Spanish.
- **Legal Notices:**
 - Publication of one legal print ad in [The Bellingham Herald](#),⁷ dated Sunday, May 31, 2026.
- **Contaminated Site Register newsletter:**
 - Publication of three notices about the comment period in Ecology's [Contaminated Site Register](#):⁸
 - May 28, 2026
 - June 11, 2026
 - June 25, 2026
 - Visit [Ecology's Contaminated Site Register website](#)⁹ to download PDFs.
- **Media Notification:**
 - Ecology sent a media notice on Monday, June 1, 2026, to the [Bellingham Herald](#),¹⁰ [Cascadia Daily News](#),¹¹ [My Bellingham Now](#),¹² [Whatcom News](#),¹³ [Whatcom Watch](#),¹⁴ [Northwest Citizen](#),¹⁵ KGMI 790 AM radio station, KMRE

⁴ <https://ecology.wa.gov/MTCA-process>

⁵ <https://ecology.wa.gov/mtca>

⁶ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2279>

⁷ <https://www.bellinghamherald.com>

⁸ <https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Guidance-technical-assistance/Site-Register-lists-and-data>

⁹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/UIPages/PublicationList.aspx?IndexTypeName=Program&NameValue=Toxics+Cleanup&DocumentTypeName=Newsletter>

¹⁰ <https://www.bellinghamherald.com>

¹¹ <https://www.cascadiadaily.com>

¹² <https://mybellinghamnow.com/>

¹³ <https://whatcom-news.com/>

¹⁴ <https://whatcomwatch.org/>

¹⁵ <https://www.nwcitizen.com/>

Community Radio, [Whatcom Talk](#),¹⁶ [Western Washington University's The Front newspaper](#),¹⁷ and [Western Washington University's The Planet magazine](#).¹⁸

- **Media Coverage:**
 - *My Bellingham Now* article: June 1, 2026
 - *Cascadia Daily News* article: June 1, 2026
- **Walking Tour & Open House:**
 - Ecology collaborated with RE Sources, an Ecology [Public Participation Grant](#)¹⁹ recipient, who hosted an on-site [walking tour](#)²⁰ on Wednesday, June 10, 2026, from 3:30–5 pm.
 - Ecology hosted an open house on Wednesday, June 10, 2026, to follow from 5–7pm at the Portal Container Village.
- **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](#)²¹
 - [Ecology's Public Inputs & Events webpage](#)²²
- **Document Repositories:**
 - Copies of the review documents and fact sheets were available for review at the Bellingham Library.
 - Outreach materials also directed the public to contact Kristen Forkeutis, Outreach Specialist, for document review assistance.

¹⁶ <https://www.whatcomtalk.com>

¹⁷ <https://www.thefrontonline.com/>

¹⁸ <https://www.theplanetmagazine.net/>

¹⁹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Payments-contracts-grants/Grants-loans/Find-a-grant-or-loan/Public-participation-grants>

²⁰ <https://www.re-sources.org/2026/05/gp-west-tour/>

²¹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2279>

²² <https://ecology.wa.gov/events/search/listing>

Comment Summary

From 12:00 a.m., June 1 to 11:59 p.m., July 1, 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 Chlor-Alkali Area of 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 seven 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	6/02/26	Amy	Armstrong		Individual
2	6/02/26	Lorraine	Delahoyde		Individual
3	6/07/26	Karl	Duscher		Individual
4	6/16/26	Jessica	Reed		Individual
5	6/17/26	Kim	Tisovovec		Individual
6	6/18/26	Janet	Higbee-Robinson		Individual
7	6/30/26	Kirsten	McDade	RE Sources	Organization

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](#)²³ to learn more about Washington's cleanup process.

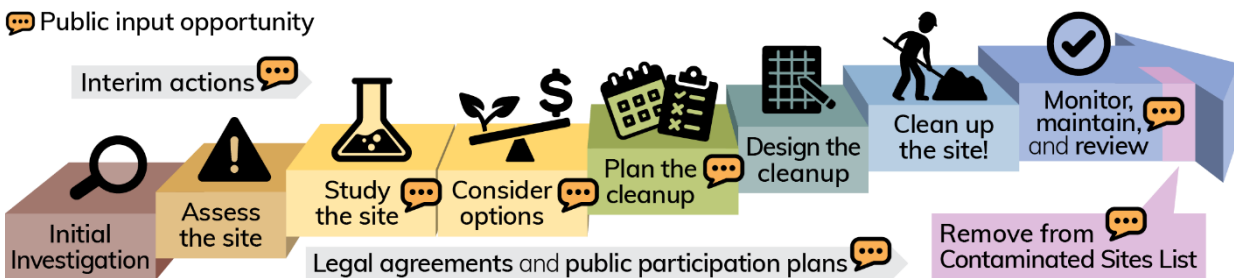


Figure 1: Washington's cleanup process

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: Amy Armstrong, 06.02.26

You have the opportunity to make more of the closed off water front more accessible in this city. Not sure if you are aware of how unwelcoming your city is regarding the access to the water, I hope you care. If you look at other major cities, they have made it a central gathering community for all to enjoy. The fact that you believe that it is a good business decision to have a garbage vehicle parking lot business taking up a huge area of prime waterfront is mind boggling. Your state and its leaders can do better, show us. You fall light years behind on many aspects of an enjoyable place to gather, do the right thing and make this a place that is offering families a reason to settle here.

Response:

Thank you for your comment. Under the [Model Toxics Control Act](#),²⁴ Ecology is responsible for overseeing the cleanup work of the Georgia-Pacific West site being managed by the Port of Bellingham. We direct the Port to make sure the cleanup work protects people and the

²³ <https://ecology.wa.gov/MTCA-process>

²⁴ <https://ecology.wa.gov/MTCA>

environment. However, we do not dictate how the property is used by the owner or subsequent owner—so long as that use does not impact the cleanup.

We encourage you to engage with both the City of Bellingham and the Port of Bellingham who are partnering to redevelop the Bellingham waterfront. The following links share information about their plans:

- [Waterfront District - City of Bellingham](#)²⁵
 - [2019-Waterfront-District-Sub-Area-Plan](#)²⁶
- [Final Waterfront District Master Plan Documents | Port of Bellingham, WA - Official Website](#)²⁷

To learn more about decisions being made on the local level and to voice your opinion, please review the following links with information about public meetings:

- [Council Meetings - City of Bellingham](#)²⁸
- [Attending Port Meetings | Port of Bellingham, WA - Official Website](#)²⁹

Comment from: Lorraine Delahoyde, 06.02.26

Bellingham seriously needs more free outdoor spaces for people to gather. The old mill site is the perfect location for a huge waterfront park that everyone could enjoy. The area should not be designed just as a profit-making venture for the city. Parks are for everyone and the mill site is a very desirable location for the cities new "livingroom".

Response:

Thank you for your comment. Please see our above response, which also addresses your comment.

Comment from: Karl Duscher, 06.07.26

Why does this require a unique public participation plan? Aren't there standard requirements for posting notices and inviting public comments regardless of the project?

Response:

Thank you for your comment. Under the [Model Toxics Control Act](#),²⁴ there are standard requirements for public notification and participation (see [WAC 173-340-600](#)³⁰). However, for

²⁵ <https://cob.org/services/planning/urban-villages/waterfront>

²⁶ <https://www.portofbellingham.com/DocumentCenter/View/9149/2019-Waterfront-District-Sub-Area-Plan>

²⁷ <https://www.portofbellingham.com/560/Final-Master-Plan-Documents>

²⁸ <https://cob.org/gov/council/meetings>

²⁹ <https://www.portofbellingham.com/188/Attending-Port-Meetings>

³⁰ <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=173-340-600>

each formal cleanup site that Ecology oversees or manages, we provide a public participation plan that outlines our location-based plans for public engagement.

Comment from: Jessica Reed, 06.16.26

Thank you for the public tour and open house. It was insightful! It is important to me as a community member that the cleanup stays transparent throughout its lifecycle. More events like the open house where we can hear what is going on, and understand what is happening right next door to housing, a beach, and multiple outdoor businesses (Trackside, Beach Cat, Jalepenos, etc.). Please stay transparent and provide opportunities for us to learn actively (ex. open houses) and passively (ex. Signage).

Additionally, it is important to me that the clean up takes place with a balance of safety and monetary cost. Just because an option is the lowest cost doesn't mean it should be chosen. This goes for cleanup methods and contractor selection, etc. We should select contractors who understand and will comply with local laws and will be transparent alongside the port and dept. of ecology. As you know, lower costs upfront may result in larger costs later on. Please select contractors carefully.

Lastly, it is imperative to be transparent and collaborative about the land use after clean up. Please keep the community well-informed before any land is sold, leased, or otherwise committed to an industrial company. With such close proximity to vulnerable spaces (land and water) we must choose appropriate companies to make good use of the property after clean up.

Thank you!!

Response:

Thank you for your comments.

We are glad that both the public tour and open house were insightful. As the Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site and other Bellingham Bay cleanup sites are entering the cleanup construction phase, we will strive to maintain transparency in the community. We plan to work with the Port of Bellingham and the City of Bellingham to hang signage about cleanup work and provide more opportunities for public engagement in the future. We are in the planning stages and welcome suggestions.

We recognize your concern about the selection of a contractor. The Port of Bellingham is responsible for selecting a contractor. They will put out public works bid solicitation and review all applicant proposals according to the Port's selection process. The chosen contractor is required to follow the design specifications for conducting work including how soil, water, and other materials generated during the cleanup are ultimately managed.

In terms of the land use after the cleanup, Ecology does not dictate how the property is used by the owner or subsequent owner—so long as that use does not impact the cleanup. Under the [Model Toxics Control Act](#),²⁴ Ecology is responsible for overseeing the cleanup work of the Georgia-Pacific West site by the Port of Bellingham. We direct the Port to make sure the cleanup work protects people and the environment.

We encourage you to engage with both the City of Bellingham and the Port of Bellingham who are partnering to redevelop the Bellingham waterfront. The following links share information about their plans:

- [Waterfront District - City of Bellingham](#)²⁵
 - [2019-Waterfront-District-Sub-Area-Plan](#)²⁶
- [Final Waterfront District Master Plan Documents | Port of Bellingham, WA - Official Website](#)²⁷

To learn more about decisions being made on the local level and to voice your opinion, please review the following links with information about public meetings:

- [Council Meetings - City of Bellingham](#)²⁸
- [Attending Port Meetings | Port of Bellingham, WA - Official Website](#)²⁹

Comment from: Kim Tisovovec, 06.17.26

With regard to how the Port of Bellingham has handled previous activity on the GP West property, and the lack of public disclosure, lack of follow through in clean up efforts in the recent past (toxic dirt pile left uncovered by Harcourt and Port of Bellingham which blows toxic dust from winds into Waypoint Park and container village, and the disastrous ABC Recycling mess), how will things be different?

The Port has not been willing to disclose information, let alone follow through with proper clean up.

I attended the walking tour and was very concerned with the fact that literally right next to the Chlor-Alkali proposed clean up they are allowing trucks to be driving and disturbing land where the clean up is taking place, industry (cranes, storage of materials that are being trucked in and out).

Since the wind tends to blow off of Bellingham Bay from the South, any toxins released blow toward the large community of downtown living, daycare facility, public park and container village, are we going to allow another bad idea - allowing industry within and next to a clean up site?

How will the Port of Bellingham be monitored regarding these issues?

Response:

Thank you for your comments.

All contaminants at the Georgia-Pacific cleanup site are currently contained so there is no exposure to people, plants, or animals. Even with the current activity taking place on the site, the underground contamination is not being disturbed. When the cleanup construction begins, best management practices will be implemented, and strict safety protocols will be followed to protect people, plants, and animals from being exposed to excavated contaminated materials.

Additionally, the uncovered piles of dirt from the Harcourt development have been subject to complex legal action between the Port and Harcourt. The soil was originally sampled in 2020 and 2021 and approved by Ecology to be suitable for reuse. It was stockpiled by Harcourt to be reused in future construction projects within two years. Due to the COVID pandemic and legal complications, reuse of the soil within this timeframe was not met.

On September 26, 2024, Ecology notified the Port that the storage of these excavated soils must be removed. Subsequently, the Port and Harcourt entered into a Stockpile and Material Removal and Arbitration Agreement (dated October 15, 2024) requiring Harcourt to remove and appropriately dispose of a minimum of 250 tons of soil weekly with all 39,000 tons of soil to be removed within two years. As of May 2025, Harcourt stopped all actions to remove the soil.

The Port has taken on the responsibility for managing the soil stockpiles. The Port wishes to use the stockpiled soil for the cleanup of the Chlor Alkali Area as general fill and/or environmental capping material in the Log Pond area, or placed underneath the hard capped areas, as outlined in Ecology's 2021 [Cleanup Action Plan](#).³¹ In June 2026, the Port (with Ecology oversight) collected additional samples from the stockpiled material and results confirmed the material is suitable for reuse. Other geotechnical specifications of the soil will need to be met to determine how and where it could be used. In the meantime, Ecology is working closely with the Port to ensure the stockpiles are properly managed. At our request, the Port has agreed to cover the piles while they determine future uses.

In terms of the land use after the cleanup, Ecology does not dictate how the property is used by the owner or subsequent owner—so long as that use does not impact the cleanup. Under the [Model Toxics Control Act](#),²⁴ Ecology is responsible for overseeing the cleanup work of the Georgia-Pacific West site by the Port of Bellingham. We direct the Port to make sure the cleanup work protects people and the environment.

We encourage you to engage with both the City of Bellingham and the Port of Bellingham who are partnering to redevelop the Bellingham waterfront. The following links share information about their plans:

- [Waterfront District - City of Bellingham](#)²⁵
 - [2019-Waterfront-District-Sub-Area-Plan](#)²⁶
- [Final Waterfront District Master Plan Documents | Port of Bellingham, WA - Official Website](#)²⁷

³¹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/document/105055>

To learn more about decisions being made on the local level and to voice your opinion, please review the following links with information about public meetings:

- [Council Meetings - City of Bellingham](#)²⁸
- [Attending Port Meetings | Port of Bellingham, WA - Official Website](#)²⁹

Moving forward, Ecology will continue to work with the Port to oversee the effective cleanup of the site, in conjunction with the entire Bellingham Bay cleanup. All site documents are posted to the [cleanup site webpage](#)⁶ once complete, and the public is welcome to contact Ecology to ask questions about the site and/or request a copy of working documents, which are subject to public disclosure.

Comment from: Janet Higbee-Robinson, 06.18.26

Of utmost concern should be discontinuing any further pollution of the Salish Sea and restoration of habitat via bioswale implementation. I attended the walking tour and heard little information about inclusion of natural forces to recharge waters, and soils and to improve air quality. A real effort to employ best practices regarding planting of native species and encouraging fungal activity is not only essential for fish, birds, pollinators, etc... but for humans recreating and living closeby. More industry that will stir up residual pollutants is not ideal for this place.

Response:

Thank you for your comment. We agree that mitigating further pollution of the Salish Sea and restoring habitat is extremely important. In fact, since 1996, the Bellingham Bay Action Team, co-managed by us and the Port of Bellingham, has been working together to coordinate the cleanup of contaminated sediments, control sources of pollution impacting sediments, and restore habitat, with consideration for land and water uses. It includes 12 agencies from federal, Tribal, state, and local governments, and Georgia-Pacific Corporation. In 2000, participants in this initiative developed the [Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy](#),³² which is used to guide our work today.

As part of the [Bellingham Bay cleanup](#),³³ which includes the Georgia-Pacific West site, future restoration of shorelines and marine sediment is planned. This includes the improvement of habitat quality by removing existing creosote-treated structures, reducing overwater cover, removing shoreline debris, and reconstructing shoreline slopes in a manner that provides expanded areas of valuable nearshore intertidal and shallow subtidal habitat along migration corridors for juvenile salmonids. A major component of the Georgia-Pacific West cleanup is restoring the shoreline while preventing mercury contamination from migrating with

³² <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/document/8276>

³³ <https://ecology.wa.gov/spills-cleanup/contamination-cleanup/cleanup-sites/puget-sound/bellingham-bay>

groundwater to the marine ecosystem. In addition, the Port is regulated by Ecology's [water quality permits](#).³⁴ that manage how stormwater enters the environment.

Under the [Model Toxics Control Act](#),²⁴ Ecology will work to make sure the cleanup of the Georgia-Pacific West site protects people and the environment. In terms of the land use after the cleanup, Ecology does not dictate how the property is used by the owner or subsequent owner—so long as that use does not impact the cleanup. If you have concerns about land use decisions, we encourage you to engage with both the City of Bellingham and the Port of Bellingham who are partnering to redevelop the Bellingham waterfront. The following links share information about their plans:

- [Waterfront District - City of Bellingham](#)²⁵
 - [2019-Waterfront-District-Sub-Area-Plan](#)²⁶
- [Final Waterfront District Master Plan Documents | Port of Bellingham, WA - Official Website](#)²⁷

To learn more about decisions being made on the local level and to voice your opinion, please review the following links with information about public meetings:

- [Council Meetings - City of Bellingham](#)²⁸
- [Attending Port Meetings | Port of Bellingham, WA - Official Website](#)²⁹

Comment from: RE Sources (Kirsten McDade)

To: John Rapp john.rapp@ecy.wa.gov
Site Manager

Kristen Forkeutis
kristen.forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov
Public Involvement Coordinator

Transmitted Via Public Comment Form: <https://ecology.commentinput.com/?id=uFVkhSMtE>

30 June 2026

RE: Georgia Pacific West Cleanup Site - Chlor-Alkali RAU Consent Decree

Dear John Rapp and Kristen Forkeutis,

Thank you for taking the time to consider our comment on the Consent Decree for the Georgia Pacific (GP) West Chlor-Alkali Remedial Action Unit (RAU). We appreciate all the work that has

³⁴ <https://ecology.wa.gov/water-shorelines/water-quality/water-quality-permits>

been done to clean up this site and the work that will be done in the future to finalize the cleanup. We would like an additional cleanup effort to be added to this Consent Decree — the dirt piles taken from the Georgia Pacific West Pulp and Tissue Mill RAU that are currently piled on the GP West Chlor-Alkali RAU.

RE Sources is a non-profit organization located in northwest Washington and founded in 1982. We mobilize people in Northwest Washington to build just and thriving communities and to protect the land, water and climate on which we all depend. Our priority programs include Protecting the Salish Sea, Freshwater Restoration, Climate Action, and Fighting Pollution—all critical issues affecting our region.

As a part of the condominiums currently being built by Harcourt on the northwestern edge of the GP West Pulp and Tissue Mill RAU, adjacent to Waypoint Park, large amounts of dirt and sediment were removed and placed on nearby land which is a part of the GP West Chlor-Alkali RAU (see screenshot below). The piles have been sitting there for over five years with no clear plan to address them (see photos below). Because the dirt originated from a MTCA cleanup site, it is probable that they are contaminated with metals, petroleum, dioxins and furans, and other contaminants both regulated and not. Sediment, contaminated or not, are hazardous to lungs and gills.

Community members have regularly witnessed the wind suspending dirt from these piles onto the surrounding land and water. This is concerning because this is basically recontaminating areas that have already gone through an extensive and expensive cleanup effort, not to mention the hazards it poses to people and wildlife. Just down wind of these piles, are very popular public spaces: Waypoint Park, a pump track, an event space, and the Port Container Village. Recent events such as the No Kings Rally, the Shoestring circus, and the FIFA World Cup watch parties have attracted 100s and 1000s of people to this space. Additionally, habitat improvements on the shoreline and in the water have likely attracted more wildlife to the area. People and wildlife are exposed to the contaminants in these dirt piles.

We are requesting that a cleanup plan for the dirt piles be added to this Consent Decree. Included in this plan should be: characterization of the dirt piles for contaminants, responsible party for the cleanup determined, method of cleanup explained, and ultimate fate of the dirt piles. It made sense, at the time, to temporarily place the contaminated dirt on the GP Chlor-Alkali site because it had not been cleaned up yet. But now, after more than five years, with no evident action on their maintenance, the dirt piles should now be formally considered a part of the GP Chlor-Alkali RAU cleanup.

The Consent Decree claims that “This Third Amendment contains a program designed to protect human health and the environment from the known release, or threatened release, of hazardous substances or contaminants at, on, or from the Site. All remedial action(s) conducted by Defendant at the Site shall be done in accordance with WAC 173-340.” To fulfill this amendment, these dirt piles should be added to the cleanup, because they may be releasing hazardous substances or contaminants on the Site.

If putting the cleanup of these dirt piles into this Consent Decree is not possible, we still ask that the requests above be carried out in a timely manner (months not years): characterization of the dirt piles for contaminants, responsible party for the cleanup determined, method of cleanup explained, and ultimate fate of the dirt piles. We also request that this information be made public. There is a lot of concern from the public about the hazards of these piles and people want to know.

Thank you for considering our request and all the hard work that goes into cleaning up these complicated sites.

Sincerely,

Kirsten McDade
North Sound Waterkeeper

Screenshot: Approximate location of dredge spoil piles



Photos 1 and 2: Dredge spoil piles on 02/18/2021, over 5 years ago:



Response:

Thank you for your comments.

We acknowledge your request that a cleanup plan for the dirt piles be added to the Consent Decree for the Chlor-Alkali Area. However, the [2014 Consent Decree](#)³⁵ and its exhibits for the Pulp and Tissue Mill Area (filed in the matter of *State of Washington, Department of Ecology v. Port of Bellingham*, Whatcom County Superior Court No. 14-2-02700-8) already account for the management of excavated soils, such as those soils which are currently stored in the Pulp and Tissue Mill Area. The portion of the Georgia Pacific West cleanup site referred to as the Pulp Tissue Mill Remedial Action Unit (PTM RAU) is subject to the requirements and restriction found in the Consent Decree, which includes a provision for the temporary stockpiling of soil from development projects with subsequent reuse within the project area beneath new capping (i.e. asphalt or building footprints). The piles in question are also subject to the terms of a Contaminated Materials Management Plan (CMMP) for the site, which is included as Exhibit E to the First Amendment to the Consent Decree.

The estimated 20,000 cubic yards of soil stockpiled in the PTM RAU have been subject to a complex legal action between the Port and Harcourt. The soil was generated from the ongoing redevelopment area located northwest of Granary Avenue and between West Laurel Street and Roeder Avenue. The soil was originally sampled in 2020 and 2021 and approved by Ecology to be suitable for reuse. For soil to be reused, its contaminant levels must be low enough that MTCA would not require cleanup. The soil was stockpiled on Port property by Harcourt to be reused in future construction projects within two years. Due to the COVID pandemic and legal complications, reuse of the soil within this timeframe was not met.

On September 26, 2024, Ecology notified the Port that the storage of these excavated soils violated the terms of the CMMP and must be removed. Subsequently, the Port and Harcourt entered into a Stockpile and Material Removal and Arbitration Agreement (dated October 15, 2024) requiring Harcourt to remove and appropriately dispose of a minimum of 250 tons of soil weekly with all 39,000 tons of soil to be removed within two years. As of May 2025, Harcourt stopped all actions to remove the soil.

The Port has taken on the responsibility for managing the soil stockpiles. The Port wishes to use the stockpiled soil for the cleanup of the Chlor Alkali Area as general fill and/or environmental capping material in the Log Pond area, or placed underneath the hard capped areas, as outlined in Ecology's 2021 [Cleanup Action Plan](#).³¹ In June 2026, the Port (with Ecology oversight) collected additional samples from the stockpiled material and results confirmed the material is suitable for reuse. Other geotechnical specifications of the soil will need to be met to determine how and where it could be used.

The stockpiled soil is already subject to the [Consent Decree](#)³⁵ and its exhibits for the Pulp and Tissue Mill Area; therefore, adding the management of these soils to the Chlor Alkali Area

³⁵ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/document/50505>

Consent Decree is not necessary. However, Ecology is working closely with the Port to ensure the stockpiles are properly managed. At our request, the Port has agreed to cover the piles while they determine future uses.

Appendix – Comments in Original Format

I-1: Amy ARMSTRONG**City:** Ferndale**State:** WA**Submit Date:** 06/02/2026 7:58 AM**Submit Method:** Website

Comment I-1-1

You have the opportunity to make more of the closed off water front more accessible in this city. Not sure if you are aware of how unwelcoming your city is regarding the access to the water, I hope you care. If you look at other major cities, they have made it a central gathering community for all to enjoy. The fact that you believe that it is a good business decision to have a garbage vehicle parking lot business taking up a huge area of prime waterfront is mind boggling. Your state and its leaders can do better, show us. You fall light years behind on many aspects of an enjoyable place to gather, do the right thing and make this a place that is offering families a reason to settle here.

I-2: Lorraine Delahoyde**City:** Bellingham**State:** WA**Submit Date:** 06/02/2026 3:15 PM**Submit Method:** Website

Comment I-2-1

Bellingham seriously needs more free outdoor spaces for people to gather. The old mill site is the perfect location for a huge waterfront park that everyone could enjoy. The area should not be designed just as a profit-making venture for the city. Parks are for everyone and the mill site is a very desirable location for the cities new "livingroom".

I-3: karl duscher**City:** Lynden**State:** DE**Submit Date:** 06/07/2026 11:07 AM**Submit Method:** Website

Comment I-3-1

Why does this require a unique public participation plan? Aren't there standard requirements for posting notices and inviting public comments regardless of the project?

I-4: Jessica Reed**City:** Bellingham**State:** WA

Submit Date: 06/16/2026 7:49 AM

Submit Method: Website

Comment I-4-1

Thank you for the public tour and open house. It was insightful! It is important to me as a community member that the cleanup stays transparent throughout its lifecycle. More events like the open house where we can hear what is going on, and understand what is happening right next door to housing, a beach, and multiple outdoor businesses (Trackside, Beach Cat, Jalepenos, etc.). Please stay transparent and provide opportunities for us to learn actively (ex. open houses) and passively (ex. Signage).

Additionally, it is important to me that the clean up takes place with a balance of safety and monetary cost. Just because an option is the lowest cost doesn't mean it should be chosen. This goes for cleanup methods and contractor selection, etc. We should select contractors who understand and will comply with local laws and will be transparent alongside the port and dept. of ecology. As you know, lower costs upfront may result in larger costs later on. Please select contractors carefully.

Lastly, it is imperative to be transparent and collaborative about the land use after clean up. Please keep the community well-informed before any land is sold, leased, or otherwise committed to an industrial company. With such close proximity to vulnerable spaces (land and water) we must choose appropriate companies to make good use of the property after clean up.

Thank you!!

I-5: Kim Tisovovec

City: Bellingham

State: WA

Submit Date: 06/17/2026 9:13 AM

Submit Method: Website

Comment I-5-1

With regard to how the Port of Bellingham has handled previous activity on the GP West property, and the lack of public disclosure, lack of follow through in clean up efforts in the recent past (toxic dirt pile left uncovered by Harcourt and Port of Bellingham which blows toxic dust from winds into Waypoint Park and container village, and the disastrous ABC Recycling mess), how will things be different?

The Port has not been willing to disclose information, let alone follow through with proper clean up.

I attended the walking tour and was very concerned with the fact that literally right next to the Chlor-Alkali proposed clean up they are allowing trucks to be driving and disturbing land where the clean up is taking place, industry (cranes, storage of materials that are being trucked in and

out).

Since the wind tends to blow off of Bellingham Bay from the South, any toxins released blow toward the large community of downtown living, daycare facility, public park and container village, are we going to allow another bad idea - allowing industry within and next to a clean up site?

How will the Port of Bellingham be monitored regarding these issues?

I-6: Janet Higbee-Robinson

City: Bellingham

State: DE

Submit Date: 06/18/2026 7:44 AM

Submit Method: Website

Comment I-6-1

Of utmost concern should be discontinuing any further pollution of the Salish Sea and restoration of habitat via bioswale implementation. I attended the walking tour and heard little information about inclusion of natural forces to recharge waters, and soils and to improve air quality. A real effort to employ best practices regarding planting of native species and encouraging fungal activity is not only essential for fish, birds, pollinators, etc... but for humans recreating and living closeby. More industry that will stir up residual pollutants is not ideal for this place.

Org-1: RE Sources (Kirsten McDade)

City: Bellingham

State: WA

Submit Date: 06/30/2026 1:58 PM

Submit Method: Website

Comment Org-1-1

Please see attached comment letter.

To: John Rapp
john.rapp@ecy.wa.gov
Site Manger

Kristen Forkeutis
kristen.forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov
Public Involvement Coordinator

Transmitted Via Public Comment Form: <https://ecology.commentinput.com/?id=uFVkJHsMtE>

30 June 2026

RE: Georgia Pacific West Cleanup Site - Chlor-Alkali RAU Consent Decree

Dear John Rapp and Kristen Forkeutis,

Thank you for taking the time to consider our comment on the Consent Decree for the Georgia Pacific (GP) West Chlor-Alkali Remedial Action Unit (RAU). We appreciate all the work that has been done to clean up this site and the work that will be done in the future to finalize the cleanup. We would like an additional cleanup effort to be added to this Consent Decree — the dirt piles taken from the Georgia Pacific West Pulp and Tissue Mill RAU that are currently piled on the GP West Chlor-Alkali RAU.

RE Sources is a non-profit organization located in northwest Washington and founded in 1982. We mobilize people in Northwest Washington to build just and thriving communities and to protect the land, water and climate on which we all depend. Our priority programs include Protecting the Salish Sea, Freshwater Restoration, Climate Action, and Fighting Pollution—all critical issues affecting our region.

As a part of the condominiums currently being built by Harcourt on the northwestern edge of the GP West Pulp and Tissue Mill RAU, adjacent to Waypoint Park, large amounts of dirt and sediment were removed and placed on nearby land which is a part of the GP West Chlor-Alkali RAU (see screenshot below). The piles have been sitting there for over five years with no clear plan to address them (see photos below). Because the dirt originated from a MTCA cleanup site, it is probable that they are contaminated with metals, petroleum, dioxins and furans, and other contaminants both regulated and not. Sediment, contaminated or not, are hazardous to lungs and gills.

Community members have regularly witnessed the wind suspending dirt from these piles onto the surrounding land and water. This is concerning because this is basically

recontaminating areas that have already gone through an extensive and expensive cleanup effort, not to mention the hazards it poses to people and wildlife. Just down wind of these piles, are very popular public spaces: Waypoint Park, a pump track, an event space, and the Port Container Village. Recent events such as the No Kings Rally, the Shoestring circus, and the FIFA World Cup watch parties have attracted 100s and 1000s of people to this space. Additionally, habitat improvements on the shoreline and in the water have likely attracted more wildlife to the area. People and wildlife are exposed to the contaminants in these dirt piles.

We are requesting that a cleanup plan for the dirt piles be added to this Consent Decree. Included in this plan should be: characterization of the dirt piles for contaminants, responsible party for the cleanup determined, method of cleanup explained, and ultimate fate of the dirt piles. It made sense, at the time, to temporarily place the contaminated dirt on the GP Chlor-Alkali site because it had not been cleaned up yet. But now, after more than five years, with no evident action on their maintenance, the dirt piles should now be formally considered a part of the GP Chlor-Alkali RAU cleanup.

The Consent Decree claims that "This Third Amendment contains a program designed to protect human health and the environment from the known release, or threatened release, of hazardous substances or contaminants at, on, or from the Site. All remedial action(s) conducted by Defendant at the Site shall be done in accordance with WAC 173-340." To fulfill this amendment, these dirt piles should be added to the cleanup, because they may be releasing hazardous substances or contaminants on the Site.

If putting the cleanup of these dirt piles into this Consent Decree is not possible, we still ask that the requests above be carried out in a timely manner (months not years): characterization of the dirt piles for contaminants, responsible party for the cleanup determined, method of cleanup explained, and ultimate fate of the dirt piles. We also request that this information be made public. There is a lot of concern from the public about the hazards of these piles and people want to know.

Thank you for considering our request and all the hard work that goes into cleaning up these complicated sites.

Sincerely,

Kirsten McDade
North Sound Waterkeeper

Screenshot: Approximate location of dredge spoil piles



Photos 1 and 2: Dredge spoil piles on 02/18/2021, over 5 years ago:



