DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY
State of Washington

Little Squalicum Park

Toxics Cleanup Program **May 2009**

Site investigation completed, draft report available

The Washington Department of Ecology would like to share the results of an investigation of contamination at Little Squalicum Park.

The 21-acre site is on the northeast end of Bellingham's waterfront. Portions of the site require cleanup because they are contaminated at levels that exceed state cleanup standards. Exposure to contaminants at these levels poses some risk to human health and the environment.

Potential sources of contamination include past operations at the Oeser Co. (a wood treating facility next to the park), stormwater from nearby roads and homes, and historic sand and gravel mining on what is now park property. Remains of a garbage landfill operated in the 1930s also occupy a portion of the site.

Contaminants of concern

Contaminants that likely came from wood treatment operations include petroleum hydrocarbons, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), pentachlorophenol (PCP), dioxins and furans.

Heavy metals and some petroleum hydrocarbons found at the site may have come from neighborhood and street runoff. Machinery formerly used in sand and gravel operations at the site also may have contributed some petroleum hydrocarbons. Heavy metals also were found in the historic landfill and in the area of a planned West Illinois Street extension.

Ownership and oversight

The city of Bellingham operates Little Squalicum Park. The city owns 8.7 acres of the park and leases 12.3 acres from Whatcom County. Under the terms of a 2005 legal agreement between the city and Ecology, the city hired a consultant to produce the site investigation report, called a remedial investigation, with Ecology oversight. The purpose of the investigation is to identify the nature and extent of contamination. It is a requirement of state toxics cleanup laws.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is overseeing cleanup at the neighboring Oeser property, a Superfund site. Superfund is the federal program to clean up hazardous waste. Results of this

Presentation and open house

7-9 p.m., Wednesday, June 10, 2009
Bellingham Technical College
Bldg G, Conference Room 102A
3028 Lindburg Ave., Bellingham WA

Public comment welcome through July 6, 2009

Please note that this is not a formal public comment period.

Send comments and technical questions to:

Mary O'Herron - Site Manager
WA Dept. of Ecology
1440 10th St., Ste. 102
Bellingham, WA 98225
Phone: 360-715-5224
E-mail: mohe461@ecy.wa.gov

DOCUMENT REVIEW LOCATIONS

WA Dept. of Ecology
1440 10th St., Ste. 102
Bellingham, WA 98225
Phone: 360-715-5200
Hours: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Mon.-Fri.

Bellingham Public Library
210 Central Ave.
Bellingham, WA 98227
Phone: 360-778-7323
Hours: Mon.-Thurs. 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Fri.-Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Sun. 1-5 p.m.

Ecology's Toxics Cleanup Website
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/blhm_bay/sites/Little_Squalicum/Little_Squalicum_hp.htm

Facility Site ID #: 7551533

recently-completed Ecology investigation and other studies at the park site show contamination along the creek exceeds levels that trigger EPA's involvement. EPA is assuming oversight of all but the landfill portion of the Little Squalicum Park site as part of the Oeser Superfund cleanup.

Public invited to review documents

Ecology is ready to share the results of the draft Little Squalicum Park Remedial Investigation. Although a formal comment period will not be offered, comments and questions are welcome.

You are invited to:

- **Review** the Little Squalicum Park Remedial Investigation.
- **Attend** a public presentation and open house June 10, 2009. See Page 1 for details.
- **Send** your comments and questions to Ecology by July 6. Because this is not a formal comment period, Ecology will not issue formal responses to comments. However, comments and questions will be considered by Ecology, and they will be part of Ecology's site file, along with the draft document. Ecology also will forward the draft document and all comments to EPA for consideration in the Superfund cleanup action.

See the box at the right of Page 1 for details about where to view documents and send comments.

Overview of remedial investigation

A remedial investigation looks for and analyzes contamination in soil, groundwater, surface water and sediments.

In addition to the remedial investigation, Ecology originally planned to provide a feasibility study of cleanup alternatives. When it appeared that EPA would take on park contamination issues, Ecology chose to produce the remedial investigation as a stand-alone document.

Completing the remedial investigation fulfills Ecology's commitment to neighboring property owners that the agency would examine the nature and extent of contamination while the site was in Ecology's jurisdiction.

Where contaminants were found

Investigators' field work and data evaluations showed:

- Soil, groundwater, sediment and surface water on much of the site contain contaminants from stormwater discharges and historic operations at the Oeser plant.
- The highest levels of petroleum hydrocarbons, PAHs, PCPs, dioxins and furans are in soils and groundwater in the upper creek and in an area formerly occupied by the creek before it was redirected.
- PAHs and PCPs in the upper creek area contaminate about 1.2 acres -- extending from Oeser/Birchwood and Bellingham Technical College/Birchwood storm-drain pipes, and downstream in the creek for about 500 feet.
- Contamination in the upper creek area ranges from the surface to about 10 feet below ground surface. A silty clay layer generally limits the depth of contamination.
- In the area of the former creek channel, contamination is in the upper 2 to 3 feet of soil.
- Contaminants from wood treatment – PAHs, PCPs, petroleum hydrocarbons, dioxins and furans – were found in creek sediments, with higher concentrations found in the upper creek. In the lower creek, contamination is generally confined to surface sediment and bank soils that moved downstream.
- Some petroleum hydrocarbons, trace metals and phthalates were found in the existing and former creek areas. Runoff from local roads and parking lots may have contributed these.
- Heavy metals were found in soils in the northeast portion of the park in the historic landfill. Contamination there covers about 7,000 square feet and is about 3 to 4 feet deep.
- Arsenic was found in soils along the planned West Illinois Street extension with the highest concentrations in the upper 2 to 3 feet.

Archeological sites found

Archeological sites were found on the west bank of the lower creek and on the upper level of the park. After consulting with the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe, the city left the creek site undisturbed and took approved actions to protect cultural resources at the upper site.

What Happens Next?

Ecology staff will present the site investigation results during a public meeting.

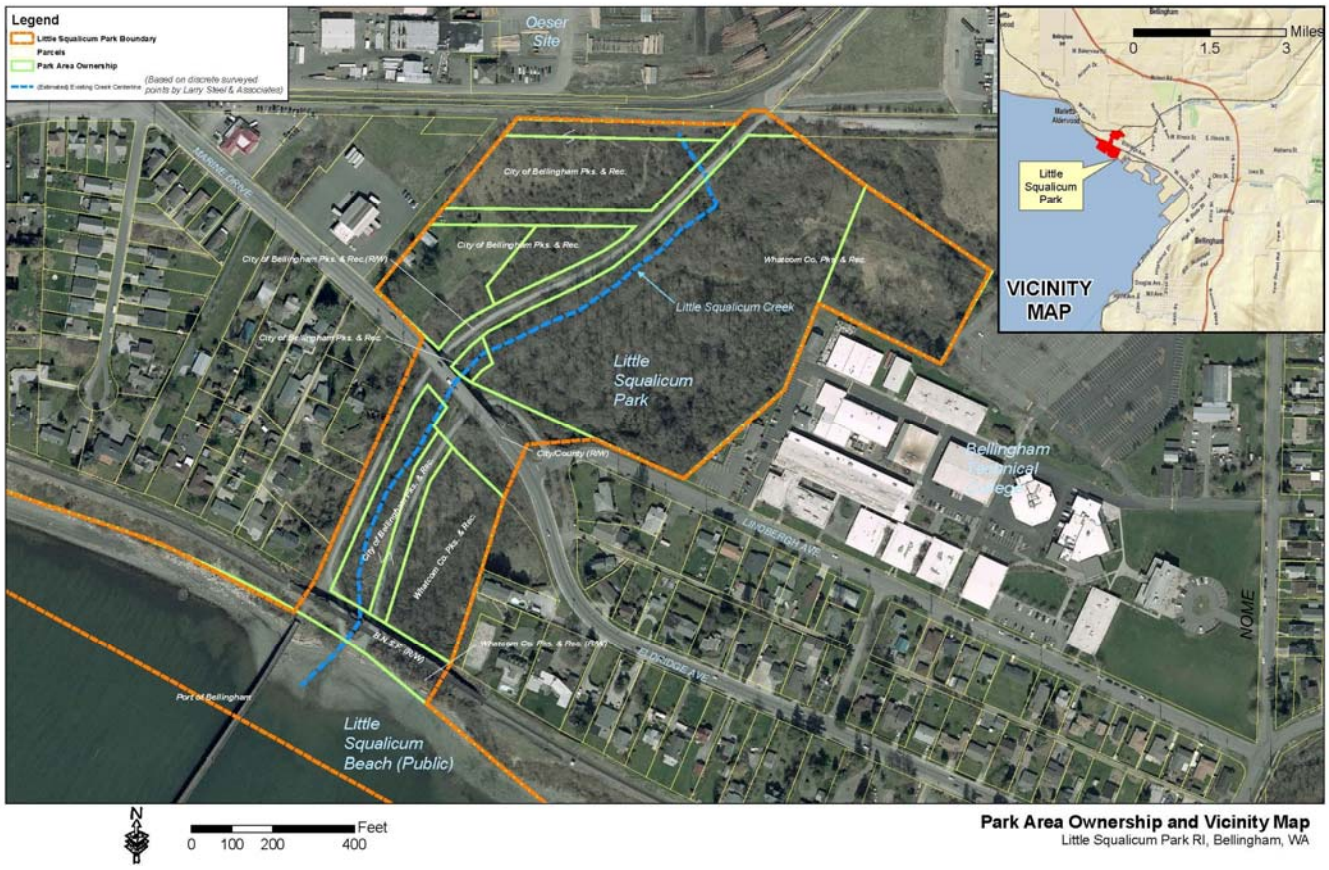
EPA will incorporate results of this investigation into its continued work with Oeser, the city and Whatcom County to examine cleanup options under federal cleanup authority.

Why This Cleanup Matters

Cleaning up Little Squalicum Park is necessary to protect people, plants, fish, birds, and other aquatic and terrestrial life from exposure to contamination.

This study was conducted under the Model Toxics Control Act, Washington state's cleanup law, passed by citizen initiative in 1988 and enacted in 1989.

Little Squalicum Park is a community asset, providing recreational opportunities, habitat and pedestrian and bicycle transportation corridors. The public has used the two major trails for recreation for more than 25 years, and efforts to improve the park have been limited by the presence of contamination.



Park Area Ownership and Vicinity Map
Little Squalicum Park RI, Bellingham, WA

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

PO Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Please recycle.

Little Squalicum Park, Bellingham, WA
Facility Site ID #: 7551533

Site investigation complete. Open house June 10. Public comment through July 6.

Help with other formats?

To ask about the availability of this document in a version for the visually impaired, call Katie Skipper at Ecology's Bellingham Field Office, 360-715-5205.

Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

Information in Spanish: Ecología compartirá los resultados de una investigación de la contaminación que existe en el Parque "Little Squalicum" durante una reunión abierta al público. La reunión será el 10 de junio, 2009 en el Colegio Técnico de Bellingham (Bellingham Technical College), 3028 Lindburg Ave., desde las 7 hasta las 9 p.m. Si recibimos temprano una solicitud para tener un intérprete de español presente, podemos arreglarlo. Para obtener más información en español, favor de comunicarse con Richelle Pérez al 360-407-6971 o enviar un correo electrónico al rdeg461@ecy.wa.gov y referenciar "Little Squalicum Park".

Information inVietnamese: Bộ Môi Sinh sẽ thông báo những kết quả của cuộc điều tra về sự ô nhiễm tại Little Squalicum Park trong một phiên họp công cộng từ 7 đến 9 giờ tối ngày 10 tháng 6 năm 2009, tại trường Bellingham Technical College, 3028 Lindburg Ave. Thông dịch viên sẽ có mặt tại buổi họp nếu có sự yêu cầu trước đó. Muốn biết thêm tin tức bằng tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng gọi ông Vũ Anh Tuấn, tại số 360-407-7449 hoặc gửi e-mail tới tuvu461@ecy.wa.gov và xin ghi đề mục tham khảo là Little Squalicum Park.