



RESPONSE to COMMENTS

**GEORGIA-PACIFIC WEST SITE
Bellingham, Washington**

Second Amendment to the Agreed Order

July 2013

ISSUED BY:

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

TOXICS CLEANUP PROGRAM

1. Introduction

On June 18, 2013, the Remedial Investigation and proposed Second Amendment to the Agreed Order (Amendment) for the Georgia-Pacific West site (Site) in Bellingham was issued for a 30-day public comment period. The public comment period closed on July 17, 2013. Public involvement activities related to this public comment period included:

- Distribution of a fact sheet describing the Site and the documents through a mailing and emailing to approximately 6,000 people, including neighboring businesses and other interested parties;
- Publication of one paid display ad in *The Bellingham Herald*; dated June 20;
- Publication of notice in the Washington State Site Register, dated June 13, June 27 and July 11;
- Announcement of the public comment period and posting of the documents on the Department of Ecology (Ecology) website.
- Providing copies of the documents through information repositories at Ecology's Bellingham Field Office and Northwest Regional Office, and the Bellingham Public Library – Downtown Branch.

A total of three people and organizations submitted written comments. The commenters are listed in Table 1. Section 2 of this document provides background information on the Site and Site cleanup activities, and Section 3 presents anticipated next steps. Section 4 lists the comments as received and Ecology's responses to those comments.

Table 1. Summary of Commenters

1	Beth Marsau
2	Wendy Steffensen
3	Frances Badgett

2. Background

The Site, located at 300 West Laurel Street in Bellingham, Washington, encompasses approximately 74 acres on the south side of the Whatcom Waterway. The Site is bordered on the north by the Whatcom Waterway (at mudline), on the east and south by the BNSF Railway Company (BNSF) main line, and on the west by the Bellingham Shipping Terminal and Bellingham Bay.

A Pulp and Tissue Mill operated at the Site from 1926 through 2007. A Chlor-Alkali Plant, producing chlorine gas and sodium hydroxide (caustic) using a mercury cell technology, operated within a portion of the Mill between 1965 and 1999. Steam heat was supplied to the Mill by burning fuel oil (e.g., Bunker C oil) in an on-Site Steam Plant. The fuel oil was stored in a 375,000-gallon tank located east of the Steam Plant and, later, in one of eight Million Gallon Tanks (Tank 2) located immediately north of the BNSF main line and west of the Pulp and Tissue Mill.

Contamination from historical industrial activities has impacted Site upland soils and groundwater with a variety of constituents, including mercury, total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH), and other constituents. The Site is defined by the extent of contamination caused by the release of hazardous substances at the Site. The Site constitutes a Facility under RCW 70.105D.020(5).

In 1999 and 2002, Georgia-Pacific (GP) entered into a pair of Agreed Orders with Ecology to perform plant decommissioning and a remedial investigation/feasibility study (RI/FS) for the Chlor-Alkali Plant portion of the Site. In addition to decommissioning the former Chlor-Alkali Plant's process equipment and machinery in 2000, GP independently conducted significant environmental investigation (including a RI/FS) and cleanup work for the Chlor-Alkali Plant area. In 2004, GP also conducted an extensive Phase II Environmental Site Assessment for the remaining portion of the property (the Pulp and Tissue Mill) prior to GP's sale of the Site to the Port.

The Port of Bellingham (Port) purchased the Site from GP in January 2005, and is currently evaluating potential future land uses, including continued industrial use and potential re-zoning to accommodate mixed use redevelopment.

In August 2009, the Port entered Agreed Order No. DE 6834 with Ecology to complete a RI/FS for the Site in accordance with WAC 173-340-350 and the Statement of Work (SOW) and Schedule in the Agreed Order. In accordance with the SOW, the Port prepared a RI/FS Work Plan, and subsequently prepared two Addenda to the RI/FS Work Plan, each of which was reviewed and approved by Ecology. The Site RI/FS is currently underway.

The first amendment to Agreed Order No. DE 6834 allows the Port to undertake Interim Actions (IAs), prior to completion of the RI/FS and with public review and Ecology approval, in accordance with WAC 173-340-430 and WAC 173-340-600(16). The IA outlined in this Work Plan will reduce the threat to human health and the environment by eliminating or substantially reducing one or more pathways for exposure to a hazardous substance at the

Site. The IA will be implemented in advance of selection of the final cleanup action for the Site, and shall not foreclose reasonable alternatives for the final cleanup action (WAC 173-340-430[3][b]).

The second amendment to Agreed Order No. DE 6834 allows the Port to divide the Site into two separate remedial action units (RAU) and develop two separate Feasibility Study (FS) documents for the purpose of expediting remedial actions and facilitating redevelopment of the Site. The Port shall prepare two separate FS documents: one for the Pulp/Tissue Mill RAU and one for the Chlor-Alkali RAU (Volumes 2a and 2b, respectively, of the RI/FS document).

3. Next Steps

No changes were made to the Amendment as a result of public comment and it will now be signed by the Port and Ecology, and development of the Feasibility Studies will move forward.

The draft FS Report for Pulp/Tissue Mill RAU is expected to be available for public review in early 2014, and the draft FS Report for Chlor-Alkali RAU is expected to be available for public review in mid 2014.

4. Comments and Ecology Responses

Comment #1:

Hello Brian,

I reside in Whatcom County and am expressing my concerns about the ongoing George Pacific West clean up project on Bellingham Bay.

Please prioritize the health and safety of the environment and of the people and animals that come in contact with this hazardous area and weigh your decisions towards a thorough clean up over concerns to hastily rebuild the site. Also, I noticed plans to build skyscrapers in the area, and I doubt this would be a wise decision. Go easy on development, and heavy on clean up. We need to have the toxins safely removed and then allow this land to rest and heal and before any plans are made to develop this area for commercial or residential use.

Thank you,

Beth Marsau
6162 Aquarius
PO Box 234
Ferndale, WA 98248
360-384-6494

Response #1:

Our mandate under state cleanup law is to eliminate threats to people, plants and animals from harmful levels of historic contamination at the GP West site. To determine how they could potentially be exposed to contamination, land use is a key consideration. The Port owns the property within the GP West site and they make the land use decisions.

The future feasibility study reports for the site will present and evaluate a range of cleanup options that protect people, plants and animals given the Port's land use plans. The range of options will include removal, but will also include treatment and containment. We encourage you to review and comment on the future feasibility study reports.

Comment #2:

Hello Brian-

This e-mail acknowledges the GP West RI and Agreed Order Addendum. In theory, the North Sound Baykeeper supports the splitting of the site into the two proposed sites. Given the short turnaround time for comments and vacation schedules, we are unable to provide substantive comments on the RI and Agreed Order. In the coming months, we will be reviewing the RI in preparation for the 2 FS's. We will be providing comments on an ongoing basis to provide our input into the FS's, as well as providing comments during the FS processes.

Thank you for your time and expertise on the GP West site. It is appreciated .
Wendy

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Wendy Steffensen, Lead Scientist
North Sound Baykeeper Team
RE Sources for Sustainable Communities
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Bellingham, WA 98225

360 733-8307 (office)
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Response #2:

We look forward to receiving comments from you on the future feasibility study reports.

Comment #3:

Dear Ecology Officials,

We're at an exciting time in our redevelopment of GP West, and we've come a very long way together to get here. As you are the authority for the cleanup at this time, I urge you to please ensure that the cleanup meets not only the Port of Bellingham's standards, but those of our community. I know that in your minds those the same, but they are not. I can't speak on behalf of the citizens in Bellingham on many points, but I know this for certain: People in this town want to feel safe when entering the waterfront for the first time. They want great things to happen down there, and they are not confident in a good outcome if the site is only cleaned to an industrial level. You have a solemn obligation to make sure that the cleanup isn't just adequate, but safe. Permanently safe. Please, I urge you, whether through interim action or through legal wrangling with the Port, to clean the most contaminated areas to a MTCA B residential standard using removal as a preferred strategy over capping. I understand the costs involved. I also understand that the site is so much more contaminated than even a lot of the local realized, even those who have been active in this discussion for a long time. This is loose fill with liquefiable soil. The more mercury and other contaminants you leave behind, the less safe this cleanup is for future generations.

Given the particular characteristics of the TOCs in the soil, as well as the particular characteristics of the soil itself that allow for mobility of the TOCs, it is critical that you reject the proposed amendment to the agreed order. I urge you to continue to treat GP West as one cleanup site. The more comprehensive our cleanup, the more protective it will be.

It is essential that we get a clean, safe, base from which to redevelop this site. When you signed onto the Port's plans, this cleanup became yours. Please recognize your obligation to protect the people of Washington State by making GP West permanently safe.

Frances Badgett
2514 West Street
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 527-1097,,a,

Response #3:

Most of your comments pertain to the future feasibility reports and we encourage you to review and comment on those documents when they become available. Briefly:

- Soil cleanup levels - Based upon our understanding of the Port's land use plans for the GP West site, unrestricted soil cleanup levels will be used to address the direct-contact exposure pathway.
- Removal and capping - The future feasibility study reports will evaluate a range of cleanup options that all eliminate exposure of people, plants and animals to harmful levels of historic contamination at the GP West site. The range will include removal, treatment and containment.
- Costs and permanence - As required by state cleanup regulations, the range of cleanup options will be evaluated through a cost benefit analysis to identify the option that is "permanent to the maximum extent practicable".
- Liquefaction - The site is fill material and subject to liquefaction. This will be considered when assembling the range of cleanup options and during remedial design of the cleanup option ultimately selected by Ecology.

Regarding dividing the site into two, the remedial investigation report issued for public review shows that contamination exists in two separate and distinct areas of the site. Because contamination in the two areas does not overlap, protective cleanups can be implemented separately.

Pertaining to the Port plans for the site, they own the property and make the land use decisions. Ecology's mandate is to ensure that the cleanup work prevents people, plants and animals from being exposed to harmful levels of historic contamination, given the port's land use plans. We take this mandate seriously.
