

---

# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

**LITTLE SQUALICUM PARK SITE  
BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON**

---

**March 2005**



**Prepared by  
Washington State Department of Ecology**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION.....   | 3  |
| SITE BACKGROUND.....                                      | 3  |
| COMMUNITY PROFILE.....                                    | 6  |
| Community Description.....                                | 6  |
| Key Community Concerns.....                               | 6  |
| HOW THE SITE WILL BE CLEANED UP.....                      | 6  |
| Site Investigation and Study.....                         | 6  |
| Cleanup.....  | 6  |
| PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES..... | 7  |
| Public Involvement Activities.....                        | 7  |
| Plan Update.....  | 9  |
| Points of Contact.....                                    | 9  |
| GLOSSARY.....   | 11 |

## FIGURE

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Site Location Map..... | 5 |
|------------------------|---|

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) has developed this draft public participation plan in cooperation with the City of Bellingham (City) and in accordance with the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) to promote meaningful community involvement during the investigation and cleanup of the Little Squalicum Park site (Site) in Whatcom County, Washington. Ecology, working with the City, retains lead responsibility for implementation of the draft public participation plan.

Public participation is an integral part of Ecology's responsibilities under MTCA. Ecology's goal is to provide the public with timely information and meaningful opportunities for participation that are commensurate with each site. The purpose of this draft public participation plan is to provide a framework for promoting public understanding and participation in the Site cleanup. Public participation plans are intended to encourage coordinated and effective public involvement tailored to the public's needs at a particular facility. This draft public participation plan describes the tools that Ecology plans to use to inform the public about the Site and identifies opportunities for the community to become involved.

## **SITE BACKGROUND**

The Site has multiple owners including the City and Whatcom County. The portion of the property owned by Whatcom County has been leased to the City for development as a park. The Site is located at 604 Marine View Drive (Figure 1) and is currently an undeveloped open space with public access.

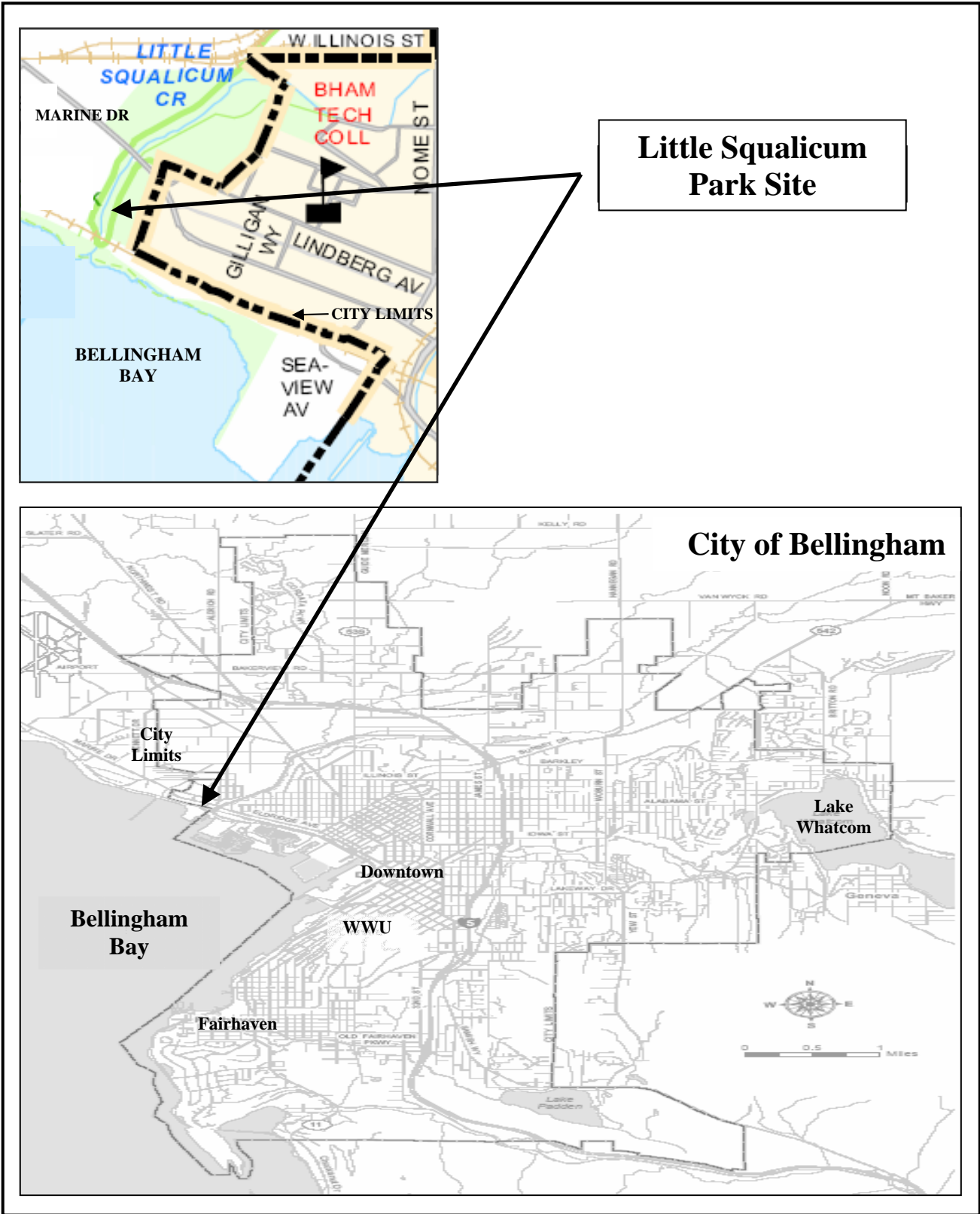
Properties in the vicinity of Little Squalicum Park include: the Oeser Company, which is a federal Superfund site, immediately adjacent to the north bank of the Little Squalicum Creek (the "Creek"); residential neighborhoods to the north and south; Morse Industrial Park to the east; and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad to the northwest and crossing the southern end of the Creek, including an old railroad grade along the Creek's west bank. Also located west of Little Squalicum Park are heavy industrial facilities including steel fabrication and fiberglass manufacturing facilities, warehouses, electrical repair shops, storage facilities, and the Tilbury Cement Company.

The Creek headwaters originate with the storm drain outflows from the combined Oeser/Birchwood neighborhood outfall to the northwest and the Birchwood neighborhood/Bellingham Technical College outfall to the northeast of the site. An outfall from the Marine Drive area south and west of the Oeser Company flows into the Creek above the Marine Drive Bridge. The Creek is also fed by springs.

Environmental investigations of the surface water, ground water, soil and sediments at the Little Squalicum Park site have confirmed the presence of hazardous substances including pentachlorophenol, dioxin, copper, zinc and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon ("PAH") compounds. As a result, the Site is subject to the investigation and cleanup requirements of the MTCA.

Ecology has conducted a Site Hazard Assessment and placed the Little Squalicum Park site on the Hazardous Sites List with a ranking of 1, where 1 represents the highest relative risk and 5 the lowest relative risk.

# Location Map of the Little Squalicum Park Site, 604 Marine Drive



## **COMMUNITY PROFILE**

### **COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

The Little Squalicum Park site is located near the northwestern limit of the City, in an area of mixed land use including commercial, heavy and light industry, and residential neighborhoods. Little Squalicum Creek and the surrounding area are part of a passive-use open space area identified as Little Squalicum Park. The Park site is located adjacent to Bellingham Bay and is currently used by the public.

### **KEY COMMUNITY CONCERNS**

Ecology has preliminarily identified the following concerns and interests that may apply to the investigation and cleanup of the Little Squalicum Park site:

- Type and level of contamination and threats to human health or the environment
- Assessment and control of contaminant sources
- Timely cleanup of the site to expedite enhancement of public access and park features
- Implications of cleanup for other property owners at and adjacent to the Site
- Relationship to the Oeser Company Superfund cleanup
- Alteration and control of water inputs to Little Squalicum Creek
- Opportunities for public involvement
- Compliance with regulatory requirements

Additional public concerns may be identified over the course of the Site cleanup through: public comment periods; community interviews; surveys; meetings; and other contacts with individuals, community groups, or organizations.

## **HOW THE SITE WILL BE CLEANED UP**

### **INVESTIGATION AND STUDY**

Initial work at the Site will focus on completing a remedial investigation and feasibility study (RI/FS). The remedial investigation will determine the type, level, location and sources of contamination at the Site. The feasibility study will evaluate a range of remedial alternatives that address the contamination, minimizing or eliminating the human health and environmental threats.

A Work Plan, Sampling and Analysis Plan, and a Quality Assurance Project Plan will be prepared to define the RI/FS work. Drafts of these documents will be issued for public review and a public information meeting will be held during this public review period. Implementation of these plans will lead to the generation of a draft RI/FS report. The draft RI/FS will be issued for public comment and an additional public information meeting will be held prior to the finalization of this report.

### **CLEANUP**

After the RI/FS is finalized, a draft Cleanup Action Plan (CAP) will be completed by Ecology that describes the remedial alternative preliminarily selected by Ecology. The CAP will be an exhibit to a legal agreement compelling cleanup of the site. The legal agreement and CAP will

be issued for public review and comment prior to finalization. Actual cleanup including the design, construction, operation and monitoring of cleanup actions will occur as part of implementing the CAP.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The purpose of this draft public participation plan is to promote public understanding and participation in the MTCA cleanup activities planned for this Site. This section of the plan addresses how Ecology and the City will share information and receive public comments and community input on the Site activities.

### **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Ecology uses a variety of activities to facilitate public participation in the planning and cleanup of MTCA sites. The following is a list of the public involvement activities Ecology will use, the purpose of these activities, and how these activities will be used during the Site cleanup.

#### ***Formal Public Comment Periods***

Public comment periods usually last 30 days and are the primary method Ecology uses to obtain feedback from the public on proposed cleanup decisions. Public comment periods are required on all agreed orders, consent decrees and enforcement orders. Public comment periods are also required for all Ecology-conducted remedial actions.

During a comment period, the public can comment in writing. Verbal comments are taken if a public hearing is held. After formal comment periods, Ecology reviews all comments received and may respond in a document called a ***responsiveness summary***. A responsiveness summary is a summary of oral and/or written public comments received by Ecology during a comment period on key documents, and Ecology's responses to those comments.

Ecology will consider the need for changes or revisions based on input from the public. If significant changes are made, then a second comment period may be held. If no significant changes are made, then the draft document(s) will be finalized.

#### ***Public Meetings***

Public meetings will be held at key points during the investigation and cleanup process to provide opportunities for the community to ask questions and voice concerns. At a minimum, public meetings will be held during public comment periods on drafts of the following documents: RI/FS Project Plans, the RI/FS, and the CAP. These meetings will be held at locations convenient to the community.

#### ***Information Repositories***

During public comment periods, Site documents will be available for review at information repositories and on Ecology's website. Ecology can also make copies of documents for a fee.

For the Little Squalicum Park site, the information repositories are:

- Bellingham Technical College Library, Building A, 3028 Lindburgh Avenue  
Phone: (360) 752-8383
- Bellingham Public Library, 210 Central Avenue

Phone: (360) 676-6860

- Department of Ecology, Bellingham Field Office, 1204 Railroad Avenue, Suite 200  
Phone (360) 738-6250
- Department of Ecology, Northwest Regional Office, 3190 160<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, Bellevue  
Phone: (425) 649-7190

Information on the Little Squalicum Park site will also be posted on the Ecology website at:  
[http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/blhm\\_bay/sites/bel\\_bay\\_sites.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/blhm_bay/sites/bel_bay_sites.html)

### ***Site Register***

The Site Register is published by Ecology bi-monthly to inform the public of:

- Activities related to the study and cleanup of contaminated sites
- Public meetings/hearings and public comment periods
- Discussion or negotiations of legal agreements
- Availability of cleanup reports
- Hazard rankings of sites

If you would like to regularly receive the Site Register, please contact:

Site Register  
Department of Ecology-Toxics Cleanup Program  
PO Box 47600  
Olympia WA 98504-7600  
(360) 407-7170

If you would like to be placed on the Site Register's e-mailing list, complete the electronic form at [http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/pub\\_inv/pub\\_inv2.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/pub_inv/pub_inv2.html).

### ***Mailing List***

Ecology, with assistance from the City, has compiled a mailing list for the Site. The list includes individuals, groups, public agencies, elected officials, private businesses, potentially affected parties, and other known interested parties. The list is maintained at Ecology's Bellingham Field Office and will be updated as needed.



### ***Fact Sheet***

Ecology will mail fact sheets to persons and organizations interested in the Site to inform them of public meetings and comment opportunities and important Site activities. A fact sheet may also be used to informally update the community regarding progress of the Site cleanup.

### ***Display Ad***

At a minimum, Ecology will place an ad in *The Bellingham Herald* to announce public comment periods and public meetings or hearings for the Site.

### **PLAN UPDATE**

This public participation plan may be updated as the project proceeds. If an update is necessary, the revised plan will be submitted to the public for comment.

## **PUBLIC POINTS OF CONTACT**

### **Washington State Department of Ecology**

#### *Site Manager and Public Involvement*

Mary O'Herron  
Washington State Department of Ecology  
Northwest Regional Office  
3190 160<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE  
Bellevue, WA 98008-5452  
(425) 649-7187

### **City of Bellingham**

#### *Project Manager*

Tim Wahl  
City of Bellingham  
Parks and Recreation Department  
3424 Meridian Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225-1764  
(360) 676-6985

## GLOSSARY

**Cleanup:** Actions taken to deal with a release, or threatened release of hazardous substances that could affect public health and/or the environment. The term "cleanup" is often used broadly to describe various response actions or phases of remedial responses such as the remedial investigation/feasibility study.

**Cleanup Action Plan (CAP):** A document that explains which cleanup alternative(s) will be used at sites for the cleanup. The CAP is based on information and technical analysis generated during the remedial investigation/feasibility study and consideration of public comments and community concerns.

**Comment Period:** A time period during which the public can review and comment on various documents and Ecology actions. For example, a comment period is provided to allow community members to review and comment on proposed cleanup action alternatives and proposed plans. Also, a comment period is held to allow community members to review and comment on draft feasibility studies.

**Consent Decree:** A formal legal document, approved and issued by a court, which formalizes an agreement reached between the state (and EPA if involved) and the potentially liable person(s) on what will take place during the remedial investigation/feasibility study and/or cleanup action. A Consent Decree is similar to an Agreed Order except that a Consent Decree goes through the courts. Consent Decrees are subject to public comment. If a decree is substantially changed, an additional comment period is provided.

**Feasibility Study (FS):** This study uses information obtained in a remedial investigation to develop and evaluate a range of cleanup options for a site.

**Information Repository:** A file containing current information, technical reports, and reference documents available for public review. The information repository is usually located in a public building that is convenient for local residents such as a public school, city hall, or library.

**Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA):** Legislation passed by the State of Washington in 1988. Its purpose is to identify, investigate, and clean up facilities where hazardous substances have been released. It defines the role of Ecology and encourages public involvement in the decision making process. MTCA regulations became effective March 1, 1989 and are administered by the Washington State Department of Ecology.

**Potentially Liable Person (PLP):** Any individual(s) or company(s) potentially responsible for, or contributing to, the contamination problems at a site. Whenever possible, Ecology requires these PLPs, through administrative and legal actions, to clean up sites.

**Public Participation Plan:** A plan prepared to encourage coordinated and effective public involvement designed to the public's needs at a particular site.

**Remedial Investigation:** A study characterizing the site and defining the type and extent of contamination.

**Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study:** Two distinct but related studies. They are usually performed at the same time, and together referred to as the "RI/FS." They are intended to:

- Gather the data necessary to determine the type and extent of contamination;
- Establish criteria for cleaning up the site;
- Identify and screen cleanup alternatives for remedial action; and
- Analyze in detail the technology and costs of the alternatives.

**Responsiveness Summary:** A summary of oral and/or written public comments received by Ecology during a comment period on key documents, and Ecology's responses to those comments. The responsiveness summary is especially valuable during the Cleanup Action Plan phase at a site when it highlights community concerns.

**Site:** Any building, structure, installation, equipment, pipe or pipeline (including any pipe into a sewer or publicly owned treatment works), well, pit, pond, lagoon, impoundment, ditch, landfill, storage container, motor vehicle, rolling stock, vessel, or aircraft; or any site or area where a hazardous substance, other than a consumer product in consumer use, has been deposited stored, disposed of, or placed, or otherwise come to be located.