

Department of Ecology News Release - February 4, 2010

10-017

Gas plant cleanup site documents ready for review Friday

BELLINGHAM – The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) is inviting the public to comment on a draft legal agreement and draft public participation plan for the South State Street Manufactured Gas Plant cleanup site at the north end of Boulevard Park. The comment period is Feb. 5 through March 8, 2010.

The gas plant site is one of 12 cleanup sites in the Bellingham Bay Demonstration Pilot. The pilot is a multi-agency collaborative effort to integrate cleanup, control of pollution sources, habitat restoration and land use.

About 6 acres are contaminated where a manufactured gas plant operated from the 1890s to the 1950s. The plant made gas from coal for home heating and cooking.

Preliminary sampling and testing have found contamination of sediment, soil, surface water and groundwater. Contaminants include petroleum hydrocarbons, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and benzene, toluene and xylene (BTX). These contaminants are present in concentrations that exceed standards under the state's cleanup law and must be addressed.

Bellingham Bay Gas Co., a predecessor to Puget Sound Energy, was the first operator of the plant. The city of Bellingham acquired most of the gas plant property in 1975 for use as a park. The state and BNSF Railway Co. also own portions of the contaminated area.

When final, the legal agreement will require the city of Bellingham and PSE to conduct an environmental study of the site (called a remedial investigation) and analyze cleanup options (called a feasibility study) with Ecology oversight.

A final agreement and public participation plan are required steps toward cleaning up toxic contamination in the environment under the state's cleanup law, the Model Toxics Control Act.

Ecology will reimburse the city for up to half the city's costs for the investigation through the state's remedial action grant program, a funding mechanism for contaminated sites in public ownership. The grant program was established by the state Legislature with revenues from a tax on hazardous substances.

Draft documents will be available for public review by Friday, Feb. 5.

View documents:

- Bellingham Public Library, 210 Central Ave.; 360-778-7323; Hours: Mon.-Tues. 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Wed.-Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Sun. closed
- By appointment at Ecology's Bellingham office, 1440 10th St., Ste. 102; Call Linsay Albin: 360-715-5200; Hours: Mon.-Fri. 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

- By appointment at Ecology's Bellevue office, 3190 160th Ave. SE Bellevue, WA 98008-5452; Call Sally Perkins: 425-649-7190
- Ecology's toxics cleanup Web site:
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/blhm_bay/sites/S_State_St_MGP/s_state_st_mgp.htm, or go to www.ecy.wa.gov , click on "Cleanup," "Site list by county," scroll to "Whatcom County," then click "South State Street Manufactured Gas Plant."

Submit comments Feb. 5 through March 8 to: Mary O'Herron, site manager, Washington Department of Ecology, 1440 10th St., Ste. 102, Bellingham, WA 98225-7028, or mary.oherron@ecy.wa.gov

###

Media Contact:

Katie J. Skipper, communications manager, 360-715-5205, 360-510-0682 cell, or katie.skipper@ecy.wa.gov .

For more information:

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/blhm_bay/sites/bel_bay_sites.html , or go to www.ecy.wa.gov, click on "Cleanup," "Site list by county," scroll to "Whatcom County," then click on "Bellingham Bay."