

## Contacts

### Ecology

Charles Gruenenfelder

Project Manager

509-724-1405

charles.gruenenfelder@ecy.wa.gov

Erika Beresovoy

Public Involvement

509-385-2290

erika.beresovoy@ecy.wa.gov

**EPA:** 800-424-4372

## Websites

### Seller Disclosure Form 17:

[apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=64.06.020](https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=64.06.020)

### Dirt Alert Program:

[ecology.wa.gov/DirtAlert](https://ecology.wa.gov/DirtAlert)

### Upper Columbia River Cleanup Site Information

#### Ecology:

[apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/12125](https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/12125)

*Find this fact sheet and more!*

**EPA:** [epa.gov/columbiariver/upper-columbia-river-remedial-investigation-feasibility-study](https://epa.gov/columbiariver/upper-columbia-river-remedial-investigation-feasibility-study)

**Teck:** <http://www.ucr-rifs.com/>

Cleanup site ID: 12125

Facility site ID: 17013

# Selling or Buying Land or a Home in the Upper Columbia River Valley?

Soil in the upper Columbia River valley of Stevens County, Washington, may contain unnaturally high levels of metals, including lead and arsenic. Concentrations depend on many factors, including land-use history and soil disturbances such as landscaping and grading.

Metal ore smelting during the last century emitted metal particles into the air and broadly dispersed them across this area. The Teck Metals smelter (Teck), less than 10 miles across the U.S.-Canadian border in Trail, British Columbia, is the main source. Smaller contributions also came from the closed and cleaned up Le Roi, or Northport, smelter.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) worked with Teck to investigate metals contamination in soil and water in the upper Columbia River valley from the Grand Coulee Dam to the U.S.-Canadian border. The information is now being used to assess risks to people and the environment. Analyses of soil samples show that some soil in this area can be unnaturally high in lead, arsenic, and other metals due to past smelter air emissions, primarily in the area highlighted in Figure 1 (page 3). Soil here may contain levels of metals above concentrations considered safe by health specialists and Washington cleanup standards.

## How does this affect me if I am selling?

- **Sellers and realtors must comply with real estate disclosure law.** [Chapter 64.06 Revised Code of Washington](#) (RCW) creates seller disclosure forms with questions about the property being sold. Real estate transactions include a seller disclosure statement, known as Form 17. You can get this form from your real estate agent or copy the questions from [RCW 64.06.020](#). Form 17 asks if the seller knows of any soil contamination. Soil along the upper Columbia River valley (Figure 1, page 3) may be contaminated with metals. Sellers also are required to disclose “adverse material defects,” which could include soil contamination. The disclosure requirements apply to improved and unimproved properties, with some exceptions. If you have questions about Form 17, please seek legal advice.
- **Soil in upland and residential areas of the upper Columbia River valley has been sampled** (Figure 1, page 3). You can learn more on [EPA’s website](#) and [Teck’s website](#), or by calling EPA (see left).
- **You may test your soil.** [Ecology’s Dirt Alert website](#) has [guidance](#) about sampling soil for residential and commercial properties. For help understanding sampling procedures or results, you may contact the Washington State Department of Ecology (see left).

## Why it matters

Potential buyers have the right to know about possible hazards in their environment, and sellers are required to disclose information about their property.

## Health effects

Arsenic and lead in soil does not pose an immediate health risk. High concentrations of lead or arsenic in soil pose a long-term health risk. People are exposed primarily through hand-to-mouth contact with contaminated soil. This includes eating food or mouthing toys with traces of soil or dust, and breathing in dust.

Arsenic can cause a variety of health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, and cancer of the bladder, lung, skin, kidney, liver, and prostate.

In children, who are more sensitive to toxins than adults, lead can cause behavioral problems such as hyperactivity, permanent learning difficulties, and reduced physical growth. In adults, lead can increase blood pressure, affect memory, and contribute to other health problems.

## Healthy actions make a big difference

- Wash your hands with soap after contacting dirt.
- Take your shoes off at the door.
- Mop and vacuum once a week.
- Wash children's toys, bedding, and pacifiers frequently.
- Cover bare patches of soil in your yard to reduce contact.
- Wear shoes and gloves when gardening.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating them.
- Wipe your pets' paws before they come inside, and brush and bathe them regularly.

## How does this affect me if I am *buying*?

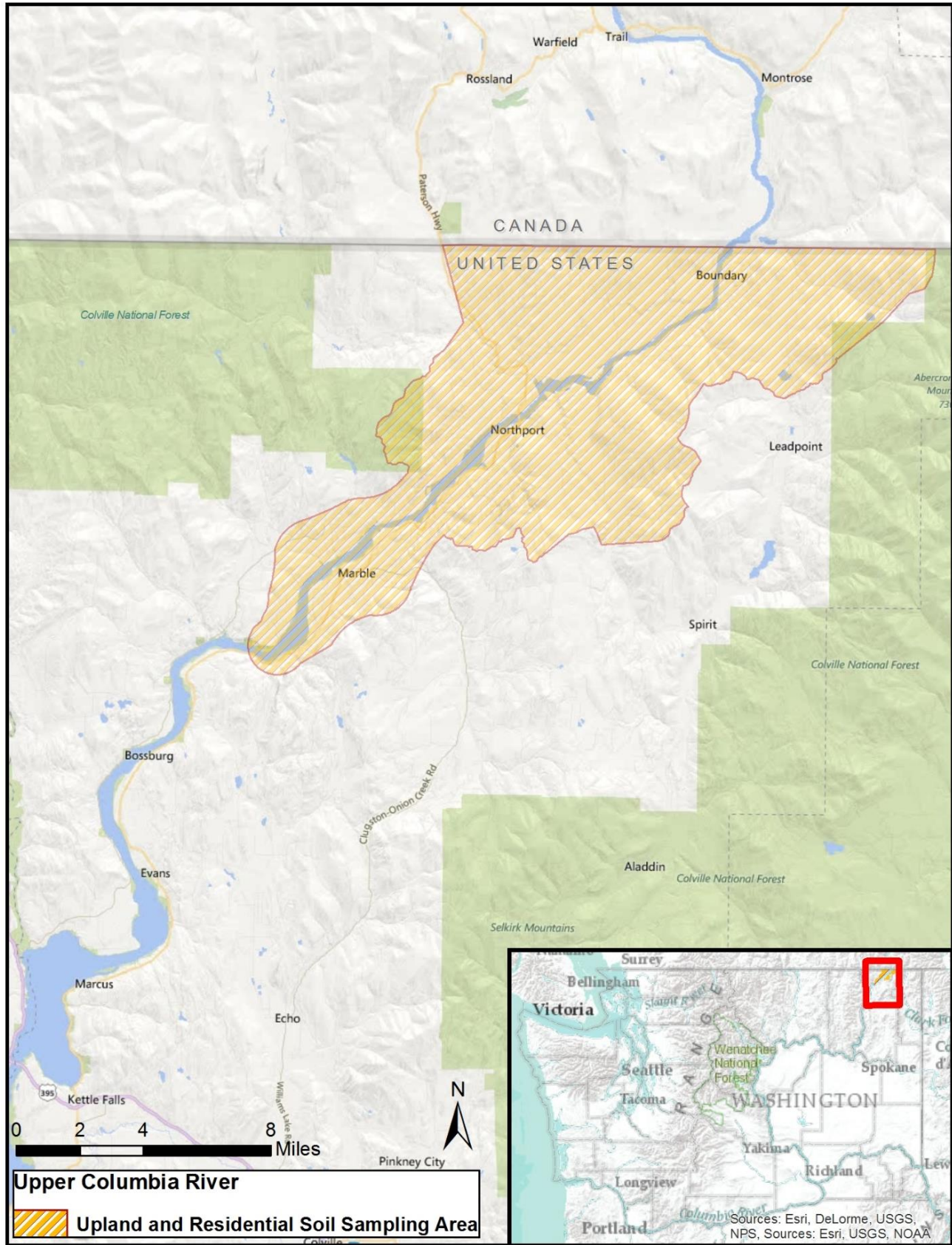
- **Check the seller disclosure form.** Unless the buyer expressly waives the right to receive the disclosure statement, the seller must provide Form 17 ([RCW 64.06.020](#)). A buyer cannot waive the right to Form 17 if the answer to any of the questions in the Environment section are "yes." The buyer can ask the seller and realtor if they are aware of any soil testing for metals on or near the property.
- **Ask the seller if you may test the soil.** [Ecology's Dirt Alert website](#) has [guidance](#) about sampling soil for residential and commercial properties. For help understanding sampling procedures or results, you may contact Ecology (page 1).
- **Learn more.** Simple [healthy actions](#) can help your family avoid potential exposure to metals in soil (see left). Visit [Ecology's Dirt Alert website](#), or contact us for more information (page 1).



**Above:** Gathering a soil sample at a residential property in the upper Columbia River valley.

**Left:** Bagging a soil sample for analysis.





**Figure 1.** Approximate area of the upper Columbia River valley where soil has been sampled and metals may be above normal as of 2016.

Toxics Cleanup Program  
4601 North Monroe Street  
Spokane, WA 99205-1295

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## What's in your soil?

Soil in the upper Columbia River valley may contain unnaturally high levels of metals, including lead and arsenic, from metal ore smelting.



## Look inside to learn:

- The facts about buying and selling land or a home in the upper Columbia River valley of Stevens County, Washington.
- Healthy actions you can take to protect your family from lead and arsenic contamination in soil.
- Where to get more information about how to sample soil.

**ADA Accessibility:** To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6831 or email at [ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov), or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY, call 711 or 877-833-6341.