



Whatcom Waterway Site Bellingham Bay

Agreed Order for Interim Action available for review

The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) is proposing to enter a legal agreement (Agreed Order) with Georgia-Pacific to conduct an Interim Action at the Whatcom Waterway site. The purpose of the Interim Action is to collect data that will be used to help design the cleanup action for the Whatcom Waterway site and associated sites in Bellingham Bay. The Whatcom Waterway site includes aquatic lands within and adjacent to the Whatcom and I & J Street Waterways (see map on back).

Background

In July 2000, the Department of Ecology issued an environmental study called a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) for the Whatcom Waterway site. The RI/FS determined that sediments at the Whatcom Waterway site contain hazardous substances including mercury and several contaminants associated with wood materials at concentrations exceeding state standards.

A number of remedial alternatives (cleanup actions to eliminate or reduce potential threats posed by the contaminated sediments to human health or the environment) were evaluated in the RI/FS and in the Final Environment Impact Statement for the Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy (FEIS, issued in October 2000). Since completion of these documents, a new remedial alternative has been identified that is evaluated in the Draft Supplemental Feasibility Study for the Whatcom Waterway site and the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy. (Both of these draft supplemental documents are currently available for review and comment through April 24, 2002.)

The remedial alternatives outlined in these documents overlap and include different combinations of natural recovery, capping with clean material, removal and disposal.

Description of the Interim Action

The proposed Interim Action will inform remedial design of all potential cleanup alternatives and consists of the following elements:

- Using chemical and biological testing procedures, refine the areal boundaries of sediments exceeding Sediment Quality Standards
- Working with and through the Puget Sound Dredge Material Management Office, determine whether certain sediments located in the outer Whatcom Waterway channel area may be suitable for beneficial reuse; and
- Perform appropriate leaching and column settling tests of prospective dredge materials to be used as a basis for remedial design of dredging and disposal actions, including disposal of sediments in a local confined disposal facility (e.g., G-P Aerated Stabilization Basin or Cornwall Confined Aquatic Disposal). Prospective dredge materials include sediments from Whatcom Waterway and other contaminated sediment sites in Bellingham Bay, such as Harris Avenue Shipyard.

April 2002

Comment Period:

April 2 – May 1, 2002

Documents are available for review at:

Department of Ecology website:
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/sites.html>

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Bellingham Field Office
1204 Railroad Avenue, Ste 200
(360) 738-6250

Bellingham Public Library
210 Central Avenue, Bellingham

Department of Ecology
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For special accommodations needs or language translation assistance, call (360) 738-6280 or (425) 649-4259 (TDD).

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Publication # 02-09-005

Work to be performed

The work to be performed includes:

- **Pre-Remedial Design Work Plan.** The work plan will describe planning activities and specific sampling and analysis activities to be performed. The work plan will include a Sampling and Analysis Plan and Quality Assurance Project Plan that describes in detail the procedures to be used. A project implementation schedule will also be included.
- **Sampling and Analysis.** These activities will be performed as set forth in the work plan.
- **Data Report.** The report will present the pre-remedial design data collected.

What happens next

After the 30-day public comment period on the Agreed Order, Ecology will review the comments received and prepare a summary of the comments and suggested changes. Those who submitted comments will be notified when a written response to those comments (called a Responsiveness Summary) is available. If significant changes are made to the Agreed Order, the revised document will be issued again for public review. If no significant changes are made, then the Agreed Order will be considered final.

Ecology will use the evaluations conducted in the RI/FS, FEIS, and the Supplemental documents to preliminarily select a remedial action alternative to be taken forward into detailed remedial design and implementation. Ecology's preliminary selection will be articulated for public review in a draft Cleanup Action Plan (CAP) for the Whatcom Waterway site. (The CAP explains which remedial alternative will be used to cleanup contaminated sediments.) The draft CAP is expected to be issued for public review in the fall of 2002. The information obtained through the proposed Interim Action will enhance the detailed remedial design work conducted after finalization of the draft CAP.

