



DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

Public Participation Plan

Weyerhaeuser Sawmill Aberdeen Aberdeen, Washington

Facility Site ID: 1126

Cleanup Site ID: 4987

February 2019
Publication 19-09-121

Publication and Contact Information

This plan is available on the Department of Ecology's website at:

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/summarypages/1909121.html>

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Public Participation Plan

Weyerhaeuser Sawmill Aberdeen

Toxics Cleanup Program
Southwest Region
Washington State Department of Ecology
Lacey, Washington

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Public Involvement in Contamination Cleanup

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) developed this public participation plan (plan) in cooperation with the Grays Harbor Historical Seaport Authority (GHHSA), the party responsible for cleanup costs. The purpose of the plan is to promote meaningful community involvement during cleanup.

The plan describes ways Ecology will inform the public about contamination investigations and cleanup options throughout the cleanup process. Ecology encourages the public to learn about and get involved in decision-making opportunities. This plan identifies how and when the public can get involved during different stages of the investigation and cleanup of contamination.

This plan is for an Agreed Order, which requires GHHSA to conduct a remedial investigation and feasibility study and identify cleanup methods in a draft cleanup action plan for the Weyerhaeuser Sawmill Aberdeen site.

Site contacts

To be included in the site record, comments about the cleanup process must be submitted during comment periods. Questions and informal comments or information about the site's history are welcome anytime.

Ecology

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Public Participation Grants

Grants may be available to neighborhood committees, non-profits, and other groups interested in the site. For contaminated sites, these funds can be used to:

- Hire an expert to help interpret technical information¹
- Conduct activities that enhance the public's understanding of, and participation in, the cleanup process

For more information about public participation grants, please contact Lynn Gooding at 360-407-6062 or lynn.gooding@ecy.wa.gov. You may also visit the [Public Participation Grant website](#).²

Washington's Cleanup Laws

Ecology uses the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) and accompanying regulations for cleanup activities.

This plan is required under MTCA, a law that passed in 1989. MTCA provides guidelines for contaminated site cleanup in Washington State and sets standards to ensure the cleanup protects human health and the environment.

Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA)

MTCA began as a grassroots citizen's initiative in 1988, and started the process of systematically cleaning up contaminated sites in Washington. Under MTCA, a current or past property owner or operator may be held responsible for cleaning up contamination on, or coming from, their property to standards that are safe for human health and the environment.

Ecology enacts MTCA and oversees cleanups in the state and issues regulations and guidance governing those cleanups. The regulations are found in [Chapter 173-340 Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\)](#).³ Ecology investigates reports of property contamination, and if the contamination is seen as a significant threat to human health or the environment, the contaminated property is placed on the Hazardous Sites List, and the cleanup process begins.

¹ Ecology currently does not have a citizen technical advisor for providing technical assistance to citizens on issues related to the investigation and cleanup of the site.

² ecology.wa.gov/About-us/How-we-operate/Grants-loans/Find-a-grant-or-loan/Public-participation-grants

³ <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/publications/9406.pdf>

Public participation is an important part of cleanup under the MTCA process. Participation needs are assessed at each cleanup site according to the level of public interest and the degree of risk posed by the contamination. Individuals who live near the site, community groups, businesses, government, other organizations, and interested parties have the opportunity to get involved by commenting on the cleanup process.

Under MTCA, the cleanup process generally includes five phases. Each phase includes an opportunity for the public to review and comment on cleanup documents.

Steps in Washington's Cleanup Process

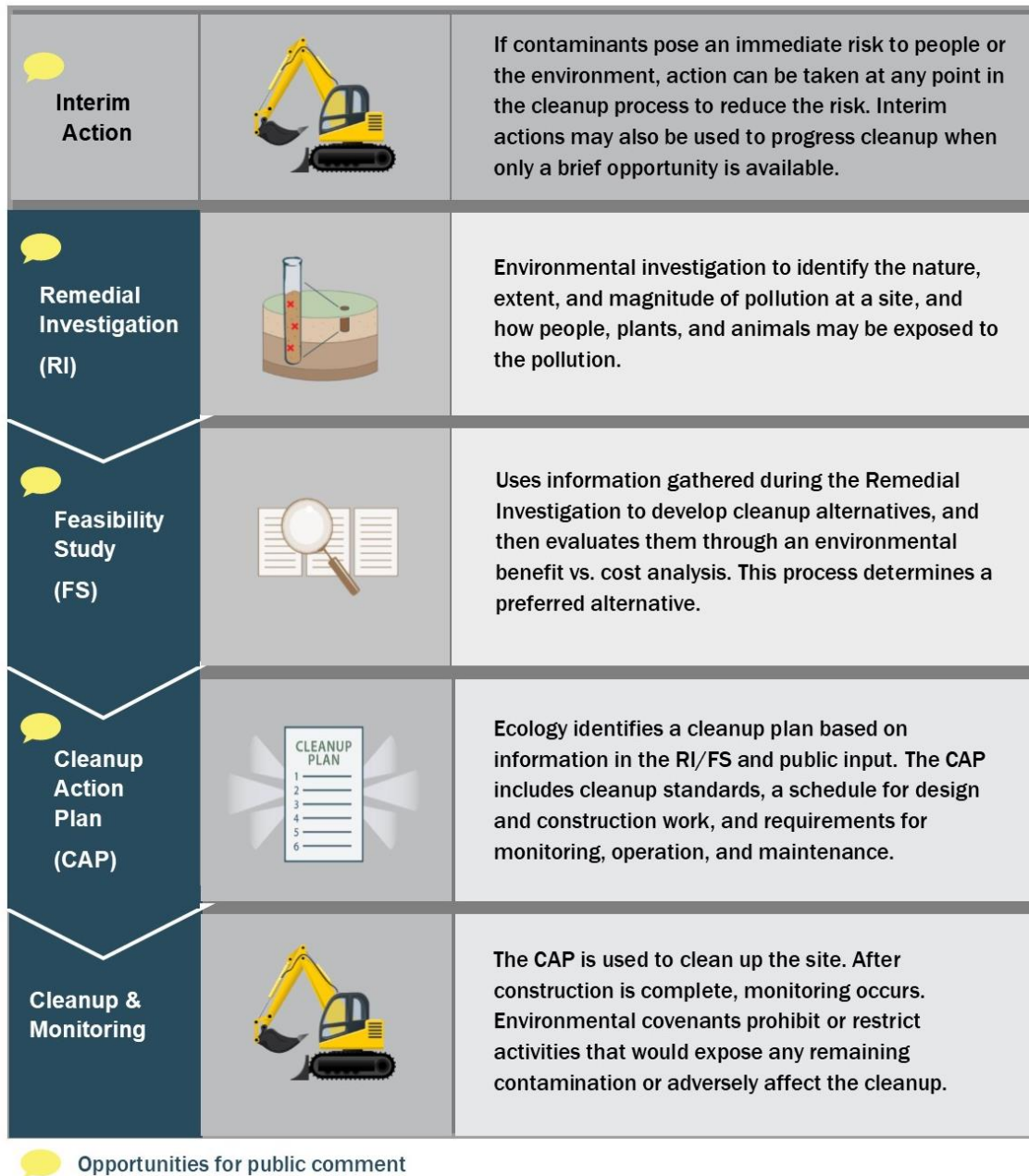


Figure 1. Steps in Washington's Cleanup Process

State Environmental Policy Act

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) is followed during review and development of cleanup plans.

Site History

Land use

The Weyerhaeuser Sawmill Aberdeen site is generally located at 500 North Custer Street in Aberdeen, Washington (site). It consists of upland properties and 14.48 acres of state-owned tidelands (tidelands) along the Chehalis River, also referred to as the aquatic lands lease tract. The tidelands are managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

From the early 1900s to 2013, the site was used for sawmills and other forest product industries. During this time, there were two sawmills, steam drying kilns, and wood refuse burners. Other activities included wood chipping and barge loading.

The structures remaining on the site include the former main shipping shed, two smaller log mills, a maintenance shop, a large storage shed, the former planer/grader building, and multiple smaller office-type buildings.

GHSA acquired the properties from Weyerhaeuser in 2013 and agreed to take responsibility for addressing any legacy environmental impacts. The site is currently listed on Ecology's Confirmed and Suspected Contaminated Site List.

How the site became contaminated

Sawmill operations and forest product industry practices contaminated soil, sediment, and groundwater at the site. Environmental investigations and cleanup work have taken place since the 1980s. Ecology reopened the site in 2014 for further investigation due to the discovery of previously unknown contamination. Investigations conducted by GHSA between 2015 and 2018 identified many potential sources and contaminated areas. These include Shannon Slough, former maintenance areas, chemical and hazardous material storage buildings, buildings used to treat lumber, and above- and belowground storage tanks.

Contamination

Sawmill operations and forest product industry practices contaminated soil, sediment, and groundwater at the site. Table 1 shows the contaminant, the probable source, and location in soil, sediment, or groundwater.

Table 1. Suspected contaminants at the Weyerhaeuser Sawmill Aberdeen site

Contaminant	Source	Location
Benzoic acid	Decaying wood waste	Sediments
Dioxins	Ash from sawmill scrap wood burners; byproduct in pentachlorophenol, forest fires, trash burning	Sediments
Mercury	Gauges and switches for sawmill equipment	Sediments
Metals (manganese, lead, copper)	Sawmill and lumber processing activities	Soil, groundwater, and sediments
Pentachlorophenol (PCP)	Chemical for treating and preserving lumber	Soil, groundwater, and sediments
Phenol	Decaying wood waste	
Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)	Electrical transformers, fluorescent light ballasts, caulks, and paints	Soil, groundwater, and sediments
Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)	Fuels and solvents used in daily operations	Soil, groundwater, and sediments
Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs)	Present in heavy oils, produced from burning wood or fuels	Soil, groundwater, and sediments
Total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH) from diesel and oil	Spills from mill equipment. Leaks from fuel tanks	Soil, groundwater, and sediments
Wood waste	Sawmill and forest product industry (sawdust, bark, and wood chips)	Sediments

Area community

The site and the surrounding area were once dominated by the timber and fishing industries. Surrounding properties include the former log storage area to the east, a former commercial boatyard to the west, and residential and commercial land use to the south. The city of Aberdeen is to the north of the site across the Chehalis River, where there are many vacant commercial buildings. West Curtis Street is located along the southern property boundary, providing roadway access to the site.

The site is in census tract 9 of the American Community Survey (ACS). Their data from 2011 to 2015 show that Spanish is the most common foreign language spoken at home by Spanish-speaking residents who speak English “less than very well”.

Ecology will reach out to cultural community organizations as part of our outreach and provide information in other languages as appropriate following federal guidance.⁴ When appropriate, Ecology will provide outreach in Spanish. We strive to make our public participation efforts as inclusive as possible and welcome your input about how to best reach the nearby community.

The Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) EJScreen Tool shows the following demographics for the area within a quarter-mile of the site:

Table 2. Environmental and demographic information for the area surrounding Weyerhaeuser Sawmill Aberdeen site

Selected Variables	Value	State Average	Percentile in State	EPA Region Average	Percentile in EPA Region	USA Average	Percentile in USA
Environmental Indicators							
Particulate Matter (PM 2.5 in $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	5.48	7.23	4	7.54	3	9.53	1
Ozone (ppb)	29	33.9	5	36.1	2	42.5	0
NATA* Diesel PM ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	0.237	1.4	11	1.06	<50th	0.938	<50th
NATA* Air Toxics Cancer Risk (risk per MM)	20	40	7	39	<50th	40	<50th
NATA* Respiratory Hazard Index	1.2	2.8	17	2.8	<50th	1.8	<50th
Traffic Proximity and Volume (daily traffic count/distance to road)	200	450	62	380	63	600	62
Lead Paint Indicator (% pre-1960s housing)	0.35	0.23	75	0.23	76	0.29	65
Superfund Proximity (site count/km distance)	0.0088	0.17	13	0.12	13	0.12	6
RMP Proximity (facility count/km distance)	0.21	0.61	48	0.63	48	0.72	41
Hazardous Waste Proximity (facility count/km distance)	0.71	1.9	51	1.5	57	4.3	58
Wastewater Discharge Indicator (toxicity-weighted concentration/m distance)	0.0081	0.062	89	0.038	90	30	79
Demographic Indicators							
Demographic Index	43%	29%	80	29%	81	36%	67
Minority Population	24%	30%	49	27%	56	38%	44
Low Income Population	62%	29%	93	32%	92	34%	88
Linguistically Isolated Population	0%	4%	42	3%	46	4%	44
Population with Less Than High School Education	16%	9%	81	10%	80	13%	68
Population under Age 5	3%	6%	16	6%	16	6%	17
Population over Age 64	17%	14%	71	14%	69	14%	70

*The National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) is EPA’s ongoing, comprehensive evaluation of air toxics in the United States. EPA developed the NATA to prioritize air toxics, emission sources, and locations of interest for further study. It is important to remember that NATA provides broad estimates of health risks over geographic areas of the country, not definitive risks to specific individuals or locations. More information on the NATA analysis can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/national-air-toxics-assessment>.

For additional information, see: www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice

The Chehalis River and Grays Harbor are in the vicinity of the site and within the Usual and Accustomed fishing grounds of the Quinault Indian Nation. Quinault tribal members harvest salmon and other treaty fisheries resources in this area.

The Quinault Indian Nation Tribe is a federally recognized tribe that could be affected by the contamination. Ecology will provide ample opportunity to the Tribe to be involved throughout the cleanup process on a government-to-government basis.

⁴ Guidance to Environmental Protection Agency Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons, 69 Fed. Reg. § 35602 (June 15, 2004).

Public Participation Activities

Members of the public may ask questions, submit informal comments, or share site information at any time. Interested parties do not need to wait for a formal public comment period to contact Ecology.

However, to be included in the formal site record, comments about the site investigation, cleanup alternatives, or cleanups must be submitted during formal comment periods. In addition, the public is invited to review site documents before they become final. This is the most direct and influential way to learn more about the site and be involved in the cleanup's decision-making.

How we share information with the community

During specific stages of the cleanup, Ecology will mail notices about public comment periods to addresses surrounding the site. The mailing list area will vary depending on the type of contamination and where it's located, but the list will at least include addresses within a 1/4-mile radius of the site and other interested organizations and individuals. These notices will provide general information about the site, contact information for submitting comments, and times and locations of public meetings or hearings or how to request one if not yet scheduled.

Ecology may also develop documents outside of comment periods to keep the community updated on the site's status. These informational documents will be available online and at document repositories. Print copies may be mailed to the nearby community if we feel the message warrants the associated cost and resources.

Comment period notices and other site announcements may also be posted in various locations throughout the community (for example, local businesses, schools, libraries).

Postal mailing list

Ecology maintains a mailing list that includes addresses within a 1/4 mile radius of the site and relevant local, state, and federal government contacts.

These people receive public comment notices when draft documents are available.

We will add additional individuals, organizations, and other interested parties to the mailing list as requested. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for this site, please contact Sheila Coughlan at 360-407-6255 or Sheila.Coughlan@ecy.wa.gov.

Site Register

Public comment periods, events, and other cleanup notices are published in Ecology's [Site Register](#).⁵ To receive the *Site Register* by email, please contact Cheryl Ann Bishop at 360-407-6848 or cherylann.bishop@ecy.wa.gov, or [subscribe online](#).⁶

Newspaper display ads or legal notices

We announce public comment periods and events in ads or notices published in *The Daily World*. We will also publish notice on our [Public Input & Events Listing](#).⁷

Email lists

Ecology maintains an email list to update interested persons about this site. If you would like to be added to the email list for this site, please contact Sheila Coughlan at 360-407-6255 or Sheila.Coughlan@ecy.wa.gov.

Ecology's website and social media platforms

We maintain a website for the [Weyerhaeuser Sawmill Aberdeen site](#).⁸ The website provides site information, and you may download cleanup documents.

We may also share information about cleanup sites through [news releases, our ECOconnect blog, and social media](#).⁹

Document repositories

During public comment periods, you can find print documents at the following locations:

Aberdeen Timberland Library
121 East Market Street
Aberdeen, WA 98520

⁵ ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Guidance-technical-assistance/Site-Register-lists-and-data

⁶ <http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=siteregister&A=1>

⁷ ecology.wa.gov/Events/Search/Listing

⁸ <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/gsp/Sitepage.aspx?csid=4987>

⁹ ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Get-to-know-us/News

Washington Department of Ecology
Southwest Regional Office
300 Desmond Drive SE
Lacey, WA 98503
(360) 407-6045 – By appointment only

To schedule an appointment, please contact Susie Baxter at 360-407-6045 or Susan.Baxter@ecy.wa.gov.

Signs around the cleanup site

We may also install signs displaying information about project status, traffic impacts, and health risks around the cleanup site.

How to share information with us

At minimum, MTCA requires 30-day public comment periods for draft cleanup documents and 14-day comment periods SEPA documents. SEPA documents are often made available for review with other cleanup documents. We may hold comment periods longer than 30 days.

We may also identify public concerns and cleanup goals by meeting with and soliciting information from interested community members and organizations. To collaborate with us about this site, please contact Sheila Coughlan at 360-407-6255 or Sheila.Coughlan@ecy.wa.gov.

Public comment periods

Formal 30-day comment periods allow interested members of the public to comment on draft documents, legal agreements, and proposed cleanup actions. If there is significant interest, Ecology may extend the public comment period. When Ecology oversees SEPA determinations, we hold comment periods for at least two weeks.

Following a comment period, we publish all the input we received and respond to significant comments and questions. If the comments result in significant changes to the cleanup documents, then the documents will be revised and re-issued for public review. If the comments do not result in significant changes, then they become final.

Public events

We hold public meetings, workshops, open houses, and public hearings based on community interest. If we have not scheduled a meeting, we will hold one if 10 people request it, and this may cause us to extend a public comment period so the meeting occurs during it.

Events are held at locations close to the site that meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Public meetings, workshops, open houses, and hearings are always announced in advance using a variety of methods.

Plan Amendments

Ecology developed this plan following MTCA regulations (WAC 173-340-600). We review it as the cleanup progresses and amend it as necessary. You may suggest amendments to Sheila Coughlan at 360-407-6255 or Sheila.Coughlan@ecy.wa.gov.

This plan includes information for the public regarding opportunities for public involvement and comment. The outreach activities discussed in this section reflect Ecology's current plans for keeping the public informed and providing ways for those interested in the site to communicate their concerns and questions to us.

If you feel the planned outreach activities and mechanisms described in this plan are insufficient, or should otherwise be modified, we will work to find solutions. New outreach activities or outreach tools established as a result can be implemented right away, with or without amending this plan.