

Cleaning up Northport Waterfront



Crews working to remove smelter-related contamination from the public beach on the upper Columbia River in 2024.

28,500 tons of metals-contaminated sand, soil, and slag removed

The Washington Department of Ecology finished cleaning up and restoring the Columbia River public waterfront in Northport in fall 2025, the conclusion of a project that began in 2019. Investigation results showed copper, lead, and zinc from smelting were throughout the waterfront at levels posing a risk to people and the environment. We used funds from the Eastern Washington Clean Sites Initiative to protect people and aquatic life from these contaminants by removing and capping contamination, and encouraging recreation in cleaned up areas.

Cleanup construction took two years due to river conditions, with work stopping in the winter. In 2024, the local cleanup contractor based out of Lone made significant progress on the seasonal beach and completed all cleanup and capping work on the hillside (see site map, page 5). In 2025, crews excavated remaining contamination from the seasonal beach and the boat dock area, and filled in the bay, jetty, and excavated areas with clean materials. The contractor ensured no excess or waste materials entered the river. They constructed stormwater control measures around all staging and stockpiling areas.

The lead levels in about 4,000 tons of material removed from the hillside and some of the seasonal beach were hazardous waste under federal standards. This waste required stabilization processing for the lead, which was done at a chemical waste facility in Oregon. Another 24,500 tons of waste were sent to the Stevens County Landfill per the county ordinance that prohibits taking materials out of the county for disposal. About 10,600 cubic yards of excavated river rock above 6 inches in diameter was mixed with imported materials for reuse on site. All clean fill material, including top soil and armor rock, was purchased in Stevens County.



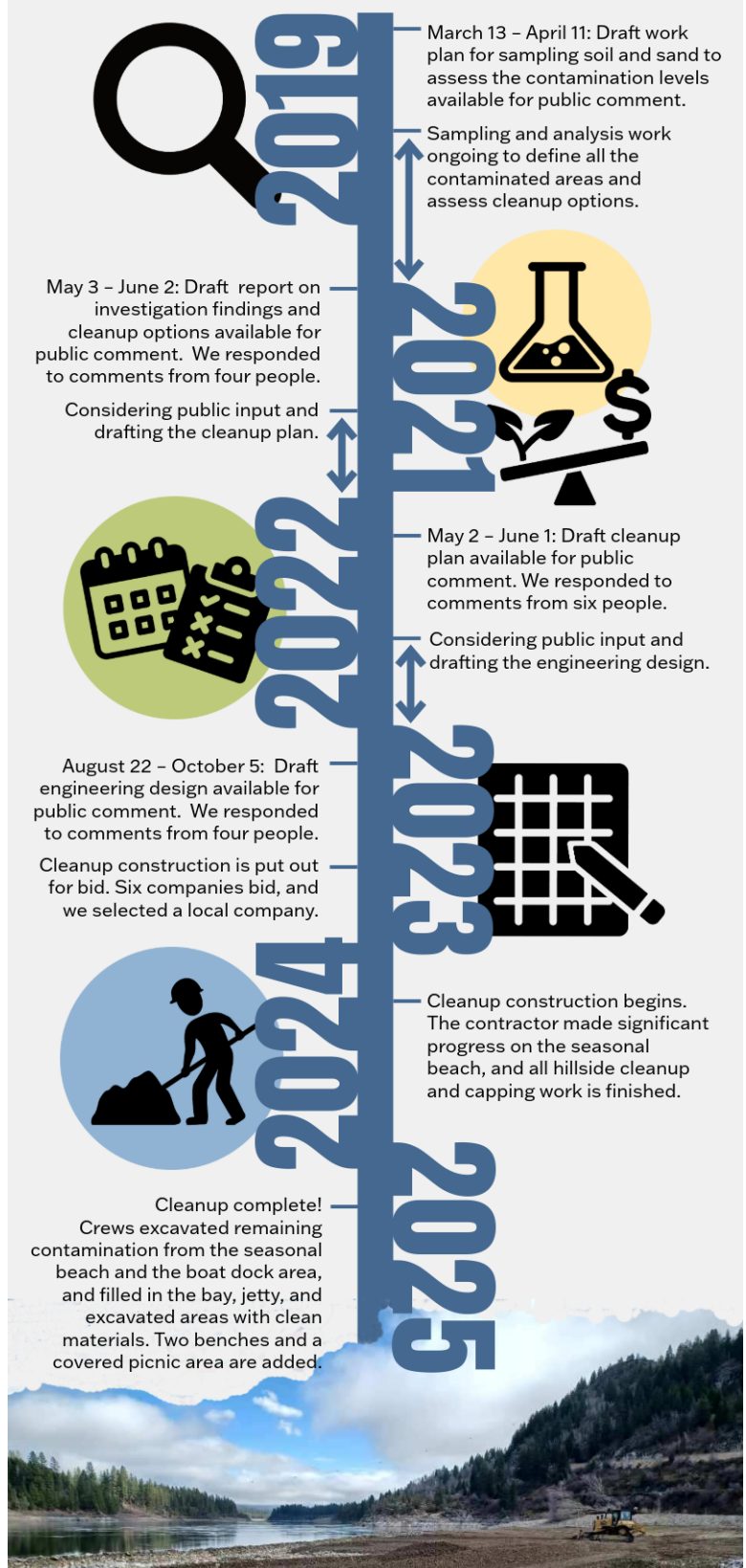
Black slag-contaminated soil being excavated from the hillside in 2024.

Public access and recreational improvements

The project improved or retained existing public access areas:

- A covered picnic area and two benches overlooking the Columbia were installed.
- The existing path from the parking lot to the shoreline was upgraded to a wooden stair-step trail.
- Cedar fencing was added around the new picnic table, benches, hillside trail, and areas of the hillside that weren't disturbed to preserve mature trees. Fencing will help prevent cut-off trails and vehicle traffic on replanted areas.
- All areas affected by earthwork were replanted with native plants approved by the town. Topsoil, compost, mulch, and an irrigation system were also added. Steep slopes were stabilized and waterbars were added to help prevent erosion.
- Two red maple trees will be planted on the jetty in fall 2025 to replace the former elm tree.
- The dock next to the boat launch was removed and protected during excavation and capping of the bay area and returned to its existing condition following construction.
- The Town Park and boat launch remained open throughout the project, except when the launch closed for a week as contamination around it was excavated.
- Removing old building foundations at the former Le Roi smelter's mill site and improving the cap over remaining contamination will help the Town's efforts to build a community center.

Cleanup Timeline



Before cleanup



Hillside trail to the beach.



Bayshore area next to the boat launch.



Jetty with the former elm tree and bay area.

After cleanup



Hillside trail to the beach with stair steps and cedar fencing.



Bayshore area next to the boat launch with a clean cap.



Jetty and bay area with clean caps. Two red maple trees will be planted on the jetty in fall 2025.

Before cleanup



After cleanup

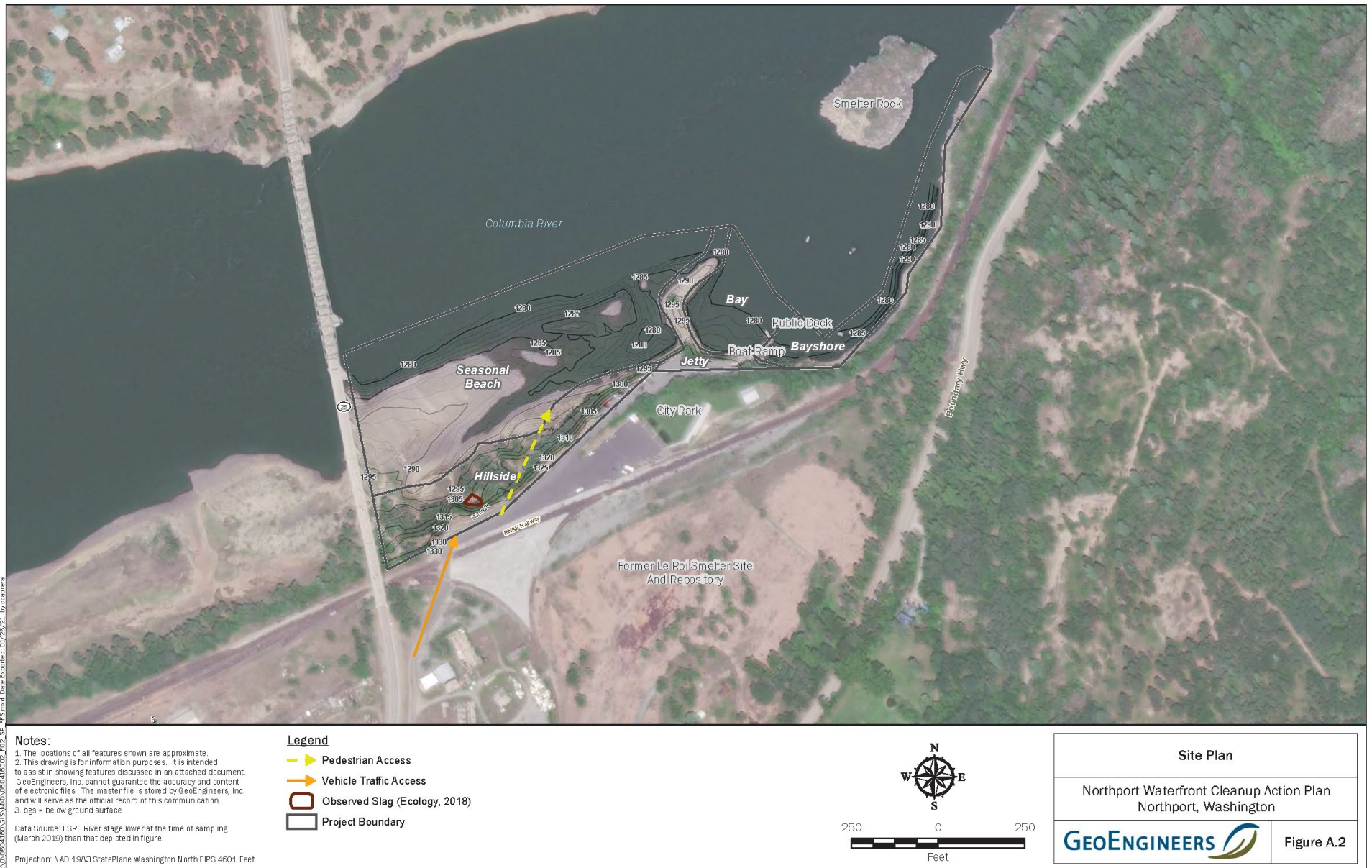


The seasonal beach looking upriver (above) and downriver (below).

The seasonal beach looking upriver (above) and downriver (below) with a clean cap.

Recreational improvements





The waterfront is at the northeastern end of the Town of Northport next to the Town Park, which was cleaned up by BNSF Railway, the property owner, in 2014.

Northport Waterfront cleanup by the numbers

Accomplishment	Amount
Eastern Washington Clean Sites Initiative funding	\$10.9 million
Waste disposed of at Stevens County Landfill	24,500 tons at a cost of \$1.9 million
Hazardous waste stabilized and disposed of in Oregon	4,000 tons at a cost of \$1.2 million
Clean, excavated river rock beneficially reused onsite	10,600 cubic yards
Local fill material used to backfill excavated contaminated areas	16,500 cubic yards
Cap material and armor rock from local pits used to cap contamination at a minimum 2-foot depth	22,100 cubic yards
Workers employed during construction	43 total, including 26 lead contractor staff and 17 subcontractor staff members for hauling, landscaping, and concrete work
Total funds going back to the local economy	\$9.4 million

Related Information

- **Northport Waterfront cleanup site page:**
<https://go.ecology.wa.gov/NorthportWaterfront>
- **Property address:** Highway 25 & Park Road, Northport
- **Ecology Cleanup Site ID:** 14874

Scan to visit the cleanup site page, and find the link to our Flickr album with more pictures!



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