

Information for Land Use Permitting Agencies

The Washington State Department of Ecology is working with local land use permitting agencies to address soil contamination from the Tacoma Smelter Plume. For properties undergoing development, Ecology's goals are:

- To ensure that owners and developers are aware of soil contamination risks and actions they can take to reduce exposure.
- To have owners or developers sample soils for arsenic and lead.
- To help address soil contamination through local land use review processes. Ecology provides educational materials, guidance, and technical assistance for local planners responding to public concerns.

Why It Matters

Soil contamination from the former Asarco smelter poses a risk to human health and the environment. Children are at high risk because their small bodies are still developing. They also put dirty fingers and toys into their mouths. Construction workers, landscapers, gardeners and others who work in the soil are also at risk.

As Washington's population grows, areas with elevated levels of arsenic and lead continue to be developed into neighborhoods, school, childcares, and parks. These development activities raise health, environmental, and marketplace concerns, while providing an opportunity for cleanup.

How You Can Help

Sampling and cleaning up properties during development can be easier and less costly than after.

- During State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) reviews, let Ecology know if a project is within the Tacoma Smelter Plume boundary. See the website listed to the right or [click here](#) for a map.
- Ask applicants to submit soil sampling data during the pre-application meeting or with their SEPA checklist.

More Information

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Tacoma Smelter Plume website

http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/tacoma_smelter/ts_hp.htm

Background

Asarco's former copper smelter in north Tacoma emitted arsenic, lead and other heavy metals from 1905-1986. The wind carried these pollutants and they settled on surface soils, creating the Tacoma Smelter Plume.

The plume covers 1,000 square miles of King, Pierce, Thurston, and Kitsap counties (map on page 3). However, arsenic and lead levels depend on the level of soil disturbance over the last 100+ years.

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- Have property owners consult with Ecology's Technical Assistance Coordinator (see box on page 1) on how to sample soils, and interpret and use the results.
- Call the Technical Assistance Coordinator if you have questions.

Some planning offices have required sampling results be submitted with the SEPA checklist. Some have also required remediation as a mitigating condition of the SEPA process. This is a local government-level decision. Currently, Ecology is not enforcing cleanup for Tacoma Smelter Plume contamination.

Advice for Property Owners: Sampling

Owners should sample properties under development, especially if children could use the property in the future. Sampling may not be needed in industrial areas or when the development is paved and will continue to be paved. Ecology has draft sampling guidance for land use planning offices that either recommend or require sampling.

Advice for Property Owners: Cleanup

Ecology is working on Tacoma Smelter Plume Model Remedies—a streamlined process for property cleanup by landowners. The four remedy choices are:

- Excavation and proper disposal.
- Capping with soil or pavement.
- Consolidation and capping.
- Mixing or tilling.

The method depends on the future use of the property and contamination levels. For example, Ecology recommends excavating and removing soils where arsenic is over 100 ppm. Capping is only for properties that will be managed and maintained. Caps need regular inspection and maintenance.

No Further Action (NFA) Determinations

Some property owners may want a cleanup opinion from Ecology—a no further action determination. **They must enter the Voluntary Cleanup Program to get an NFA.** Ecology requires sampling and can recommend cleanup actions, depending on the levels of contamination.

Some planning offices are requiring an NFA letter before approving a project.

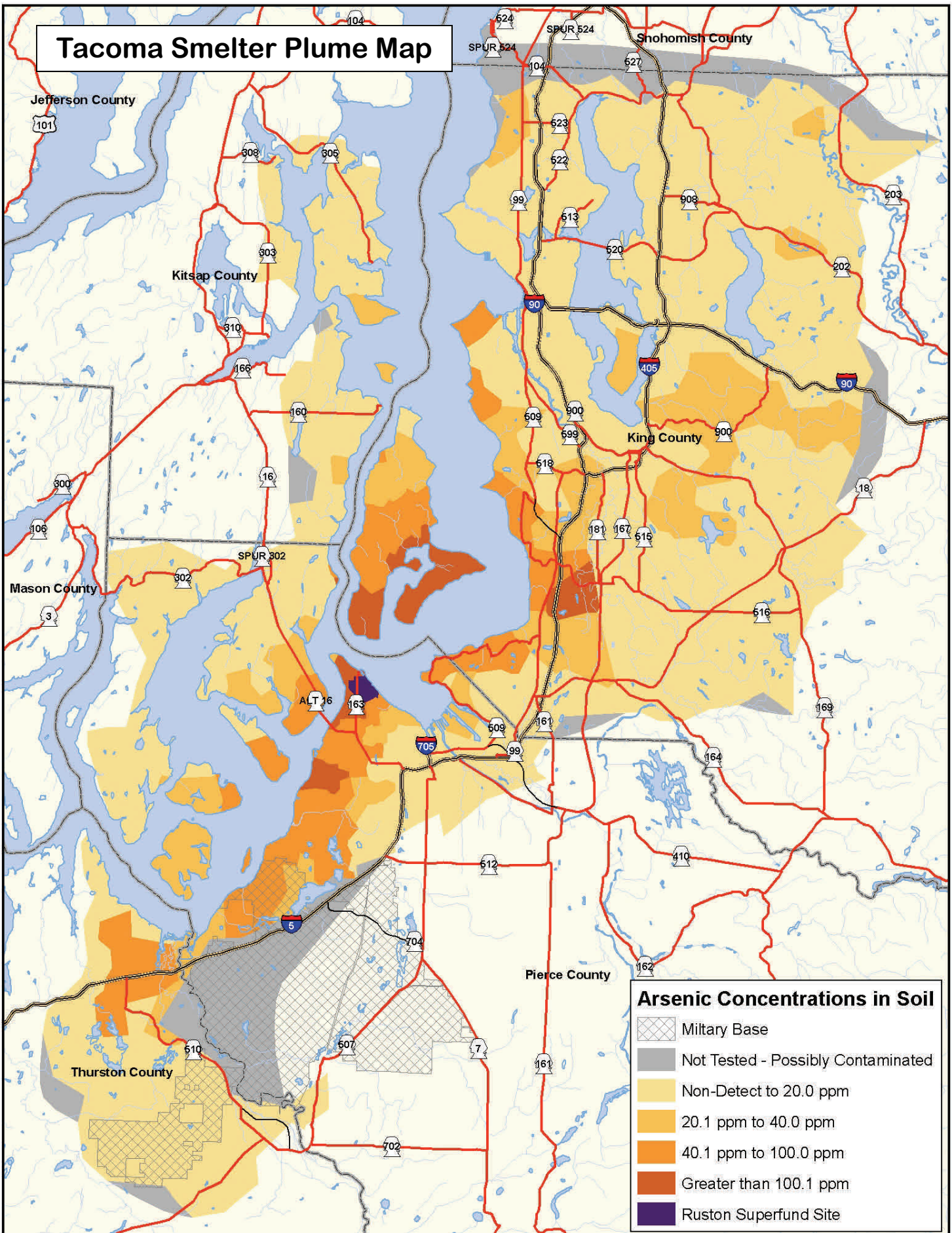
Resources

- **Draft soil sampling guidance:** Step-by-step guidance for property owners wanting to do their own sampling. This is draft guidance—contact the Technical Assistance Coordinator for a copy.
- **Worker safety fact sheet** (forthcoming).
- [Map](#) (also available on the website).

What Happens Next?

Ecology is drafting an Interim Action Plan (partial cleanup plan) for the Tacoma Smelter Plume. This plan includes Model Remedies and will be available for public comment later in 2011. The plan also proposes a residential property sampling and remediation program and ongoing education and outreach.

Land use planners will play an important role in the Tacoma Smelter Plume cleanup. We need your input on how to get cleanup done during property development. To join the mailing list and receive updates on public involvement, contact Hannah Aoyagi at 360-407-6790 or Hannah.Aoyagi@ecy.wa.gov.



Also available at: http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/tacoma_smelter/ts_hp.htm