

Kaiser Mead Groundwater Cleanup



Submit comments:

Online at
<http://cs.ecology.commentinput.com/?id=4Z8Fg>

Or by mail to:
 Garin Schriever
 Industrial Section
 P.O. Box 47600
 Olympia, WA 98504

Document review locations:

North Spokane Public Library
 44 E Hawthorne Road
 Mead, WA 99218
 Phone: 509-893-8350

Department of Ecology
 Industrial Section
 P.O. Box 47600
 Olympia, WA 98504
 Phone: 360-407-6916
 Hours: Mon. – Fri. 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Site info:

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/gsp/Sitepage.aspx?csid=2901>

Comment period: March 25 – April 25, 2019

Why are you getting this notice?

We identified you as someone either required by Washington state rules to receive this notice, or we think you'll be interested. There is no immediate threat to human health or the environment.

What are we accepting comment on?

We invite you to comment on documents related to a cleanup activity we propose to take on part of the former Kaiser Mead aluminum smelter site.

These include a:

- Draft work plan to address groundwater contamination left behind by smelter operations.
- State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Determination of Nonsignificance based on a review of the impacts this cleanup activity could cause.
- Public participation plan describing how we plan to work with the local community and other interested parties as cleanup activities take place.

Site history

The Kaiser Aluminum Company produced aluminum at the Mead site for more than 50 years. Waste handling practices used from the 1940s to the late 1970s led to cyanide and fluoride contamination in groundwater.

A number of activities have already taken place to address the problem.

- In the late 1970s, Kaiser provided alternate water supplies for property owners whose wells were contaminated. The county put restrictions on new wells in the area.
- The wastes remaining on site were covered with an asphalt cap to keep rain and snow from leaching more contamination into groundwater.

- Investigation of other potential sources of contamination were investigated and groundwater monitoring routinely takes place.

While these steps have helped control the risk posed by the site, levels of contamination in the groundwater have not declined as quickly as expected. Even though no one is drinking the groundwater, and there is no immediate risk to people, we believe more should be done.

Proposed project

We propose building a “pump and treat” system to remove the cyanide and fluoride contamination from groundwater. This includes:

- Design, installation, and operation of a system to capture groundwater,
- Treatment of the water to remove contamination, and
- Maintaining a system where the treated water filters back into the ground, recharging the aquifer.

We believe this action will reduce contamination and help the aquifer recover more quickly.

If the proposed plan goes forward, design of the system and possibly some construction activities will take place in 2019, with most of the construction and start-up happening in 2020. If there’s a change to the cleanup based on public input, the timeline may also change.

Site information

Located at 2111 E Hawthorne Ave in Mead, the aluminum smelter was built by the United States government on about 240 acres of undeveloped land in 1942 to provide aluminum for aircraft used in World War II. It was originally operated by ALCOA. Kaiser Aluminum purchased the smelter in 1946. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) placed the site on the National Priorities List (NPL) in 1983, making it a “Superfund” site. Superfund sites are sites contaminated with hazardous substances needing long-term cleanup.

The company permanently closed the smelter in 2000 and filed for bankruptcy in 2002. The Department of Ecology and EPA reached a settlement with Kaiser through the bankruptcy court in 2004 to provide resources for monitoring and additional cleanup of the groundwater contamination, if needed.

The NPL site includes about 37 acres owned by the Mead Custodial Trust and the area of groundwater contamination included in this cleanup action. The remainder of the former plant is under separate ownership and is not part of the proposed cleanup.

Accommodation Requests: To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-6000 or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.