

GP West Cleanup Site - Lignin Operable Unit



Lignin Operable Unit (left of railroad tracks), April 2022

Comments accepted

June 20 – July 19, 2022

Submit comments

Online at:

www.bit.ly/Ecology-Lignin-Comments

Or by mail to:

Sandra Matthews, Site Manager
 WA Department of Ecology
 PO Box 330316
 Shoreline, WA 98133-9716
 425-223-1999
Sandra.Matthews@ecy.wa.gov

Document review

www.bit.ly/Ecology-GPWest

For document review assistance,
 please contact:

Ian Fawley

Outreach Specialist
Ian.Fawley@ecy.wa.gov
 425-324-5901

Site info

Facility Site ID: 14
 Site Cleanup ID: 2279

Cleanup and legal documents ready for public review

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) invites you to review the cleanup action plan and associated legal documents for the Lignin Operable Unit at the Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site (GP West). The Lignin Operable Unit is located on the Bellingham waterfront within the Chlor-Alkali Area of the GP West site – see map on page 2.

Ecology and the Port of Bellingham (Port) have prioritized cleanup of the Lignin Operable Unit to enable purchase by Mercy Housing Northwest (Mercy) for redevelopment as affordable housing. The Port will clean up the Lignin Operable Unit under a legal agreement (Consent Decree Amendment) with Ecology. After the cleanup, Mercy will purchase a portion of the property from the Port and redevelop it under a legal agreement (Prospective Purchaser Consent Decree) with Ecology.

The following documents are available for review:

- **Cleanup Action Plan:** Ecology's plan that describes the cleanup work to address contamination within the Lignin Operable Unit.
- **Consent Decree Amendment:** Amendment to a previous legal agreement between Ecology and the Port that requires the Port to complete engineering design documents and clean up the Lignin Operable Unit.
- **Prospective Purchaser Consent Decree:** Legal agreement between Ecology and Mercy that settles Mercy's cleanup liability for the Lignin Operable Unit and details property access requirements and affordable housing development information.

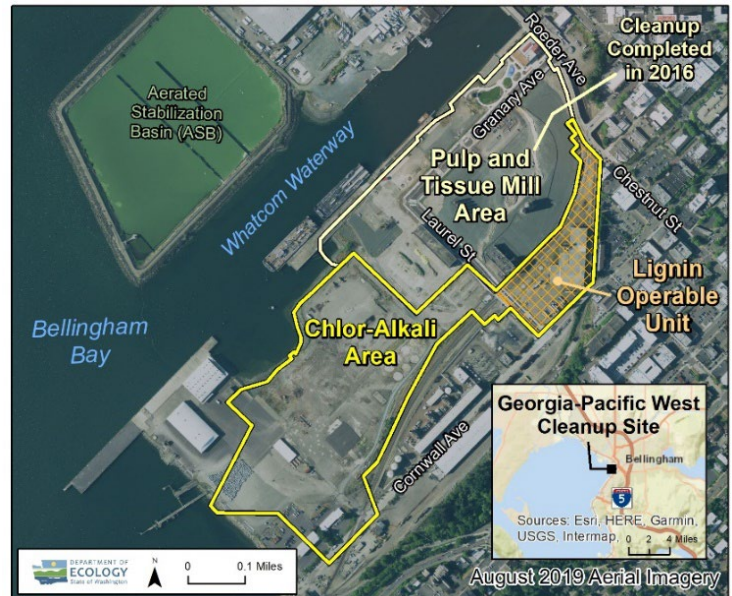
For public meeting and tour event details, see Page 5 →

Location and cleanup area management

The approximately 4 acre Lignin Operable Unit is located at the corner of W. Laurel Street and Cornwall Avenue in downtown Bellingham.

To expedite the cleanup of this unit and enable Mercy to purchase and redevelop a portion of the property after cleanup, the Consent Decree amendment creates the Lignin Operable Unit within the Chlor-Alkali Area of the Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site and sets the cleanup requirements for that Operable Unit. (See map to the right.)

Future cleanup of the remainder of the Chlor-Alkali Area outside of the Lignin Operable Unit will take place under a second amendment to the Consent Decree.



Aerial view of Georgia-Pacific West site and Lignin Operable Unit

Cleanup of the Pulp and Tissue Mill Area of the Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site was completed in 2016.

The Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site is one of 12 [Bellingham Bay cleanup](#)¹ sites coordinated through the Bellingham Bay Demonstration Pilot. The Pilot is a bay-wide multi-agency effort to clean up contamination, control pollution sources and restore habitat, with consideration for land and water uses.

Site history

The Lignin Operable Unit portion of the Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site was the location of a warehouse and above ground tanks. The warehouse was used to store manufactured lignin products and the tanks contained liquid waste from the lignin process. (Lignin is a resin byproduct of the paper pulping process and can be converted into various consumer products such as vanilla flavoring, adhesives, pharmaceuticals, dust retardants, etc.) The warehouse and tanks are gone, but foundations, pavement and railroad spurs are still present on the property.



Lignin warehouse (light-colored roof on right) and storage tanks, 1974

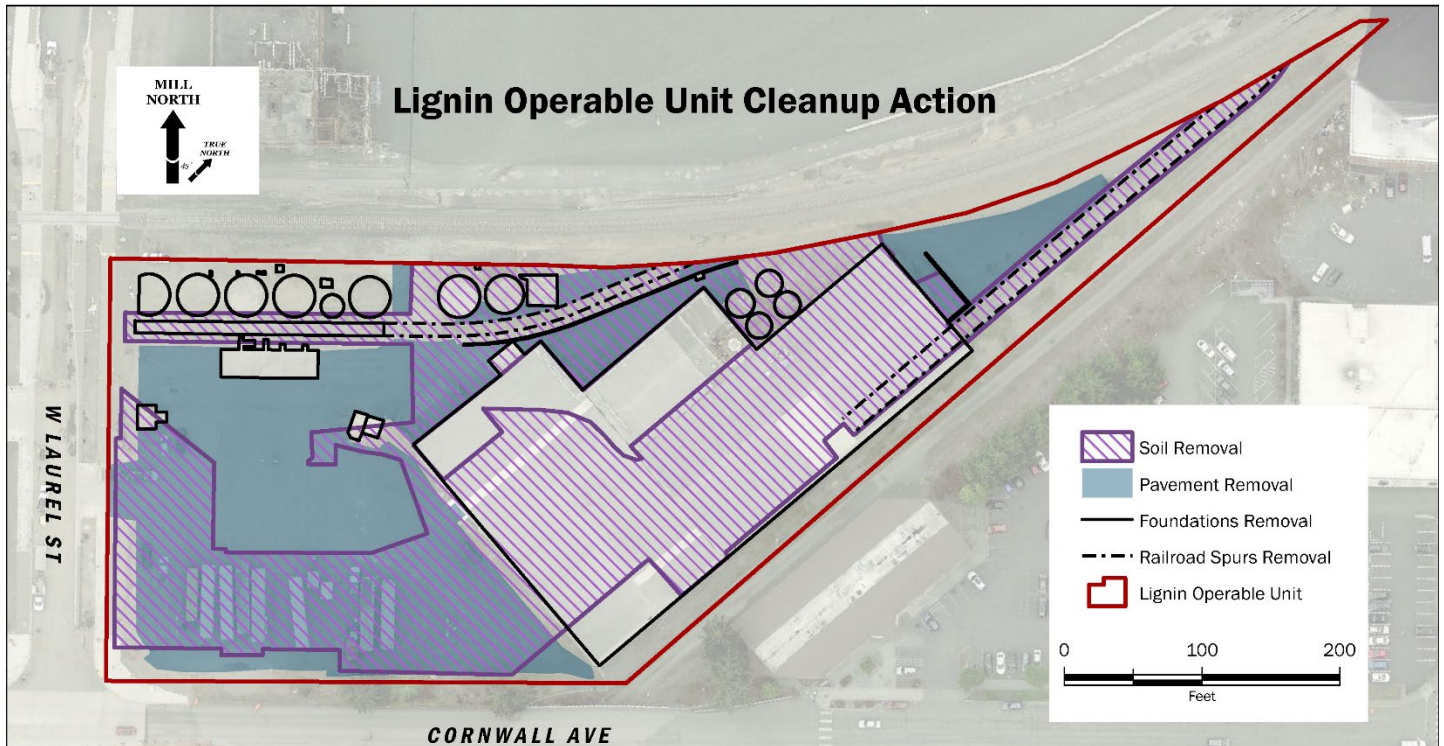
Environmental investigations at the Lignin Operable Unit have found metals and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in the soil and metals in the groundwater.

En español

El Departamento de Ecología le invita a comentar sobre un reporte ambiental para el sitio que está contaminado Lignin Operable Unit en Bellingham.

Si le gustaría recibir este documento en español, por favor llame a 425-324-5901 y espere a que un intérprete se una a la llamada o envíe un correo electrónico a preguntas@ecy.wa.gov. Traducciones de avisos públicos para los sitios de limpieza de la Bahía de Bellingham se preparan bajo solicitud.

¹ www.ecology.wa.gov/BellinghamBayCleanup



Lignin Operable Unit Cleanup Action Plan

Based on the planned redevelopment of the Lignin Operable Unit as affordable housing by Mercy, Ecology has selected a different cleanup action to address contaminated soil. Rather than capping contaminated soil as required by the 2021 Chlor-Alkali Area Cleanup Action Plan, the Lignin Operable Unit Cleanup Action Plan calls for removing contaminated soil from areas of that Operable Unit.

The Lignin Operable Unit Cleanup Action Plan includes:

- Removal and off-site disposal of 13,600 tons of contaminated soil and 5,900 tons of remaining structures (foundations, pavement, and railroad spurs)
- Monitor groundwater to ensure natural processes continue to reduce levels of contamination.
- Establish site use controls to protect the integrity of the completed cleanup action.

Planning and cleanup funding

In 2019, Ecology awarded the Port \$200 thousand for a Healthy Housing Integrated Planning Grant to fund early project planning efforts with Mercy to evaluate the feasibility of developing affordable housing and other mixed uses at the Lignin Operable Unit.

In 2021, Ecology awarded the Port \$2.8 million for an [Affordable Housing Cleanup Grant](#)² to fund the design and cleanup in support of the affordable housing redevelopment project.

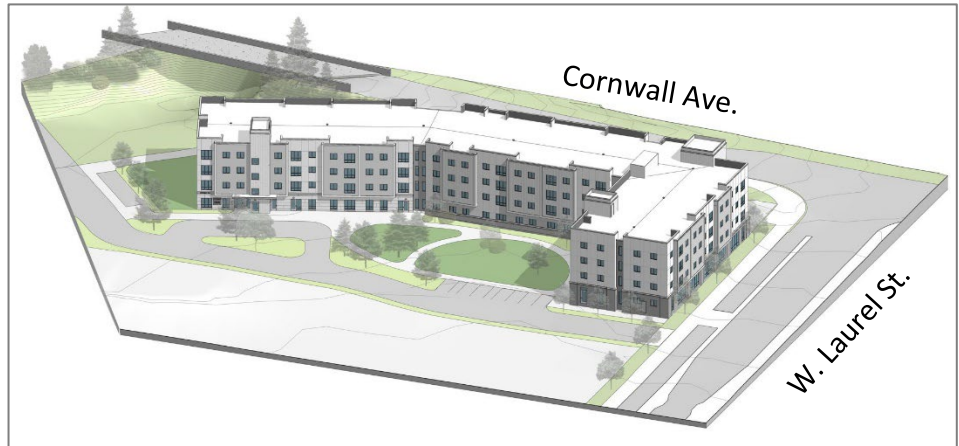
These grants are funded by the Washington State legislature through a [tax on hazardous substances](#).³

² <https://ecology.wa.gov/Spills-Cleanup/Contamination-cleanup/Brownfields/Affordable-housing>

³ <https://ecology.wa.gov/Spills-Cleanup/Contamination-cleanup/Cleanup-process/Paying-for-cleanups/Hazardous-Substance-Tax>

Redevelopment

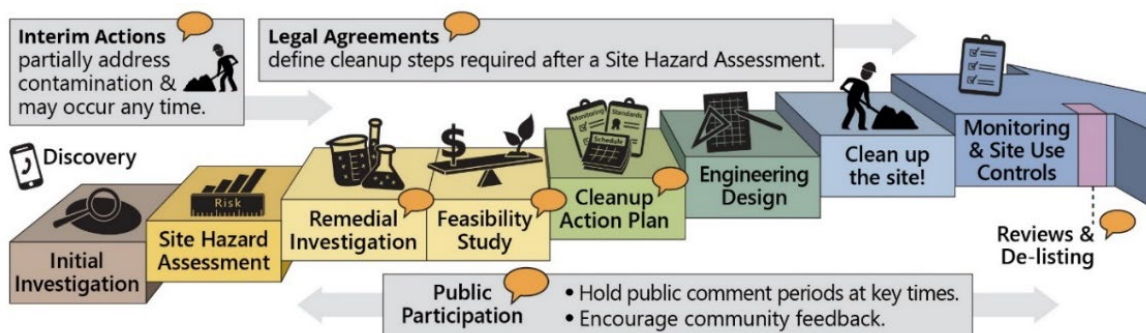
After the Port cleans up the Lignin Operable Unit, [Mercy Housing Northwest](#)⁴ (a non-profit affordable housing developer, owner, and service provider) will purchase a portion of the property from the Port and enter into a legal agreement with Ecology to settle their cleanup liability. The legal agreement also outlines continued property access for cleanup monitoring and requires Mercy’s redevelopment to include affordable housing for at least 50 years, which fulfills the Port’s Affordable Housing Cleanup Grant requirements from Ecology.



Aerial view of Mercy Housing Northwest’s redevelopment vision

Mercy plans to redevelop the property by constructing affordable housing on the southern portion of the property. Starting by the end of 2022, Mercy will begin construction on a building with affordable housing, community space, and an early learning center. Planning and design for a second building on the northern portion of the property is ongoing.

What happens next?



Washington’s formal cleanup process ([download text explanation](#)⁵)

- **June 20 – July 19, 2022:** Public comment period for Lignin Operable Unit Cleanup Action Plan and associated legal documents.
- **June 29, 2022:** In-person walking tour (noon) hosted by RE Sources through an Ecology Public Participation Grant. Online and in-person public meeting (6:30 p.m.) hosted by Ecology. See details on Page 5.
- **Late Summer 2022:** Ecology finalizes the Lignin Operable Unit Cleanup Action Plan and associated legal documents after addressing public comments received. Port completes engineering design and begins cleanup.
- **By End of 2022:** Port completes cleanup. Mercy purchases a portion of the property from the Port and begins redevelopment.

⁴ <https://www.mercyhousing.org/northwest/>

⁵ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/1909166.html>

Public meeting: in-person and online

Ecology will host a public meeting to provide project information and answer questions. Ecology will host the meeting *simultaneously* in-person and online.

Wednesday, June 29

- **6:30 p.m.:** Presentation
- **7:30 p.m.:** Questions and answers, as needed

In-person Meeting (Health screening required)

Ecology’s Bellingham office:

- 913 Squalicum Way, Unit 101 (follow signs towards back of Squalicum Lofts business park)

Ecology’s facility safety plan:

- All attendees are required to complete an [online health screening](#)⁶ before entering the building. (Staff support will be available on entry.)
- Face masks are optional.



Ecology’s in-person meeting location:
Ecology’s Bellingham Office, 913 Squalicum Way, Unit 101

Online Meeting (Registration required)

- **Register and join:** Go directly to the [Zoom meeting registration link](#)⁷ or visit [Ecology’s webpage](#)⁸. After entering an email address, participants will receive a unique link to join the meeting.
- **Participate online:** Participants will be able to view the presentation, listen to presenters, and ask questions through the Zoom meeting platform.

In-person walking tour

RE Sources will host a walking tour of the unit. Ecology, Port, and Mercy staff will join to share about the cleanup and redevelopment projects and answer questions.

www.re-sources.org/Lignin

- Visit RE Source’s webpage for an informational virtual tour video and to sign up for the tour.

Wednesday, June 29, 2022; Noon – 1:30 p.m.

- Meet at property access gate off of W. Laurel Street in downtown Bellingham (see picture to the right).
- Parking is available across railroad tracks on other side of W. Laurel Street.



Lignin tour entry gate off W. Laurel Street

This tour is funded through a Public Participation Grant from Ecology.

⁶ <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/e563597010a64f388418ebd1eca2fd2a?portalUrl=https://gis.ecology.wa.gov/portal>

⁷ <https://waecy-wa-gov.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlsdOmtqTljGt3hZsljccENySDQOMr9AqFf>

⁸ www.bit.ly/Ecology-GPWest

Toxics Cleanup Program
913 Squalicum Way, Unit 101
Bellingham, WA 98225

GP West Cleanup Site – Lignin Operable Unit

Cleanup and legal documents ready for public review



Información en español incluida (página 2)

Public comment period

June 20 – July 19, 2022

www.bit.ly/Ecology-Lignin-Comments

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Public outreach events – see page 5 for details

June 29, 2022

- **Noon:** In-person walking tour hosted by RE Sources
- **6:30 p.m.:** Public meeting (in-person & online) hosted by Ecology

ADA accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 425-324-5901 or email at ian.fawley@ecy.wa.gov, or visit ecology.wa.gov/Accessibility. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.



Aerial view of Lignin Operable Unit
and downtown Bellingham, May 2021