Focus on: Port Angeles Rayonier Mill Cleanup Project Updates

DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY State of Washington

This focus sheet provides updates on the Rayonier Mill cleanup project. Information includes:

- **Pages 2-3:** A summary of the 2025 public comment period, including how Ecology considered and responded to comments.
- **Page 4:** Clean up next steps and responsibilities.
- **Page 5:** What to expect over the next few months.

Overview of the cleanup project

Rayonier purchased the mill property in the 1930s and operated until 1997. While the mill produced specialty pulp, it also released harmful chemicals into the environment. Operations at the mill contaminated air, soil, groundwater, and marine sediments.

Rayonier and Ecology have studied the area and evaluated cleanup options. We focused our investigations on a portion of the site, called the study area, that includes the former mill property and adjacent marine environment.

In the 2000s, a series of cleanup actions removed roughly 30,000 tons of contaminated material from the study area. Current cleanup efforts focus on addressing the remaining contamination within the study area.

Ways to stay informed

Ecology has several resources to help the public learn about this site and sign up for updates. Please visit:

- ecology.wa.gov/Rayonier for details about the site's history, past investigations, and public involvement.
- go.ecology.wa.gov/2270 to view cleanup documents and subscribe for site updates.
- go.ecology.wa.gov/subscribePA to sign up for email updates about all Port Angeles cleanup sites.

Language Services

This material is available in multiple languages.

本材料提供多种语言版。

이 자료는 한국어로 제공됩니다.

Este material está disponible en varios idiomas.

Этот материал доступен на различных языках.

Цей матеріал доступний кількома мовами.

Tài liệu này có sẵn bằng nhiều ngôn ngữ.

Abby.Zabrodsky@ecy.wa.gov
564-250-0561

Accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, email Abby.Zabrodsky@ecy.wa.gov, call 564-250-0561, or dial 711 to call through the Washington Telecommunications Relay for services like text telephone (TTY).

Visit ecology.wa.gov/ADA for more accessibility information.

Overview of the 2025 public comment period

Ecology held a public comment period for the Port Angeles Rayonier Mill cleanup project from June 12 to August 12, 2025. A consent decree, an Interim Action Plan, and a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Determination of Nonsignificance were available for public review and comment. These documents, now finalized, will move the project into the next phase of cleanup.

To learn more about these documents and the interim action cleanup plan, please visit Ecology's Rayonier Mill webpages (links on page 1) or watch our 2025 Public Comment Period Presentation YouTube video.[1]

Comments we received

We received **386 comments from 359 commenters** during the comment period. The top concerns were:

- Commenters want a full removal of contaminated soil to an off-site facility (Alternative SL5).
- Commenters have concerns that the selected soil cleanup remedy (Alternative SL3) is inadequate.
- Commenters have financial concerns, including about the disproportionate cost analysis (DCA).

Ecology's full response to comments, along with a record of all the comments received, are available in **Ecology's 2026 Responsiveness Summary** (download link).[2]

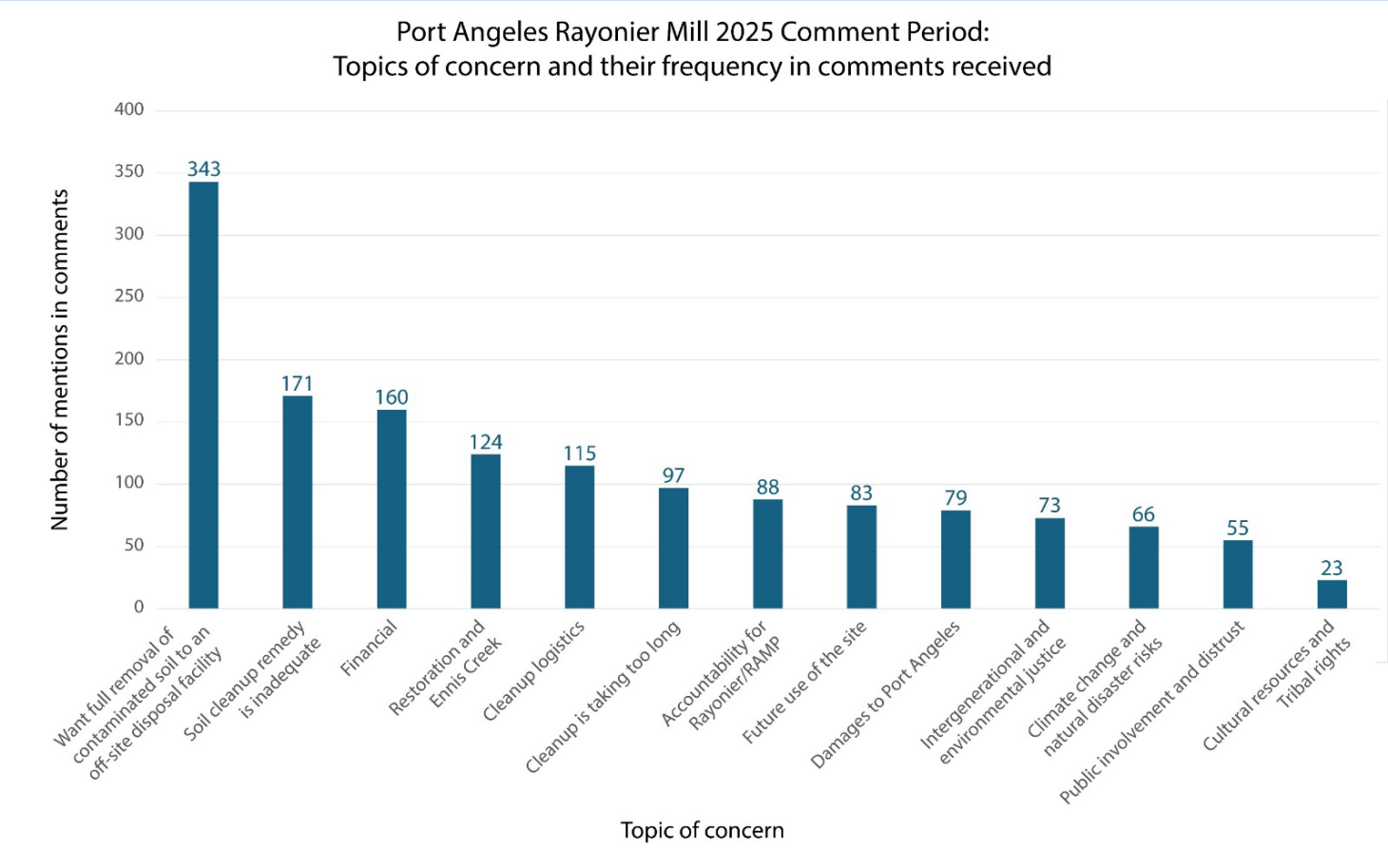


Figure 1: A bar chart showing how often each concern topic appeared in comments during the 2025 public comment period.

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkQrn9GW7O8
[2] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/document/172135

How we considered comments

We reviewed community feedback to identify key concerns and proposed solutions. We compared those ideas from commenters against our authority under the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA). We also reviewed our guidance for selecting and implementing cleanup solutions. Using this information, Ecology re-evaluated and explored a variety of ideas and proposals that we found in the comments. This includes:

- We reanalyzed the Disproportionate Cost Analysis (DCA) that was originally used to determine the soil cleanup remedy that is permanent to the maximum extent practicable (PMEP). According to MTCA, Ecology must select the cleanup remedy that is PMEP. As requested by commenters, we considered the recommendations that the City of Port Angeles' consultant, Integral, offered. **The findings show that the PMEP solution is still Alternative SL3.** Ecology's DCA Reanalysis Memo (download link; 244KB) provides more details about this reanalysis and the PMEP conclusion.[3]
- We explored alternative disposal locations for the contaminated soil and sediment that otherwise would be consolidated and capped. This included talks with the City of Port Angeles, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, and Ecology's Solid Waste Management Program. **We concluded that disposing of this waste off-site at an appropriate and local landfill is not feasible.**
- We worked with consultants at Moffatt & Nichol Engineers, a leading U.S.-based global infrastructure firm, to assess risks related to climate change and natural disaster, informed in part by public concerns. **We determined that many of the concerns brought by commenters will be carefully considered during the cleanup design.** While designing the cleanup, this project will follow mandatory climate and natural disaster risk management procedures to minimize risks.

What we found

Ultimately, Ecology cannot require a full removal of contaminated soil to an off-site facility (Alternative SL5), as it is not the permanent to the maximum extent practicable (PMEP) remedy as required under MTCA. According to MTCA, Ecology must select a cleanup option that is permanent without being disproportionately costly. This means we are legally bound to select the consolidation and capping cleanup remedy (Alternative SL3).

We appreciate the community's comments, time, and energy with this cleanup. We have used community feedback to shape this cleanup. Based on this feedback, we believe the cleanup will address what we hear as the community's key concerns: having the former Rayonier Mill site be safe for humans and the environment, as well as keeping the potential for a variety of future uses.

How we updated and finalized the public review documents

After taking these actions, we determined that we didn't need to make major changes to the documents. However, the agency made some *minor* updates to the documents after this public comment period. These include:

- Updating the Interim Action Plan from "public review draft" to "final."
- Adding a reference to and summary of the DCA Reanalysis Memo to the Interim Action Plan.

On June 25, the consent decree was lodged with the Clallam County Superior Court for entry as a binding order of the Court, requiring the PLPs to implement the final Interim Action Plan.

[3] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/document/172137

Who is financially responsible for the cleanup?

Current owners or operators of contaminated property, as well as owners and operators at the time of contamination, may be named as Potentially Liable Persons (PLPs) under MTCA.

Rayonier, Inc. owned and operated the former Rayonier Mill and was named a PLP in 2001. In 2004, Rayonier, Inc. conveyed property ownership to Rayonier Properties, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary, which Ecology named a PLP in 2009. When Rayonier, Inc. split into Rayonier, Inc. and Rayonier Advanced Materials (RYAM) in 2014, the subsidiary moved to RYAM and was renamed Rayonier A.M. Properties LLC (RAMP). As a result, RYAM and RAMP are the PLPs for the site and have accepted financial responsibility for the cleanup by entering into the consent decree (download link; 6.4MB).[4]

Figure 2: Rayonier Mill while in operation.
Source: Ecology's Coastal Atlas, 1990

Next steps in the cleanup process

The Rayonier Mill cleanup has reached a major milestone: the study area is now in the "Design the Cleanup" phase (see Figure 3). RAMP has hired consultants to complete final sampling work, which will help refine the boundaries of the cleanup areas. Using this information, RAMP will prepare an engineering design report. Ecology will continue to provide close oversight of all sampling, data collection, and analysis.

The design work will likely be completed in phases. Initial studies will be conducted first, and the resulting data will then be used to develop detailed engineering reports and cleanup designs. Public comment periods typically do not occur during the "Design the Cleanup" or "Clean Up the Site" steps. However, Ecology will continue to share updates on the design work and overall cleanup progress. Community members are always welcome to share their thoughts, concerns, and priorities with Ecology at any point during the cleanup process.

Once the engineering designs are finalized, cleanup construction ("Clean Up the Site!") will begin. In total, the soil cleanup is expected to take no more than 7 years, while groundwater and sediment cleanup efforts are expected to take no more than 10 years. These timeframes will run largely in parallel, so the overall restoration timeframe for the project (including the design, permitting, contracting, construction of the cleanup remedy, and implementation of institutional controls) **is expected to be no more than 10 years.** As design progresses, new data may further refine these estimates.

Once cleanup construction is completed, the Port Angeles Rayonier Mill study area will be safe for the community and environment, and ready to be put back into productive use. Ecology is not involved in selecting or implementing future land uses; these decisions rest with the property owner and local government.

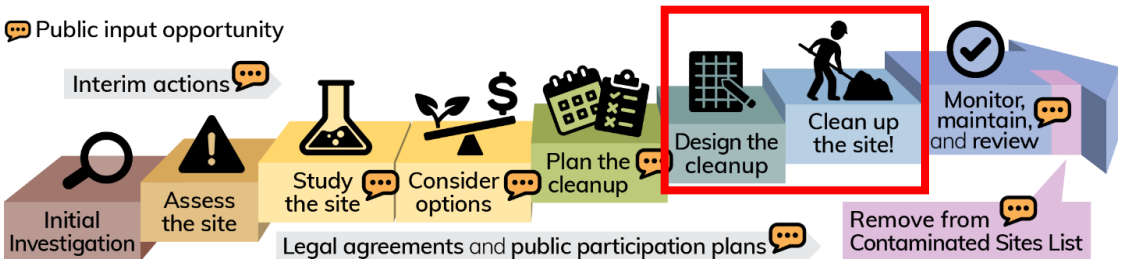


Figure 3: Steps of Washington's cleanup law (Model Toxics Control Act). The red box highlights the current milestone for the Rayonier Mill cleanup: starting to "Design the Cleanup" and preparing to "Clean Up the Site!"

[4] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/document/157962

Actions being taken at the site now and over the next few months

Under the 2024 amendment to the agreed order (download link; 224KB), RAMP has started hydrodynamic modeling in the adjacent marine environment.[5] This modeling is to evaluate how sediments may move after the removal of the large in-water dock and jetty. RAMP also will collect sediment samples under the dock and in the nearshore area. The modeling and sediment data will be used to determine the appropriate remedies for the area under the dock and the nearshore area. Once the consent decree is finalized, any remaining modeling and sampling work required under the amended agreed order will be performed under authority of the consent decree.

Sampling work in the marine waters is expected to begin in mid-September. During this period, community members and visitors may notice boats (like the one shown in Figure 4) conducting sampling activities in Port Angeles Harbor.

Figure 4: An example of a marine sediment sampling boat.

Related information

- How the cleanup process works[6]
- Making Cleanups as Permanent as Practicable (download link; 399KB) [7]
- Rayonier Mill 2025 fact sheet (download link; 1,623KB) [8]

Contact Information

Abby Zabrodsky,
public involvement coordinator
Abby.Zabrodsky@ecy.wa.gov
564-250-0561

[5] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/document/142382
[6] https://ecology.wa.gov/spills-cleanup/contamination-cleanup/cleanup-process
[7] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2509058.pdf
[8] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/document/157425

DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY
State of Washington
Toxics Cleanup Program
PO Box 47775
Olympia, WA 98504-7775

Focus On: Port Angeles Rayonier Mill Cleanup Project Updates

700 N Ennis, Port Angeles
CSID: 2270 | FSID: 19

Ecology provides updates on the 2025 public comment period, including a summary of the comments we received and the actions we took to consider them. We also provide updates on cleanup actions now being taken at the study area.

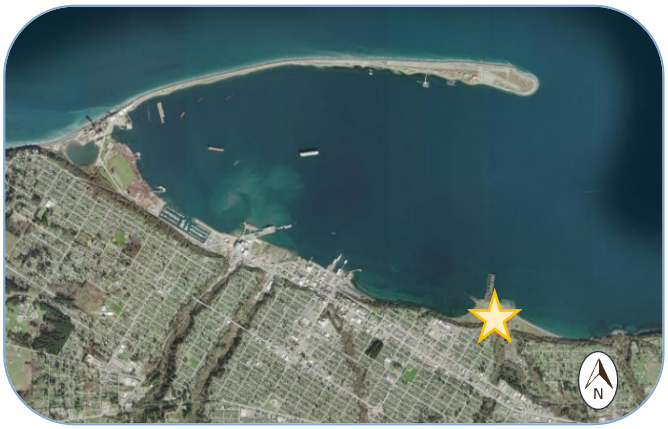
Learn more about the cleanup

Visit go.ecology.wa.gov/2270 or scan the QR code to:

- view cleanup documents
- subscribe for site updates

Contact us

Abby Zabrodsky, public involvement coordinator
Abby.Zabrodsky@ecy.wa.gov, 564-250-0561



The location of the Port Angeles Rayonier Mill cleanup project (gold star).

ADA accessibility and translation information inside:

- 内含中文
- Información en español incluida
- 한글번역본 내부에 있음
- Impormasyon sa Tagalog sa loob
- Українська всередині
- Thông tin bên trong bằng tiếng Việt