Public Participation Plan

Northern State Multi Service Center Cleanup Site
Sedro-Woolley, WA

Toxics Cleanup Program
Washington State Department of Ecology
Northwest Region Office
Shoreline, Washington

Publication 26-09-143, June 2026

DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY
State of Washington

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Cover photo credit

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Related Information

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To request an ADA accommodation, email Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov, call (425) 240-4353, or call Ecology through the Washington Telecommunication Relay for services including text telephone (TTY) at 711 or through your preferred relay service provider. Visit Ecology.wa.gov/ADA for more accessibility information.

Language Access

The Department of Ecology is committed to providing language services, including translation and interpretation, for people whose primary language is not English. To request these services, email Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov or call (425) 240-4353. If you call, ask for an interpreter to be connected with one.

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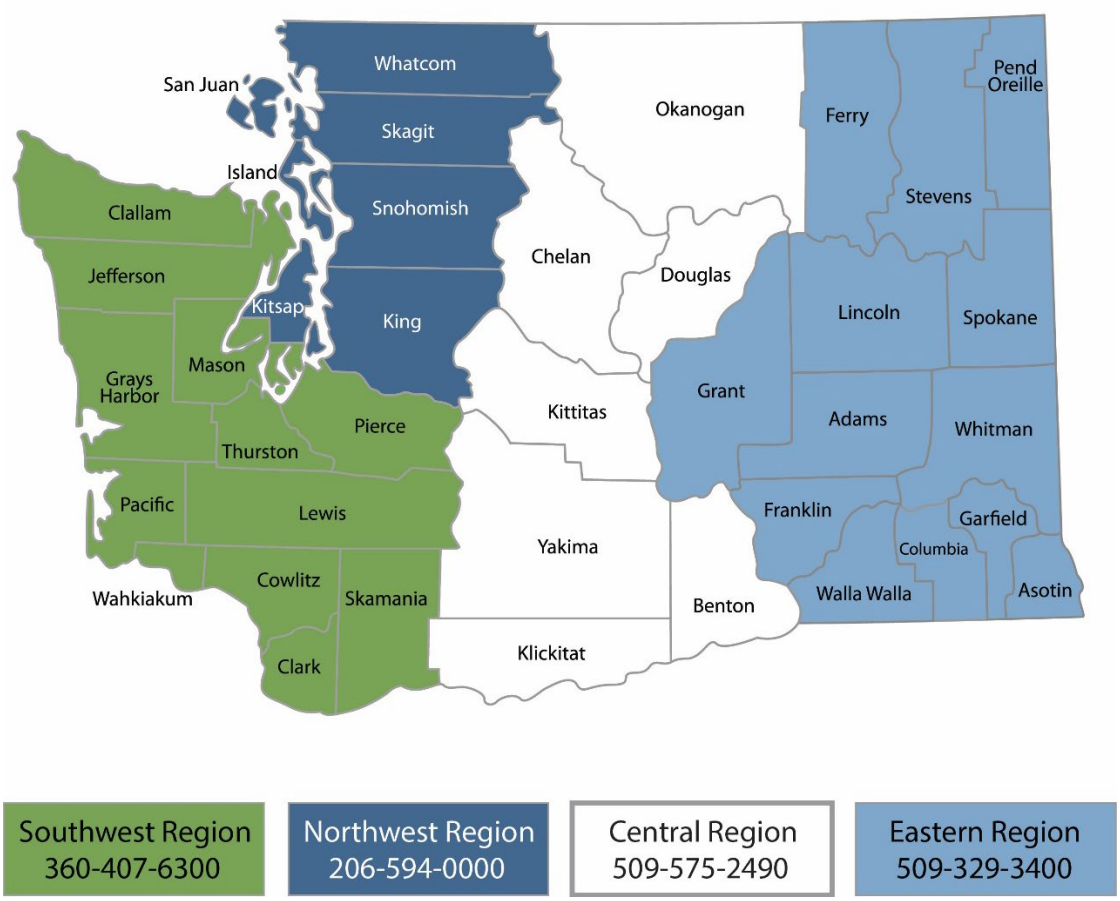
[1] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/10048
[2] https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Who-we-are/Our-Programs/Toxics-Cleanup

Department of Ecology's Region Offices

Map of Counties Served



Region	Counties served	Mailing Address	Phone
Southwest	Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Mason, Lewis, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum	PO Box 47775 Olympia, WA 98504	360-407-6300
Northwest	Island, King, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom	PO Box 330316 Shoreline, WA 98133	206-594-0000
Central	Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, Yakima	1250 W Alder St Union Gap, WA 98903	509-575-2490
Eastern	Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman	4601 N Monroe Spokane, WA 99205	509-329-3400
Headquarters	Across Washington	PO Box 47600 Olympia, WA 98504	360-407-6000

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Public Involvement in Contamination Cleanup

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) developed this public participation plan (plan). The purpose of the plan is to promote meaningful community involvement during cleanup of the Northern State Multi Service Center cleanup site.

This plan outlines how Ecology will keep the public informed about contamination investigations and cleanup options at each stage of the process. Please review the Appendix for more information about the cleanup process. The plan also details when and how the community can participate in the cleanup process. We encourage the public to engage with the decision-making opportunities and provide input.

Site contacts

To be included in the site record, comments about the cleanup process must be submitted during comment periods. Questions and informal comments or information about the site's history are welcome anytime.

WA State Dept of Ecology

Northwest Region Office
PO Box 330316
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425-240-4353

If you are unable to reach these contacts, please visit the Northern State Multi Service Center cleanup site webpage[3] for up-to-date contact information.

Public Participation Activities

Members of the public may ask questions, submit informal comments, or share site information at any time. Interested parties do not need to wait for a formal public comment period to contact Ecology.

However, to be included in the formal site record, comments about the site investigation, cleanup alternatives, or cleanups must be submitted during formal comment periods. In addition, the public is invited to review site documents before they become final. This is the

[3] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/10048

most direct and influential way to learn more about the site and be involved in the cleanup's decision-making.

How we share information with the community

During specific stages of the cleanup, Ecology will mail notices about public comment periods to addresses surrounding the site. The mailing list area will vary depending on the type of contamination and where it's located. However, the list will at least include addresses within a 1/4-mile radius of the site and other interested organizations and individuals. These notices will provide general information about the site, contact information for submitting comments, and times and locations of public meetings or hearings or how to request one if not yet scheduled.

Comment period notices will be available online and at document repositories (for example at the library closest to the site). Notices may also be posted in various locations throughout the community (for example, local businesses, schools, or post offices).

Ecology may also develop documents outside of comment periods to keep the community updated on the site's status. These informational documents will be available online and print copies may be mailed to the nearby community if we feel the message warrants the associated cost and resources.

Postal mailing list

Ecology maintains a mailing list that includes addresses within at least a 1/4-mile radius of the site and relevant local, state, and federal government contacts. All contacts receive public comment notices when draft documents are available.

We will add additional individuals, organizations, and other interested parties to the mailing list as requested. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for this site, please contact Kristen Forkeutis at 425-240-4353 or Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov.

Contaminated Site Register

Public comment periods, events, and other cleanup notices are published in Ecology's *Contaminated Site Register*.[4] To receive the *Contaminated Site Register* by email, please subscribe online,[5] or contact Sarah Kellington at sarah.kellington@ecy.wa.gov or 360-280-3167.

Newspaper display ads or legal notices

We announce public comment periods and events for this site in ads or notices published in the *Skagit Valley Herald*. We will also publish notice on our Public Input & Events Listing webpage.[6]

[4] https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Guidance-technical-assistance/Site-Register-lists-and-data
[5] https://ecology.wa.gov/site-register
[6] https://ecology.wa.gov/Events/Search/Listing

Email lists

Ecology maintains an email list to update interested persons about this site. If you would like to be added to the email list for this site, please contact Kristen Forkeutis at 425-240-4353 or Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov.

Ecology's website and social media platforms

We maintain a website for the Northern State Multi Service Center cleanup site.[7] The website provides site information, and you may download cleanup documents.

We may also share information about cleanup sites through news releases, our ECOconnect blog, and social media.[8]

Automatic site updates

You can subscribe to this site from our Northern State Multi Service Center webpage.[7] You'll receive a weekly email if we change the site's status, add documents to the site's webpage, or open a comment period.

Places to see print documents

During public comment periods, you can find print documents at the following locations:

Central Skagit Sedro-Woolley Library
110 W State St
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284
360-755-3985

Washington Department of Ecology
Bellingham Field Office
913 Squalicum Way, Unit 101
Bellingham, WA 98225

To schedule an appointment with Ecology, please contact the Bellingham Field Office administration staff at 360-255-4400 or ecydlbfoadminsupport@ecy.wa.gov.

If you would like to be mailed print documents, please contact Kristen Forkeutis at 425-240-4353 or Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov.

How to share information with us

We hold public comment periods and sometimes public events to learn your thoughts, opinions, and concerns about cleanup at a site. We may also identify public concerns and cleanup goals by meeting with and soliciting information from interested community members and organizations. To collaborate with us about this site, please contact Kristen Forkeutis at 425-240-4353 or Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov.

Public comment periods

At a minimum, the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA, see page 18 for more information) requires 30-day comment periods to allow interested members of the public to comment on

[7] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/10048
[8] https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/who-we-are/news

draft documents, legal agreements, and proposed cleanup actions. If there is significant interest, Ecology may extend the public comment period.

When Ecology oversees the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) determinations (see page 19 for more information), we hold comment periods for at least two weeks and may extend to 30 days or more when other cleanup documents are concurrently available for review.

Following a comment period, we publish all the input we received and respond to significant comments and questions, as appropriate. If the comments result in significant changes to the cleanup documents, then the documents will be revised and re-issued for public review. If the comments do not result in significant changes, the documents will become final.

Public events

We hold public meetings, workshops, open houses, and hearings based on community interest. At meetings, workshops, and open houses, attendees can ask questions, learn more about the site, and submit written comments when a comment period is open. At a public hearing, verbal comments are transcribed for the record, and Ecology responds to them after the comment period in our response to comments.

If we have not scheduled an event, we will hold one if 10 or more people request it. This may cause us to extend a public comment period, so the event occurs during it.

Events are held at locations close to the site that meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Public events are always announced in advance using a variety of methods.

Public Participation Grants

Grants may be available to neighborhood committees, non-profits, and other groups interested in the site. For contaminated sites, these funds can be used to:

- Hire an expert to help interpret technical information
- Conduct activities that enhance the public's understanding of, and participation in, the cleanup process

For more information about public participation grants, please contact Laura Busby at 360-280-5088 or laura.busby@ecy.wa.gov and Maria Marlin at 360-407-6083 or maria.marlin@ecy.wa.gov. You may also visit the Public Participation Grant website.[9]

[9] https://ecology.wa.gov/PPG

Site Information

Site background

The 220-acre Northern State property sits on the northeastern edge of Sedro-Woolley in Skagit County, WA. The property was developed in 1909 for the Northern State Hospital, which was owned and operated by Washington State. The hospital treated individuals with mental health issues and employed more than 400 people. It was a self-sustained, residential community with a farm, creamery, shop, and more. It closed in 1973 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2015 the City of Sedro-Woolley annexed the Northern State property, and in 2018, Washington State transferred ownership of the property to the Port of Skagit. The port, city, and county are working together to turn the property into the Sedro-Woolley Innovation for Tomorrow (SWIFT) Center,[10] a mixed-use campus for education, research and development, manufacturing, hospitality, and commercial venues. Many of the property's buildings are currently leased to tenants.

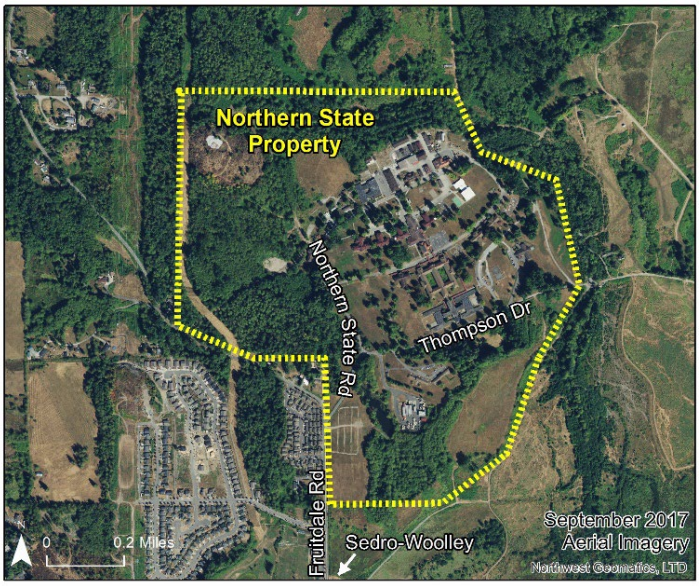

Figure 1: Northern State property, September 2017

Figure 2: Northern State Hospital dedication, May 1912
Source: WA State Archives

[10] https://www.swiftcenterskagit.com

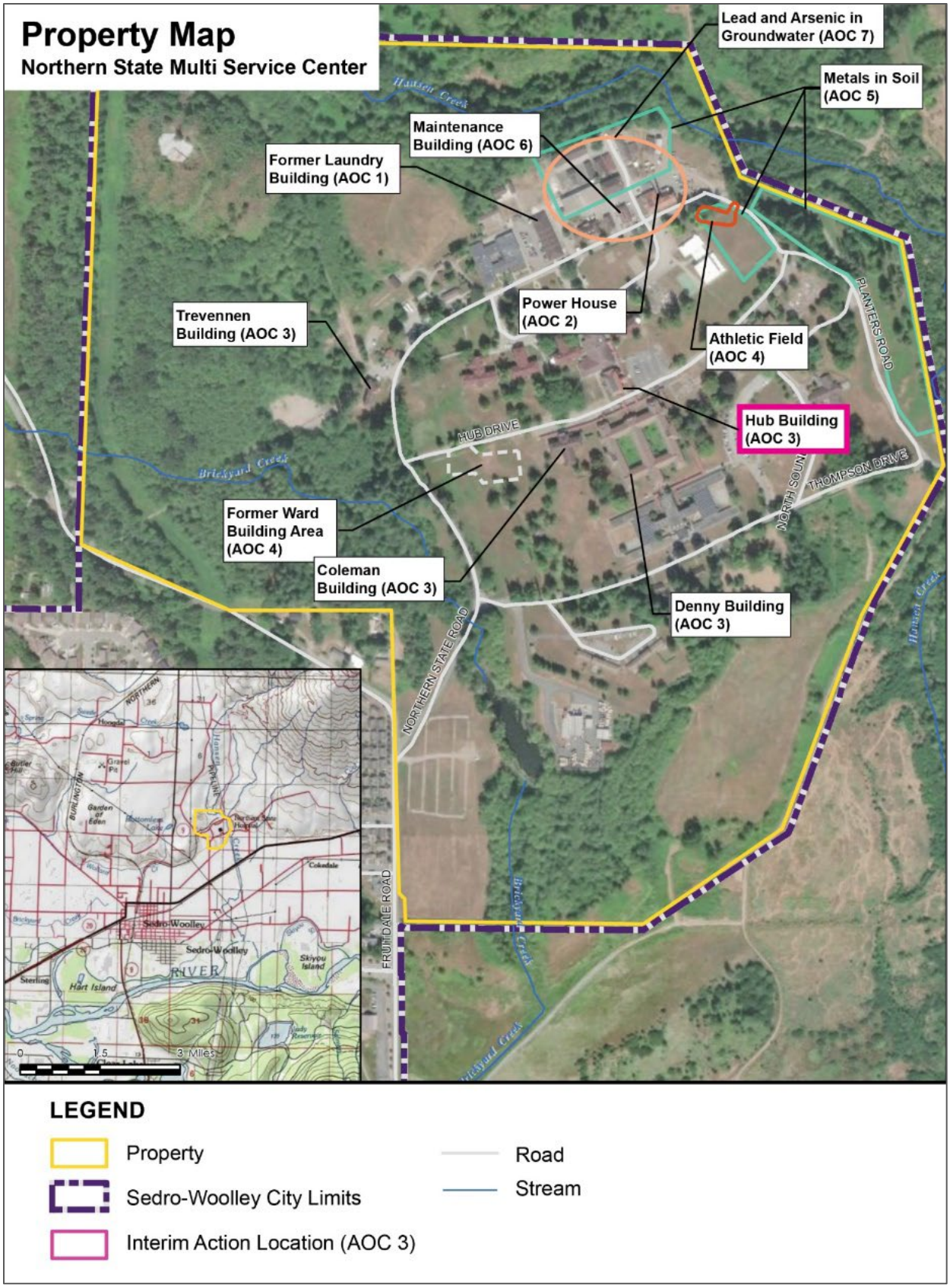

Figure 3: Map of the Northern State Multi Service Center property showing the seven areas of concern (AOC)

Contamination

Decades of hospital operations and maintenance for a powerhouse, a water treatment facility, a fueling station, maintenance and paint shops, and a laundry facility contributed to contamination on the property. Debris from demolished buildings was also reportedly buried or disposed of on site.

Environmental investigations found contaminated soil, groundwater, and soil vapor. The following contaminants are above WA State cleanup levels established to protect human health and the environment:

- **Soil:** metals, carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (cPAHs), tetrachloroethene (PCE), trichloroethene (TCE), and petroleum products
- **Groundwater:** metals, PCE, and petroleum products
- **Soil vapor:** PCE and TCE

Testing identified contamination within seven areas of concern (AOC) at the site (see Figure 3).

- **AOC 1:** Former Laundry Building
- **AOC 2:** Power House Building
- **AOC 3:** Hub Building, Trevennen Building, Coleman Building, and Denny Building
- **AOC 4:** Former Ward Building Area and Athletic Fields
- **AOC 5:** Metals in Soil
- **AOC 6:** Maintenance Building
- **AOC 7:** Lead and Arsenic in Groundwater

Cleanup plans

Under the MTCA cleanup process (see page 19) the Northern State Multi Service Center site is moving through the steps to achieve cleanup. Interim actions (early partial cleanups) are being prioritized at this site to support redevelopment efforts at the SWIFT Center. Concurrently, the site is being studied (remedial investigation) and options for cleanup are being considered (feasibility study). Once those steps are final, a cleanup action plan will be developed, followed by engineering design. These cleanup documents and future legal agreements will be available for public review and comment.

The port will be expected to carry out Ecology's Cleanup Action Plan to address contamination at the site. Following the cleanup, the site will be monitored to ensure the cleanup is protecting human health and the environment.

Area community and land use

Sitting at the western edge of the Cascade Mountain Range in Washington, Sedro-Woolley is known as the "Gateway to the North Cascades." It lies about 70 miles north of Seattle and about 20 miles south of Bellingham on Highway 20, along the Skagit River. It's only about 9.8 square kilometers in size and has a population of over 12,000 residents.

Community members frequent the Northern State property for its recreational and historical value. The property is currently zoned as "Public" with the land parcels surrounding the property to the east as "Urban Reserve Public Open Space" and to the west as "Residential-5" (see Figure 4).

The community vision for the redevelopment of the Northern State property into the SWIFT Center relies on the partnership among the Port of Skagit,[11] City of Sedro-Woolley,[12] and the Skagit County.[13] The port, city, and county entered into an interlocal agreement (and amendment) with the following redevelopment goals:[12]

- Encourage the private sector to create and sustain jobs at the SWIFT Center benefiting all of Skagit County and its citizens and that are compatible with all the other goals.
- Continue and promote public recreational use of property.
- Protect the environmentally sensitive areas of the property, in particular Hansen Creek.
- Acknowledge and protect the historic significance of Northern State Hospital to the local community, the wider region, and the State of Washington.
- Acknowledge and respect the neighboring Upper Skagit Indian Tribal Nation's interests in the property.

[11] https://portofskagit.com/swift-center/
[12] https://www.sedro-woolley.gov/departments/planning/northern_state.php
[13] https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/Home/main.htm

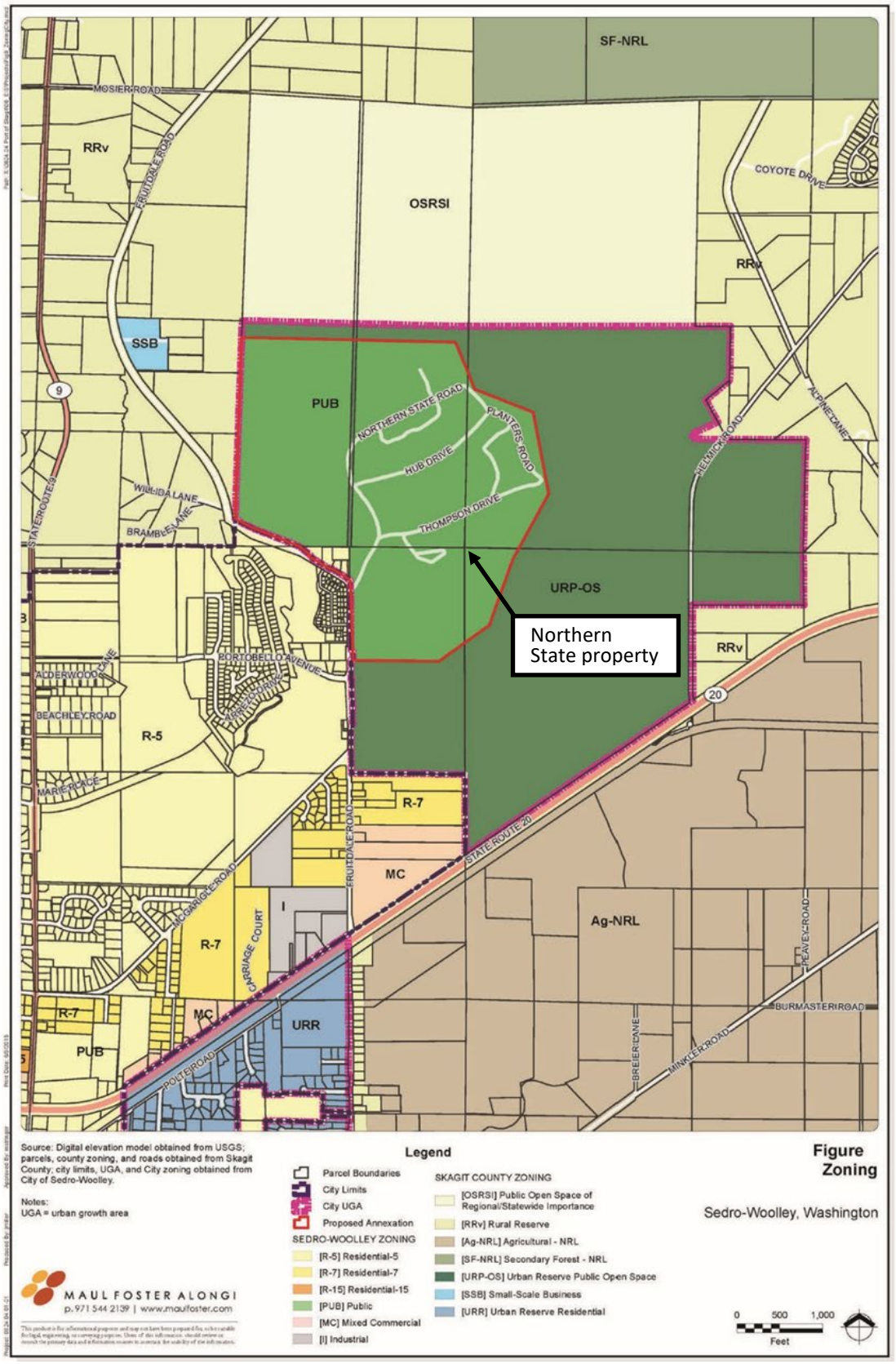

Figure 4: SWIFT Center 2015 Subarea Plan Zoning Map

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Ecology is committed to addressing environmental and health disparities in communities and ensuring non-discrimination, meaningful public involvement, and equitable access to agency information and services.

Ecology uses external data sources to better understand the environmental and demographic information of the communities impacted by cleanup sites. When appropriate, Ecology considers special accommodations based on the needs of the community.

WA Environmental Health Disparities Map

The Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map[14] compares communities across our state for environmental health disparities and ranks them on a scale of 1-10 (low to high). Ecology uses this information to identify cumulative environmental health issues. However, we do not interpret rankings as absolute values, and we do not use them to diagnose a community health issue or to label a community.

The Northern State Multi Service Center census tract (53057950900) has an environmental health disparities ranking of 2 (see Figure 5). The demographic data White (78.1%), Hispanic or Latino (9.3%), Multiracial (5.8%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (5.1%) individuals make up the largest racial groups (see Figure 6) while ages 50-64 make up the widest age group (see Figure 7).

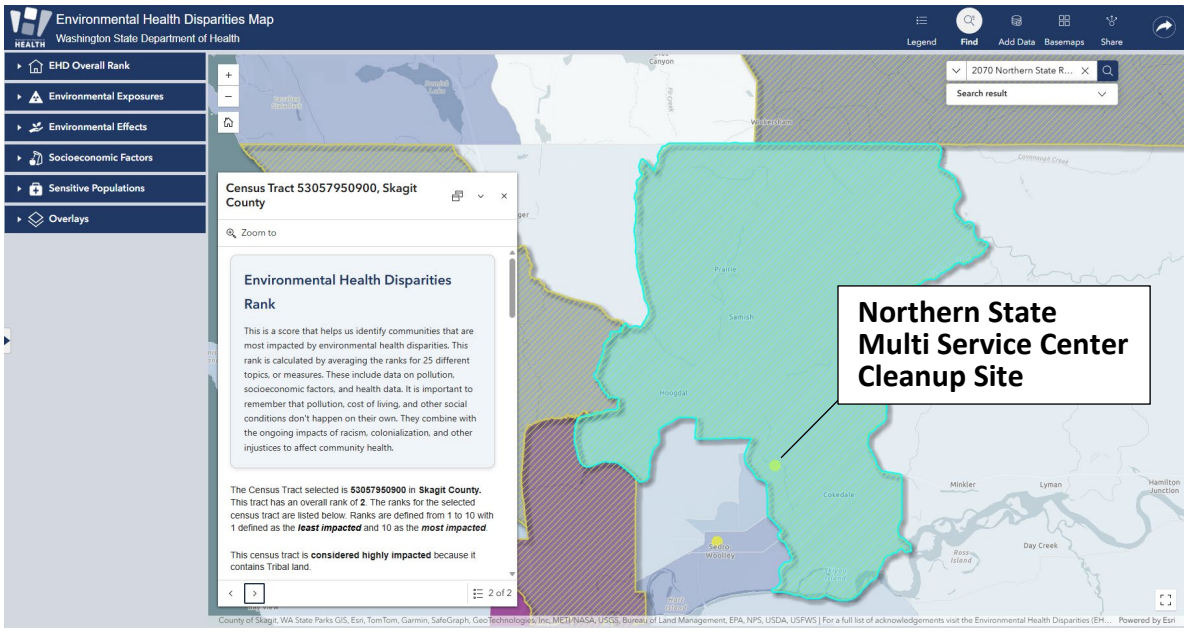

Figure 5: Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map – Census Tract 53057950900, Environmental Health Disparities Rank 2

[14] https://doh.wa.gov/data-and-statistical-reports/washington-tracking-network-wtn/washington-environmental-health-disparities-map

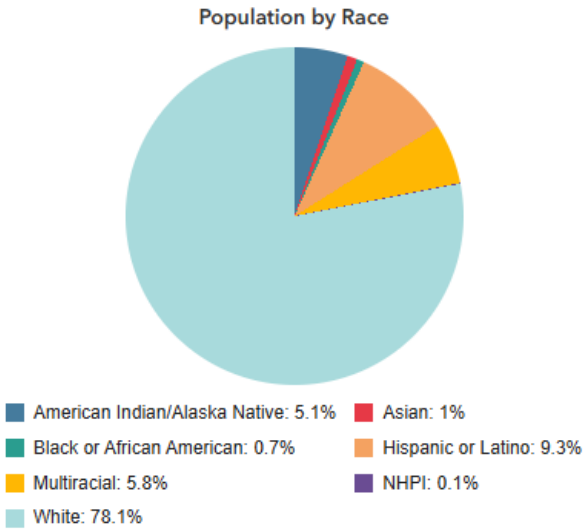

Figure 6: Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map demographic details (race/ethnicity)

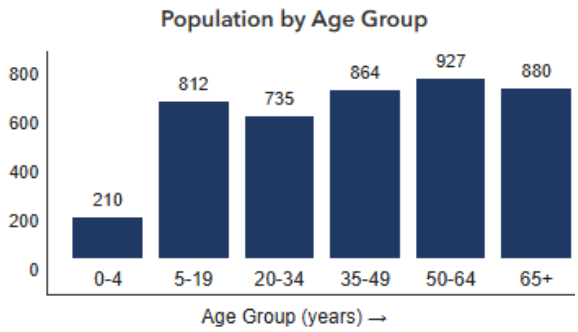

Figure 7: Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map demographic details (age/sex)

The Washington State Department of Health mapping tool model was "specifically adapted from CalEnviroScreen – a cumulative environmental impacts assessment mapping tool developed by CalEPA and used in California. It estimates a cumulative environmental health impact score for each census tract reflecting pollutant exposures and factors that affect people's vulnerability to environmental pollution.

The model is based on a conceptual formula of Risk = Threat * Vulnerability, where threat and vulnerability are based on several indicators.

The threat is represented by indicators that account for pollution burden, which is a combination of environmental effects and environmental exposures in communities. Environmental effects include indicators that account for adverse environmental quality generally, even when population contact with an environmental hazard is unknown or uncertain. Environmental exposures include the levels of certain pollutants that populations come into contact with.

Vulnerability is represented by indicators of socioeconomic factors and sensitive populations for which there is clear evidence that they may affect susceptibility or vulnerability to an increased pollution burden. Indicators in socioeconomic factors measure population characteristics that modify the pollution burden itself. Sensitive populations refer to those who are at greater risk due to intrinsic biological vulnerability to environmental stressors.

In the model, threat is multiplied by vulnerability in order to reflect the scientific literature that indicates population characteristics often modify and amplify the impact of pollution exposures on certain vulnerable populations. The rankings help to compare health and social factors that may contribute to disparities in a community."

American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS)[15] is an ongoing survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. It provides updated data on the social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics of the U.S. population. Ecology uses this information to help identify socioeconomic indicators, including limited English proficient (LEP) populations and languages spoken at home.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) Populations

The 2023 ACS 5-year estimates include the following LEP data for Skagit County with a total population of 131,031 people.

- **Spanish:** 5,170 LEP individuals

Languages Spoken at Home

The percentage of the population that speaks a language other than English at home based on the representative Census Tract follows.

- **Census Tract 9509** (where the site is located):
  - **4,447** total population
  - **6.4%** of the population speaks a language other than English at home
    - Spanish: 4.8%
    - Other Indo-European languages: 1.2%
    - Asian and Pacific Island languages: 0.2%
    - Other languages: 0.2%

Income and Poverty

- Median Household Income: $122,039
- Poverty: 14.2%

Area Community

Ecology considers the needs of the surrounding community when planning public outreach. As a starting point, we collect data from the WA Environmental Health Disparities Map and the American Community Survey, and we conduct community research to build on this information. We reach out to cultural community organizations (when available) and provide information in other languages as needed and in accordance with federal guidance.[16]

Demographic data and community research indicate that Spanish speakers are the largest Limited English Proficient (LEP) population. In addition, the non-English language most widely spoken at home in Census Tract 9509 is Spanish (4.8% out of 4,447 people).

[15] https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/about.html
[16] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2004/06/25/04-14464/guidance-to-environmental-protection-agency-financial-assistance-recipients-regarding-title-vi

Ecology will provide information about available language services in both English and Spanish on fact sheets and the cleanup site webpage. This information will explain that translations of materials and interpretation services are available upon request at no cost. We believe this approach will meet community needs based on previous outreach efforts and the standard practices of the City of Sedro-Woolley and Skagit County.

To request information in another language, call Kristen Forkeutis at 425-240-4353 or email Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov. If calling for interpretation services, please ask for an interpreter and stay on the line while we connect you.

We strive to make our public participation efforts as inclusive as possible and welcome feedback about how to better reach the surrounding community.

Tribal engagement

The following Tribes could be affected by the contamination, and the cleanup process may also uncover cultural resources.

- Lummi Nation
- Nooksack Indian Tribe
- Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
- Upper Skagit Indian Tribe
- Samish Indian Nation
- Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe
- Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians
- Tulalip Tribes
- Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

We will reach out to these Tribes to offer opportunities to engage with Ecology in the cleanup process.

Washington's Cleanup Laws

Ecology uses the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA)[17] and accompanying regulations for cleanup activities. Passed in 1989, MTCA provides guidelines for contaminated site cleanup in Washington state. This law sets standards to ensure the cleanup protects human health and the environment. MTCA requires the creation of this plan.

Model Toxics Control Act

MTCA began in 1988 as a citizen-led effort to clean up contaminated sites in Washington state. The law holds property owners or operators responsible for cleaning up contamination on, or coming from, their property.

[17] https://www.ecology.wa.gov/mtca

Ecology carries out MTCA, making sure cleanups happen according to state rules and regulations. These rules are found in Chapter 173-340 Washington Administrative Code (WAC).[18] Ecology investigates reports of contamination, and the property is placed on the Contaminated Sites List,[19] if the pollution is determined to pose a serious risk to human health or the environment. This starts the cleanup process at the site.

The cleanup process under MTCA includes several steps (see Appendix). Public involvement is a key part of MTCA's cleanup process.[20] Nearby residents, businesses, community groups, and other interested parties can review and comment on documents related to steps that make crucial decisions or plans regarding the cleanup.

State Environmental Policy Act

MTCA cleanups also require evaluation under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).[21] Under SEPA, the potential for significant adverse environmental impacts from a project or action must be evaluated by state and local agencies when making decisions. This evaluation is subject to public review and comment in parallel with cleanup documents.

Plan Amendments

Ecology developed this plan following MTCA regulations (WAC 173-340-600). We review it as the cleanup progresses and amend it as necessary. You may suggest amendments to Kristen Forkeutis at 425-240-4353 or Kristen.Forkeutis@ecy.wa.gov.

This plan intends to provide the public with information on opportunities for public involvement and comment. The outreach activities discussed reflect Ecology's current plans to keep the public informed. It also provides ways for those interested in the site to communicate their concerns and questions to us.

If you feel the planned outreach activities and mechanisms found in this plan are insufficient or would like to modify them in some way, please contact us. We will work to find solutions. We can implement new activities or outreach tools right away, with or without amending this plan.

[18] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/publications/9406.pdf
[19] https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/reports/cleanup/contaminated
[20] https://ecology.wa.gov/MTCA-process
[21] https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=197-11

Appendix – Steps in the cleanup process

The cleanup process is defined in the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA), Washington's cleanup law. See the accessible PDF on the next page for details.

Washington's Cleanup Process

Public participation plans and comment periods are only required for cleanups under a legal agreement with Ecology. Otherwise, all cleanups follow the same steps. The steps are defined by Washington's cleanup law, the Model Toxics Control Act.

DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY State of Washington

Public input opportunity

Initial investigation
Find out if there's contamination needing cleanup.

Assess the site
Evaluate potential threat to humans and the environment.

Study the site (remedial investigation)
- Find out what and where the contamination is.
- Determine how contamination might impact living things.

Consider options (feasibility study)
- Compare ways to keep the contamination from harming people or the environment.
- Weigh benefits versus costs of each cleanup option.

Plan the cleanup (cleanup action plan)
- Describe Ecology's selected cleanup option.
- Set cleanup standards that will protect living things.
- Schedule next steps.
- Set requirements for monitoring and maintenance.

Design the cleanup
Make detailed construction plans for the cleanup action.

Clean up the site!
Complete the cleanup action. For example:
- Constructing a multi-layered capping system.
- Installing a treatment system.
- Removing contamination to a special landfill.

Monitor, maintain, and review
- Operate treatment systems and monitor progress.
- Prevent activities that could disturb the cleanup.
- Review regularly to ensure cleanup still protects living things.

Remove from Contaminated Sites List
Move to No Further Action list if site meets all standards and requirements.

Interim actions may clean up some contamination before the final cleanup.

Legal orders or agreements define required tasks and schedules.

Public participation plans explain how Ecology will ask for input from the local community.

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