



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources
Doug Sutherland - Commissioner of Public Lands



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Landmark Cleanup Effort Launched by Ecology's Whatcom Waterway Decision
Public Invited to Signing Ceremony at 10:30 a.m. Thursday on the Waterway Site

[Bellingham, Wash.] Today the state Department of Ecology's final approval of a Cleanup Action Plan and Consent Decree for the Whatcom Waterway on Bellingham's downtown waterfront sets the stage for one of the state's largest marine cleanup projects to date.

When completed, this cleanup will remove 530,000 cubic yards of contaminated material from Bellingham Bay and the waterfront area, will create two miles of enhanced nearshore habitat and will transform a contaminated 37-acre industrial treatment lagoon into a Clean Ocean Marina with new salmon habitat and fish passageways.

Ecology's announcement was praised by officials from the Port of Bellingham, City of Bellingham and state Department of Natural Resources – all responsible parties in executing this \$44 million cleanup project. Since 1996, they have worked together, along with federal, state, local agencies, Nooksack and Lummi Tribes and ReSources — known as the Bellingham Bay Pilot Team — to develop a cleanup plan. The original plan has been adjusted to reflect the dramatic change in waterfront activities since the project began. While the waterfront has been used for industrial purposes for more than 100 years, the community now is working on a transition to a more sustainable waterfront economy with a mix light industry, commercial and recreational uses. Ecology's cleanup plan is designed to support these new waterfront uses into the future.

At the heart of the cleanup plan is the conversion of a 37-acre industrial treatment lagoon into a new Clean Ocean Marina. This will add new public access, moorage and small boat launching for Whatcom County's boating community.

"The city is excited about creating a new, vibrant urban village on the waterfront, which not only provides jobs and recreational opportunities, but restores public access to Bellingham's true front yard," said Mayor Tim Douglas.

"Ecology's cleanup plan for the Whatcom Waterway will allow the redevelopment of our contaminated and underutilized industrial waterfront into a new, vibrant part of our community that provides jobs and recreational opportunities to the next generation of Whatcom County residents," said Port Commission President Scott Walker. "The port thanks all of its project partners, especially Ecology, for working with us to ensure a lasting, effective cleanup that protects our community and supports state-wide salmon recovery efforts."

Ecology approved its earlier draft Consent Decree without any substantive changes. This Action Plan (described in the attached fact sheet) includes full removal of contaminated sludge in the treatment lagoon, targeted dredging where channel depth is needed in Whatcom Waterway

alongside the port's Shipping Terminal, and capping of contamination in areas of the waterway that do not require additional depth.

"When the health of the state's marine ecosystems are at stake, it is incredibly important that we move forward with effective long-term solutions to contamination problems," said Doug Sutherland, Commissioner of Public Lands. "I commend the Port, City and all the partners in this effort for taking this opportunity to go beyond the necessary cleanup to create a new vision for Bellingham's waterfront. The results will be an example of how cleanup and economic revitalization can go hand in hand to create a vital and sustainable future for Washington's citizens."

Ecology has pledged to provide half of the \$44 million cleanup costs to the port through the state's Model Toxic Control Act fund. Ecology entered into an initial grant agreement with the port this spring giving \$15.5 million. Ecology anticipates providing the remaining money over four state biennium budget periods, ending in 2013. Budget estimates for the full project cost include a 30 percent contingency and anticipated inflation over the full project period, which includes post-construction site monitoring for thirty years.

The Whatcom Waterway, which includes the Treatment Lagoon, is one of 11 sites in Bellingham Bay that are being cleaned up through the Bellingham Bay Pilot project. To date, two sites have have been cleaned up, including an operating boatyard and an old landfill on the banks of Whatcom Creek. In addition, DNR and partners cleaned up hundreds of tons of creosote pilings and dock from the mouth of Squalicum Creek, helping to begin the baywide cleanup. And in each case the projects included substantial restoration of marine and estuarine habitat to support state-wide salmon recovery efforts.

While the Bellingham Bay Pilot Project began in the 1990s, these cleanup projects are being supported through the umbrella of Governor Christine Gregoire's Puget Sound Initiative, a Sound-wide effort to reduce toxic pollution and protect the health of marine habitat. Major partners in the Bellingham Bay Project include the City of Bellingham, state Departments of Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, and Natural Resources; local tribes, federal agencies, Georgia Pacific and volunteer organizations.

The City of Bellingham and DNR already reached agreements with the port that direct the port to take the lead in performing the cleanup of the Whatcom Waterway. This cleanup agreement must be signed by officials from the city, DNR, the port and a private company, Meridian Pacific Highway, LLC., owned primarily by David Ebenal.

Washington's Department of Natural Resources is trustee and steward of the 2.4 million acres of state-owned aquatic lands—including many beaches, the bedlands under Puget Sound, the coast, natural lakes, and navigable rivers. They are managed as a "public trust" for the people of the state. In addition to protecting the health of these aquatic ecosystems, DNR leases aquatic lands to public and private users both for water-dependent uses, such as boat moorage and shellfish cultivation, and for non-water-dependent uses such as restaurants and office buildings.

The public is invited to the Consent Decree signing ceremony and celebration on Thursday September 20, from 10:30-11:30 a.m. overlooking the Whatcom Waterway on the former Georgia Pacific property.