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News Release

Cleanup of contaminated sediment to begin in Lower Duwamish

To protect water quality and fish, the agencies and tribes managing the Elliott Bay/Duwamish Restoration Program plan to dredge an area of contaminated river sediment and dispose of the sediment at an approved landfill in Klickitat County. Selection of the disposal site was the last step before beginning the cleanup.

"We're moving forward now to make sure we begin dredging this year and not miss the fish window for work in the Duwamish River," said Robert C. Clark Jr., administrative director with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "It's important to remove the contamination as soon as possible."

The dredging contractor must start work in early November to finish by the deadline of February 2004, when juvenile salmon start their run downstream. Other members of the program panel are the state Department of Ecology, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Muckleshoot and Suquamish tribes, King County and City of Seattle.

The dredging will remove contaminated sediment from a small stretch of the Lower Duwamish Waterway just north of Kellogg Island. The Duwamish flows northwest from Tukwila, splitting around Harbor Island and emptying into Elliott Bay south of the Seattle waterfront. The lower waterway has been heavily industrialized for more than 80 years, getting discharges from a large industrial, urban area.

"Because of uncertainty in getting approval in time, the panel decided not to pursue an offer by the Port of Tacoma and Occidental Chemical to use their Slip 1 sediment disposal facility," said Don Theiler, director of the King County Wastewater Treatment Division.

King County's regional wastewater treatment utility is managing the cleanup for the program, removing contaminated sediment from a 7-acre area at the Duwamish/Diagonal combined sewer overflow and storm drain.

About 70,000 cubic yards of sediment will be transported to a regional solid-waste landfill in rural Eastern Washington owned by Rabanco of Seattle.

A 1991 consent decree settled a 1990 lawsuit filed by NOAA against the City of Seattle and the former Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle (Metro), now King County's Wastewater Treatment Division. The lawsuit alleged injuries to natural

resources in Elliott Bay and the lower Duwamish River.

Several projects have already been completed in the \$24 million program. The projects include two other sediment cleanups, six wildlife habitat restorations and various pollution source-control measures.

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