April 2, 2013

The Lower Duwamish Waterway Proposed Cleanup Plan: It's Time to Speak Up

On February 28, 2013, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its Proposed Plan to clean up the Lower Duwamish Waterway. The proposed cleanup is expected to take seven years to construct and at least $305 million to complete. Taxpayers, utility ratepayers, and local businesses will be responsible for paying for the cleanup.

While EPA's plan is a good starting point, it can be improved. The Lower Duwamish Waterway Group (LDWG), a partnership of The Boeing Company, King County, the City of Seattle, and the Port of Seattle, believes changes to the plan can make cleanup more cost effective, reduce construction time and community impacts, and better use available cleanup technologies.

Do comments really make a difference?

Your opinion counts. EPA will consider public comments to determine plans for the final cleanup, which will be described in a document called the record of decision (ROD), expected in 2014. The ROD will be the basis for a consent decree, a court-enforced agreement between EPA and potentially responsible parties regarding their liability for the cleanup.

EPA will likely receive comments from the public asking for additional dredging and significant mitigation, which would substantially increase cleanup costs and result in less certainty that the proposed cleanup will be considered final. That's why it's vital to voice your opinion.

Public comments DO make a difference

EPA narrowed the number of sites to be cleaned up as part of the Bunker Hill Superfund project, which was a direct response to public comments. This reduced the cost of the cleanup by $560 million and shortened constructed time by 70 years.

Public comments on a Superfund cleanup plan for the Hudson River in New York led to a commitment to remove contaminated waste via rail and/or barge and to treat contaminated material outside the Hudson River valley.

Photo courtesy Don Wilson, Port of Seattle

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How do I write an effective comment letter?

- **Tell your story.** How does the cleanup affect you, your job, your business, or your community? Why do you care about the final cleanup plan?
- **Be specific.** How do you want EPA to change the proposed cleanup?
- **Keep it simple and based on sound reasoning.** Explain why you are concerned about a particular issue and suggest ways to make changes to the proposed cleanup.

What should I comment on?

The LDWG partners are reviewing EPA's Proposed Plan and will share more detailed comments in mid-May. Based on an initial review of the cleanup plan, LDWG will urge EPA to adopt a plan that:

- Sets realistic and achievable cleanup goals
- Completes construction and reduces risks to public health as quickly as possible
- Focuses dredging on the most contaminated areas
- Uses the most suitable cleanup technologies to limit the construction schedule and get to the final outcome sooner

How to comment

Visit EPA's website (see link below) to learn more about EPA's Proposed Plan, find out about public meetings, and comment either in writing or on-line. Comments are due to EPA by June 13, 2013.

Attend a community meeting:

- April 30 in Georgetown
- May 15 in South Park
- May 29 in downtown Seattle

For more information, visit:

LDWG's website: www.ldwg.org

EPA's website: yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/lduwamish

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