

ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



Oeser Company Superfund Site, Bellingham, Washington

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10

September 2003

Final Oeser Cleanup Plan Announced

EPA recently signed a Record of Decision (ROD) documenting the final cleanup plans for the Oeser Company Superfund Site

EPA's final plan describes how it will address highly contaminated areas that remain within the site boundary. Previous cleanups have addressed the most immediate threats to people and the environment at the site. The cleanup plan will protect human health and the environment by preventing contact with contaminated soil and by reducing the potential for pollution to move into the deep aquifer.

Storm water and drainage from the newly capped areas would be collected and treated to limit contamination draining into the nearby Little Squalicum Creek and other surrounding areas. The Agency has determined that no action is necessary for the South Slope Area, Little Squalicum Creek and the residential neighborhood. However, under a separate Agency program called *Brownfields*, EPA is providing funds to the City of Bellingham to conduct additional environmental studies for the potential redevelopment of creek areas.

Major Elements of the Final Remedy Include:

- ◆ Excavating about 2,700 cubic yards of contaminated soils in the North and South Pole yards, unless future sampling indicates that capping would be more efficient while still protective of human health and the environment.
- ◆ Capping about 1.5 acres of contaminated soil in the primary wood-treating areas of the Oeser property, in coordination with RCRA/ Washington State Dangerous Waste Regulations. In the primary wood-treating area, EPA may determine that it is more feasible, cost-effective, and protective to excavate some of the contaminated soil.
- ◆ Institutional controls on the Oeser property, restricting groundwater use and non-industrial uses, to ensure that people will not come into contact with site contamination.
- ◆ Monitoring groundwater on the Oeser property, and removing oily contaminants with absorbent pads if detected during sampling.
- ◆ Long-term maintenance of the caps.

EPA's Response to Public Comments

EPA held a 45-day public comment period for the Oeser Company Proposed Plan from December 11, 2002 to January 24, 2003. The Agency received many comments focusing on its investigations and findings.

Little Squalicum Creek

THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL ASPECT OF EPA'S proposed cleanup plans for the Oeser Company was the decision not to further study and cleanup Little Squalicum Creek under the Superfund Program. Little Squalicum Creek functions primarily as a drainage ditch for neighborhood storm water runoff. The Agency concluded that sediment in Little Squalicum Creek does not pose a significant threat to the local aquatic life, wetlands, or recreational visitors. The creek was found to be similar to most urban streams, so that major cleanup activity under the Superfund program is not warranted.

However, under a separate EPA program called *Brownfields*, EPA is providing funds to the City of Bellingham to conduct additional environmental studies for the potential redevelopment of the creek area. These studies are

being coordinated with the Washington State Department of Ecology. To find out more about the *Brownfields* Program visit www.epa.gov/brownfields.

Odors from the Oeser Facility

MANY COMMENTS SUGGESTED THAT THE facility be shut down because of the odors generated during the wood-treatment process. Continuing operations at Oeser are not regulated under the Superfund program, and EPA does not have justification to simply shut down the operation. Air monitoring data were sent to the Northwest Air Pollution Authority and the Washington State Department of Health for their review and consideration.

Other comments asked for more information about the designs, studies, and technical documents prepared for the site. These are available as part of the Record of Decision.

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What Happens Next?

EPA EXPECTS TO PROVIDE THE OESER COMPANY WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO NEGOTIATE A CONSENT DECREE to perform the selected cleanup at the site. If a Consent Decree is negotiated, the Federal Government will provide the public an opportunity to comment on the agreement. If a Consent Decree is finalized, the Oeser Company would then work on design and construction of the plan. EPA has not negotiated a construction schedule but expects to begin work late in 2004.

Background

The Oeser Company is an active wood-treating facility in Bellingham, Washington. The company has been treating wood since the 1940s. During the early days of operation, the company manufactured poles for utility companies, using creosote as a wood preservative. In the mid-1980s, Oeser stopped using creosote at the facility. Pentachlorophenol (PCP or Penta) is the preservative currently used at the facility. Because of the contamination at this site, the facility was designated a Superfund site in 1997.

EPA's Final Decision Document is Available to the Public

The final decision can be found in a document called a Record of Decision. All significant comments received during the comment period and EPA's responses are included as part of the "Responsiveness Summary" for the Record of Decision. They can be reviewed at the information repositories listed below.

Information Repositories

Bellingham Public Library
210 Central Avenue, Bellingham
(360) 676-6860

EPA Records Center
7th Floor, 1200 Sixth Avenue, Seattle
(206) 553-4494

On the Internet

If you would like to learn more about the Oeser Company Superfund site, you can visit EPA's website by going to www.epa.gov/r10earth. Click on **Index** and **Oeser**.

Questions? Comments?

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For people with disabilities: Alternative formats are available upon request. Please contact Lilibeth Serrano-Velez to request reasonable accommodation. For TTY users: Please call 1-800-877- 8339 and give the operator Lilibeth's phone number.



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*OESER COMPANY SUPERFUND SITE
RECORD OF DECISION FACT SHEET
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