

SUPERFUND

Fact Sheet

COMMENCEMENT BAY NEARSHORE/TIDEFLATS *Tacoma, Washington*

EPA announces the last major cleanup plan for the Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Superfund site!

EPA has approved the final plans for the cleanup of Middle Waterway

The final cleanup plan for contaminated sediments in Middle Waterway includes dredging, capping, enhanced natural recovery (thin-layer capping), natural recovery, monitoring, and no action. A combination of these cleanup actions will take place throughout the three main sections of the waterway: the head of the waterway, the mid section, and the mouth.

- Over 90,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments, covering more than 11 acres of the waterway, will be dredged and then disposed in Blair Slip 1.
- More than four acres will be capped (using both thick and thin-layer capping).
- Long-term monitoring will be required for all the remedies to verify that they remain protective and to insure cleanup goals are achieved.
- The cost of this cleanup is approximately \$12.5 million.
- Next steps include completing and approving the final remedial design and negotiating the final settlement agreement for cleanup of Middle Waterway.

EPA's response to public comments

EPA received 80 comment letters on the cleanup plan during the public comment period, which was held from August 24 to October 9, 2001. The most controversial aspect of EPA's proposed cleanup plans for Middle Waterway was the decision to leave subsurface contamination in place in one small area at the head of the waterway. EPA received a number of comments in support of leaving the subsurface contamination in place as well as overall support for the other remedies planned throughout Middle Waterway. Many commentors disagreed with EPA's decision to leave the subsurface contamination in place.

However, EPA's evaluation found:

- 1) there is no current exposure pathway that creates a risk to human health or the environment from this subsurface contamination;
- 2) that this subsurface contamination has been in this location for more than sixty years and yet it is not acting as a significant source of contamination to the waterway;

continued from page 1

- 3) that it is contained and not mobile; and
- 4) that the surrounding areas are not being adversely impacted by the existence of this subsurface contamination.

No new technical or other information was provided by commentors that would fundamentally alter EPA's evaluation of the need for removal of the subsurface contamination at this time. However, EPA will closely monitor the subsurface contamination and if any of the above conditions change, the need for additional cleanup of the subsurface contamination will be re-evaluated.

EPA's final decision document is available for review

The final decision can be found in a document called an "Explanation of Significant Differences" (ESD), which becomes part of the Record of Decision. Comments received during the comment period and EPA's responses are also included with the ESD. The document is part of the Administrative Record for the Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Superfund site and can be reviewed at the information repositories listed in this fact sheet.

Background

The Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats (CB/NT) Superfund Site is located in Tacoma, Washington at the southern edge of Puget Sound. EPA placed the site on the National Priorities List for cleanup under Superfund on September 8, 1983. Since the late 1800's, shipbuilding, oil refining, chemical manufacturing and storage, and other industrial activities have caused hazardous waste contamination of the land and water in the Commencement Bay area. Many of these contaminants have affected marine life. The cleanup goal for the site is to have a healthy marine environment and protect people from eating contaminated seafood from the Bay. This goal was established in EPA's 1989 cleanup plan.

The CB/NT site includes the Hylebos, Sitcum, St. Paul, Middle, Wheeler-Osgood, and Thea Foss Waterways, the Puyallup River upstream to the Interstate-5 bridge, and adjacent land areas.

EPA has been working, for the past several years, to develop cleanup plans for the contaminated sediments in Commencement Bay. The community, other state and federal agencies, the Port of Tacoma, the City of Tacoma, and the business community have helped significantly with this effort.

In August 2000, EPA issued an ESD which described the cleanup plans for three of the other waterways in Commencement Bay – Thea Foss, Wheeler-Osgood, and Hylebos – and identified the disposal sites for all of Commencement Bay dredged contaminated sediments, which includes Middle Waterway. The three disposal sites are the St. Paul nearshore fill, Blair Slip 1, and an upland regional landfill.

Information Repositories

Tacoma Main Public Library *
1102 Tacoma Avenue South
Northwest Room
Tacoma, WA

Citizens for a Healthy Bay
917 Pacific Avenue, Suite 406
Tacoma, WA
(253) 383-2429

Please call for an appointment if information is needed after business hours.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency *
1200 Sixth Avenue
7th Floor Record Center
Seattle, WA

* Indicates official information repositories for the Administrative Record

For More Information

If you would like more information or a copy of the ESD for Middle Waterway, please call:

Nancy Harney, EPA Project Manager, at **206-553-6635**
email - harney.nancy@epa.gov

Jeanne O'Dell, Community Involvement Coordinator, at **206-553-6919**
email - odell.jeanne@epa.gov

or call our toll free number at **1-800-424-4372**.

Check Out EPA's Web Page

Internet information for the Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Superfund site can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/>, then hit "index" on the left of the page, hit "C" for Commencement Bay, hit "Nearshore/Tideflats."

Scroll down to Administrative Record Index to review the Explanation of Significant Differences. Other documents pertaining to the site are also available from this web page.

To ensure effective communication with everyone, additional services can be made available to persons with disabilities by calling one of the numbers listed above.