



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98101

February 9, 2007

Regina Delahunt, Director
Whatcom County Health Department
509 Girard Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

RE: Release of Final Summary Report of EPA Activities, Swift Creek Asbestos Site, Whatcom County, Washington.

Dear Ms. Delahunt:

This letter transmits the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Final Summary Report of EPA Activities, Swift Creek Asbestos Site, Whatcom County, Washington. EPA began this investigation on March 2006, at the request of the Whatcom County Health Department and Whatcom County Public Works. The goals of this investigation were to characterize the nature and extent of the asbestos contamination in stockpiled sediments along the creek and to determine the potential health risks to local residents and site visitors. With this letter we also offer our assistance to Whatcom County to work on a multi-agency approach to address this site.

EPA's field events included a site reconnaissance and sampling event in April 2006 to verify the presence and source of asbestos and associated minerals, an Integrated Assessment in May 2006, and activity-based sampling in August 2006. The methods and results of these field events have been presented in several separate reports. This final report is intended to provide an overview and summary of EPA's work at the site in 2006.

The results of EPA's April and May 2006 site characterization field events confirmed that asbestos is present in the dredged sediment materials and determined the distribution of asbestos concentration. The average concentration of asbestos in bulk samples collected from dredged sediment at the site was 1.7 percent (%) and ranged up to 4.4 %.

To further investigate the potential health risks for visitors to the site, EPA performed activity-based sampling at the site in August 2006. EPA evaluated three scenarios that are typically performed at the site, including loading / hauling dredged material, raking / spreading dredged material, and recreation (e.g., walking, jogging, and biking). The results indicated that there were elevated levels of exposure to asbestos fibers for all three activities evaluated.

EPA then performed a risk evaluation with the results of the activity-based sampling to evaluate potential long term health risks for area residents and visitors. The results indicated that typical activities performed at the site that involve the disturbance of the dredged materials may lead to an increased level of long term risk.

As you may know, all the work EPA completed in this investigation was conducted in cooperation with the following agencies: the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR); Northwest Clean Air Agency; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Washington State Department of Ecology; Washington State Department of Health; Whatcom County Health Department; and Whatcom County Public Works. The analytical results obtained from our sampling events, and the risk evaluation developed from those results have been carefully reviewed by our partner agencies, as well as by members of EPA's asbestos technical review workgroup, a group of National Asbestos experts.

This concludes EPA's investigation to characterize the nature and extent of the asbestos contamination in stockpiled sediments along the creek and to determine the potential health risks from those sediments.

Because of the potential health risks posed by the asbestos at this site, EPA recommends that dredged material no longer be removed from the site as they have been in the past – where residents and contractors reportedly moved these materials without personal protection to other sites where further exposure is possible. EPA also recommends that community education be continued to help prevent or minimize ongoing exposures to residents. Failure to restrict the movement and use of the contaminated dredged material may lead to health and legal liabilities.

EPA is ready to participate in a multi-agency approach to address management of current and future dredged sediments from Swift Creek. We suggest that EPA and other federal, state, and local agencies work together to:

- Determine what additional environmental and/or human health assessment work is appropriate in this area, and how to accomplish this work;
- Find a short-term solution that will allow Whatcom County to dredge Swift Creek this summer to prevent flooding next fall and winter; and
- Develop safe, long-term solutions for flood control and management of dredged sediments from Swift Creek.

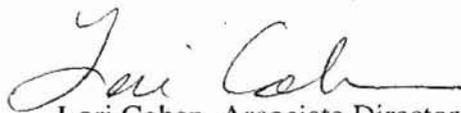
If requested by Whatcom County or the State, the EPA could also provide emergency assistance should flooding occur this winter.

We look forward to presenting these findings in person to you and to the Whatcom County Council at their meeting on February 13, 2007, from 5:30-6:30 PM. We will also be sharing these findings with the residents living along Swift Creek on February 12, 2007, from 7:00-9:30 PM, at St. Innocent Orthodox Church, 7461 Goodwin Road, in Everson, WA. We understand that Jeff Hegedus, of your staff will join us at that meeting, as well as representatives from ATSDR, Northwest Clean Air Agency, Washington State Department of Ecology, and Washington State Department of Health.

If you would like to discuss our report or findings with me, please feel free to contact me

at (206) 553-6523. Or, if you would prefer, have your staff contact Denise Baker-Kircher, of my staff, EPA's lead for this investigation. Denise can be reached at (206) 553-4303 or at baker.denise@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Lori Cohen, Associate Director
Office of Environmental Cleanup
U.S. EPA, Region 10

Attachment

cc: Copy of report will be sent to cc list via e-mail
Jeff Hegedus, Whatcom County Health Dept.
John Wolpers, Whatcom County Health Dept.
Bruce Roll, Assistant Director, Whatcom County Public Works
Paul Pittman, Whatcom County Public Works
Karen Larson, ATSDR
Dave Blake, Northwest Clean Air Agency
Mary O'Herron, Ecology - Bellingham
Shannon Sullivan, Ecology - Bellingham
Jim Pendowski, Ecology - Olympia office
Pete Kmet, Ecology - Olympia office
Wayne Clifford, DOH
Gary Palcisko, DOH
Randel Perry, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Luke Loeffler, Congressman Rick Larsen's office
Jill McKinnie, District Director, Congressman Rick Larsen's office
Christie Gullion, NW Regional Director, Senator Patty Murray's office