

Celebrating Success: Oeser Company Superfund Site Bellingham, Washington



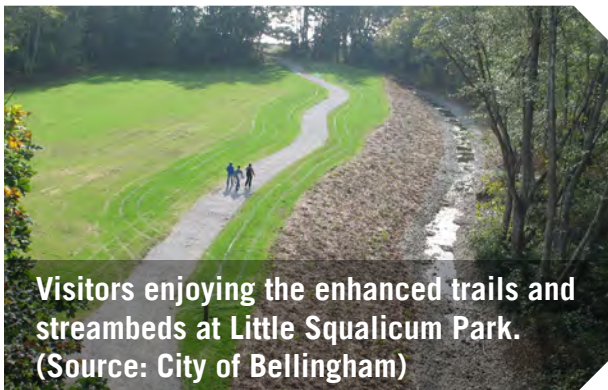
Superfund
Redevelopment
Initiative



Aerial view of Little Squalicum Park and the surrounding residential and industrial areas. (Source: EPA)

“Little Squalicum Park is a newly restored site for Bellingham residents and visitors alike...”

- Gina Austin, Bellingham Parks Department



Visitors enjoying the enhanced trails and streambeds at Little Squalicum Park. (Source: City of Bellingham)

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Reconstructed stream channels at the LSP area of the site. (Source: EPA)

The 26-acre Oeser Company Superfund site is located in a mixed-use residential and industrial area of Bellingham, Washington. The site includes the Oeser facility and the Little Squalicum Park (LSP) area, which spans approximately 21 acres of the site. Effective collaboration on cleanup work resulted in restoration of creeks and wetland habitats, as well as enhancement of recreational park trails in the LSP area of the site.

Since 1943, Oeser has operated a wood treating facility on site that prepares wood poles for utility companies. Wood treating operations and two documented spills in 1971 and 1975 resulted in soil and ground water contamination at the Oeser facility and the downgradient LSP area, which had previously been used as a sand and gravel quarry area. EPA added the site to the Superfund program's National Priorities List in 1997. EPA and Oeser performed initial cleanup work at the facility. This involved excavating contaminated soil, installing a protective cap and creating a storm water collection and treatment system to minimize further contamination of the LSP area. Currently, Oeser continues wood treating operations at the facility.

The City of Bellingham used \$75,000 in Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) funding for the master planning of Little Squalicum Park on the LSP area. Before implementing the plan, the City conducted additional sampling and found pockets of soil contamination in the historic meanders of the creek. Based on the risks posed to people and the environment, a non-time-critical removal action was conducted. EPA and Oeser moved over 28,000 tons of contaminated soils into an engineered repository at the Oeser facility, re-established the natural stream meander channel, re-routed storm drains and restored wetlands.

In October 2011, the City of Bellingham opened the restored Little Squalicum Park to the public. The City also contributed by revegetating stream banks with native plants and wetland shrubs, including native red alder, cottonwood, cedar, and maple tree seedlings. The mature trees will help stabilize stream banks in the future. Restoration work also provided an opportunity to remove invasive plant species and weeds from the park. Migratory birds, including peregrine falcons and bald eagles, and other wildlife species make their home in the LSP area. Additionally, EPA and the City of Bellingham enhanced bicycling and walking paths in the LSP area with a new layer of crushed limestone. These paths connect the site to the larger Bay-to-Baker Trail network, which connects the City of Bellingham to Mount Baker.