

# Proposed Changes to the Lower Duwamish Cleanup

Lower Duwamish Waterway Superfund Site

February 2021

## Changes proposed for Lower Duwamish cleanup plan based on updated health risk information

Along with PCBs, dioxins/furans, arsenic, and other contaminants, cPAHs are targeted for cleanup in the Lower Duwamish Waterway. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is proposing changes to the cPAH levels in the cleanup plan to incorporate updated health risk information. These changes are described in a proposed Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD).

### Updated health risk information

The chemical benzo(a)pyrene (BaP) is one of seven carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (cPAH). PAHs come from many sources, such as coal, oil, and gas, and combustion of wood and other organic materials. PAHs break down slowly in the environment, accumulating in soils, sediment, and some animals. In 2017, EPA finalized an update to the 1987 health risk information for BaP following extensive technical review. The review indicated that the cancer risk associated with BaP is less than previous estimates. The updated health risk information can be viewed in the Integrated Risk Information System, EPA's centralized database of current research on chemical toxicity: [https://iris.epa.gov/ChemicalLanding/&substance\\_nmbr=136](https://iris.epa.gov/ChemicalLanding/&substance_nmbr=136)

### Proposed changes to the cleanup plan

Based on the updated health risk information, EPA is proposing to change some of the cleanup levels for cPAHs in the Record of Decision, as listed below. The goals for human health protection are not changed. EPA's updates to the cleanup plan will ensure that the cleanup levels continue to protect people's health and the environment. EPA estimates that the change to the Remedial Action Level (RAL) for cPAHs will ultimately reduce active cleanup areas by about five acres and reduce the cleanup cost estimate by about \$1 million.

- Change the cPAH cleanup level for the top 10 centimeters of sediment in intertidal and subtidal areas from 380 to 2,800 ppb, that's "parts per billion," dry weight. This applies to the entire site.
- Change the cPAH cleanup level for the top 45 centimeters of sediment in intertidal potential clamming areas from 150 to 1,100 ppb dry weight. This applies to the entire site.
- Change the cPAH cleanup level for the top 45 centimeters of sediment in beach play areas from 90 to 590 ppb dry weight. This applies to individual beach play areas.
- Change the risk-based target clam tissue level for cPAHs from 0.24 to 1.5 ppb wet weight.
- Change the cPAH RAL in intertidal sediments from 900 to 5,900 ppb dry weight.
- Change the cPAH RAL in intertidal and subtidal sediments from 1,000 to 5,500 ppb dry weight.

All other parts of the 2014 cleanup plan are unchanged.

EPA is currently overseeing the engineering design of the cleanup for the first two miles of the waterway. Design for this phase and later phases of cleanup will incorporate the changes to the cPAH values.

## Public participation opportunities

We value your input and would like to hear from you. The proposed ESD will be available for public comment on February 4, 2021. Comments are due March 8, 2021.

EPA will present information and answer questions about the proposed ESD at a community meeting on February 17, 2021. The presentation will also be shown in Spanish, Khmer, and Vietnamese, with interpreters for the question and answer session. The recorded presentations will be available online after the meeting.

**Submit comments by email to:** [Region10@epa.gov](mailto:Region10@epa.gov)

To learn how to attend the community information meeting, and to review the proposed ESD and supporting documents, visit:

<https://www.epa.gov/superfund/lower-duwamish>.

EPA will review and consider all public comments, develop a summary of our responses, and issue a final ESD that will be available to the public.

For more information about this public participation opportunity please contact Kay Morrison, Community Involvement Coordinator, at 206-553-8321, or [morrison.kay@epa.gov](mailto:morrison.kay@epa.gov)

If you or someone you know needs language interpretation or special accommodations, contact Kay Morrison as soon as possible and we will do our best to accommodate your request.

## Lower Duwamish Waterway Superfund site history

The Lower Duwamish Waterway Superfund site is a five-mile segment of Seattle's only river, the Duwamish. The river flows between the neighborhoods of South Park and Georgetown and through the industrial core of Seattle into Elliott Bay. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency listed the waterway on the Superfund national priorities list in 2001, due to high levels of chemicals in the river sediments, water, and fish. These contaminants pose a risk to the environment and to people's health, especially for those who eat resident fish from the waterway. In November 2014, EPA issued a final cleanup plan, or Record of Decision, for 411 acres of contaminated sediments.

The cleanup plan called for active cleanup of 177 acres and monitoring of remaining areas where natural processes are expected to clean up the sediments. The cleanup plan included sediment cleanup levels and action levels for chemical contaminants of concern for human health and the environment. The total cost of the Lower Duwamish Cleanup is estimated to be \$342 million.