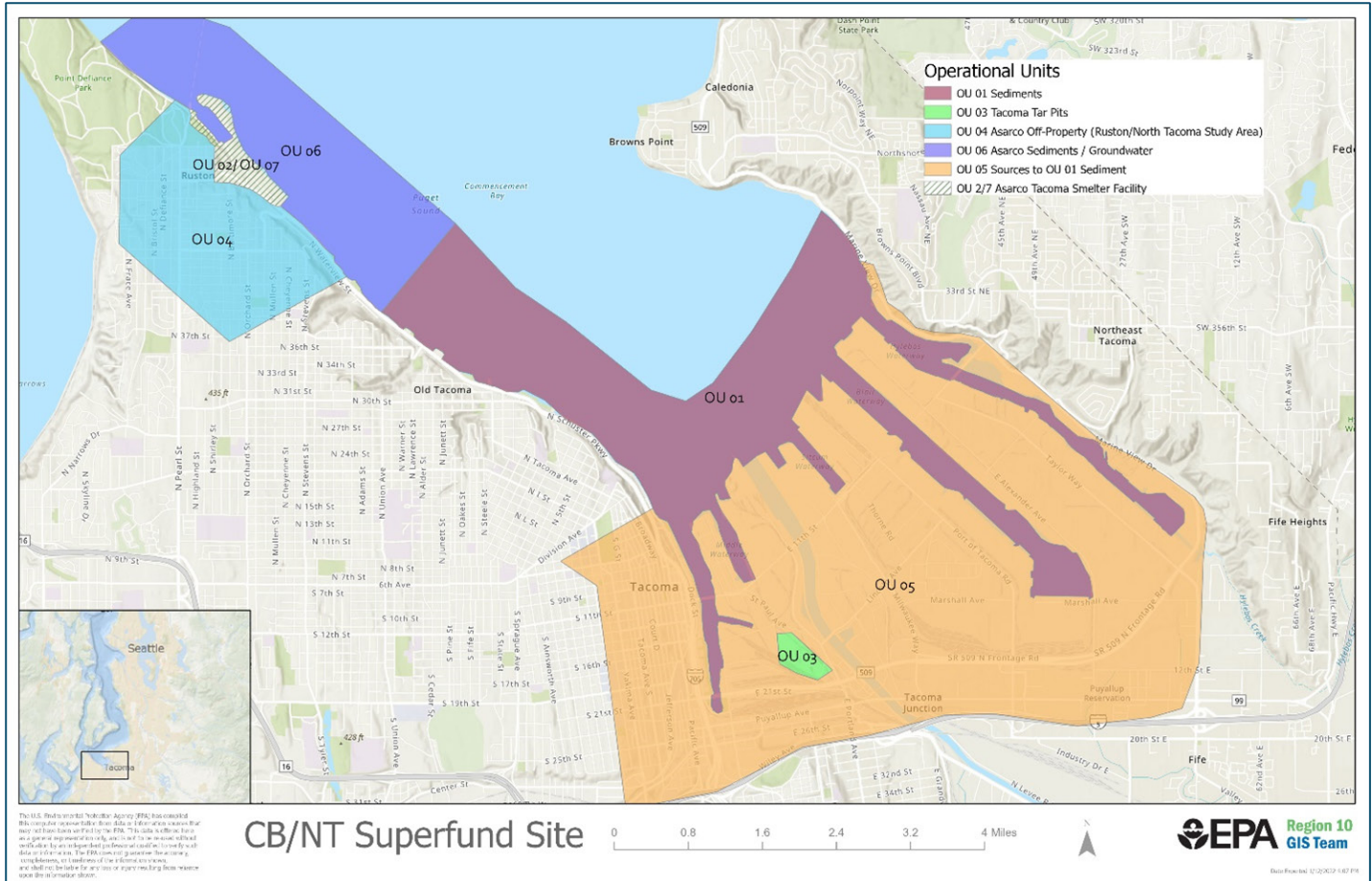


Cleanups in Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Superfund Site

Region 10

May 2022

We would like to give you some updates on upcoming and ongoing work and a status of accomplishments for the different Operable Units of the Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Superfund Site.



The site is made up of 10-12 square miles of shoreline, sediment (mud) in shallow water (nearshore and tideflats), and industrialized land between the Hylebos Waterway and Point Defiance in both Ruston and Tacoma, Washington. The site consists of the following seven operable units (OUs) depicted in the figure, above:

- OU 1 Sediments,
- OU 2 Asarco Tacoma Smelter Facility,
- OU 3 Tacoma Tar Pits,
- OU 4 Asarco Off-Property (referred to as Ruston Ruston/North Tacoma Study Area),
- OU 5 Sources to OU 01 Sediment,
- OU 6 Asarco Groundwater and Sediment, and
- OU 7 Asarco Facility Demolition.

EPA has worked alongside the Washington State Department of Ecology, the Puyallup Tribe, Performing Responsible Parties (PRPs), and the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to determine the extent of the contamination, and develop and implement plans to remove or contain contaminated material and control sources of pollution to clean up the site.

Ongoing Cleanup Actions

Operable Unit 2: Capping of the former Asarco Tacoma Smelter site will be complete by June 30, 2022. However, the developer will remove some of the caps to construct buildings in the future. This will involve breaching the cap to install building foundations and utilities. EPA will continue to provide oversight of these activities to ensure that the public is safe from exposure to the contaminated soils.

Upcoming Activities

Operable Unit 1

Sampling of sediment in the Middle Waterway will occur in Summer 2022. In 2023, the PRPs will be monitoring their areas of the site and EPA will be conducting inspections in preparation for the next Five-Year Review of the site.

In Summer 2022, EPA will release a report by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife describing the results of the fish sampling effort conducted in 2019. This report will be posted on the [EPA CB/NT website](#) and a notice will be sent out via EPA's listserv when it is posted.

Operable Unit 2

EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers will oversee the repair of the shoreline cap and Tacoma's stormwater outfall on the outer edge of the Breakwater Peninsula (Dune Peninsula Park). Preconstruction activities, such as installing construction fencing, will start in June 2022 and construction will start August 15, 2022. This work will not impact access or use of the park but may affect the sightlines into the bay. Construction is scheduled to be completed by February 2023.

Status of Cleanup Efforts

Operable Units 1 and 5

Cleanup activities and control of sources in the Thea Foss Waterway, Wheeler-Osgood Waterway, Middle Waterway, Olympic View Resource Area, St. Paul Waterway, St. Paul Cap, Sitcum Waterway, Blair Waterway, and Blair TBT (Terminal 4) are complete. The responsible parties will continue to monitor and maintain constructed features (caps, confined disposal facilities, and habitat). EPA will continue to provide oversight of these activities and work with Ecology and the Puyallup Tribe to ensure long-term stewardship of these areas.

Decades of industrial activity at the site released pollutants into the water and the mud (sediment), including:

- Arsenic,
- Lead,
- Zinc,
- Cadmium,
- Copper,
- Mercury,
- PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls),
- PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons),
- Dioxins, and
- Phthalates.

These are the primary contaminants of concern at the site.



Boats moored in Tacoma harbor

⇒ Continued

Status of Cleanup Efforts - Operable Units 1 and 5

Construction activities in the Hylebos Waterway are nearly complete. The responsible parties still need to construct approximately two acres of shoreline habitat as mitigation for the construction activities. In 2021, the sediments were monitored to determine if the ongoing sources to this waterway were adequately controlled. EPA, Ecology, and the Puyallup Tribe are currently reviewing this information. Sources of contamination from the former Arkema facility and Occidental facility are being cleaned up and controlled under Ecology oversight. EPA will continue to oversee sediment sampling until all the sources in this waterway are cleaned up or controlled.

The Washington Department of Health and TPCHD issued a fish consumption advisory recommending that people not eat crab, shellfish, or bottom-feeding fish from the inner waterways of Commencement Bay. For more information, visit the [TPCHD website](#) or the [WDOH website](#).

Operable Unit 2

The source areas of contamination have been removed and disposed of in the on-site containment facility. The cap on the entire site will be completed by June 2022. However, development will continue into the future so the cleanup action here will not be complete until the development is complete.

Operable Unit 3

Contaminated soils have been excavated, stabilized, and capped on-site. A groundwater pump and treat system has been operating since 2002 and was upgraded in 2017. EPA continues to work with the PRPs to monitor the remedy and may conduct an optimization study in the next couple of years.

Operable Unit 4

Nearly all the yards in the EPA Study Area have been cleaned up to EPA's cleanup goals. However, Ecology has lower cleanup goals and is revisiting some of these properties for additional cleanup. EPA and Ecology are coordinating efforts to complete the cleanup.

Operable Unit 6

Sediment: A sediment cap has been installed offshore of Point Ruston. However, the area in the Yacht Basin and offshore of the Breakwater Peninsula has not been cleaned up. EPA is preparing to sample these areas to determine if the remedy described in the cleanup plan is still valid. EPA will be coordinating with Metro Parks Tacoma (the landowner) and Tacoma Yacht Club and Breakwater Yacht Club (the tenants) to conduct this sampling in 2023 and 2024.

Groundwater: Groundwater monitoring wells were installed in Fall 2021 and will be sampled each Spring and Fall until the development of the site is complete. At that point, EPA will evaluate the data and determine whether additional groundwater actions need to occur to ensure that groundwater discharging to Commencement Bay meets Washington's Water Quality Standards.

Operable Unit 7

All the existing structures and infrastructure at the former Asarco Tacoma Smelter facility have been removed and disposed of in an off-site landfill or in the Onsite Containment Facility.

As the cleanup work is completed, EPA may be proposing that some areas are deleted from the National Priorities List. However, these areas will remain part of the Superfund site, and the CB/NT site will remain on the National Priorities List until all areas of the site achieve the cleanup objectives in the final cleanup plans, also known as Records of Decisions. Long-term management of areas where waste is managed in-place will be evaluated in Five-Year Reviews of the site.



Mudflats along Commencement Bay

Results of the Fifth Five-Year Report

The [fifth FYR](#) for the Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Superfund site was completed in 2020. The purpose of a Five-Year Review is to look at the cleanup implementation and performance at a Superfund site to see if it is still protecting people and the environment. At a site like CB/NT with cleanup work still underway, the Five-Year Review ensures that the cleanup plan will protect people and the environment from contaminated water, soil, and air when it is complete. The next FYR will be in 2024 with the responsible parties conducting their monitoring in 2023 and EPA performing inspections in 2023 and 2024.

For more information

Please visit EPA's web page on the cleanup at www.epa.gov/superfund/commencement-bay

To receive **regular updates** on EPA's cleanup work, please contact **Julie Congdon** (congdon.julie@epa.gov) to subscribe to the **Commencement Bay cleanup listserv**.

If you have other questions or would like additional information, please contact the following EPA staff:

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If you need materials in another language or an alternative format, please contact Julie Congdon at 206-553-2752 800-424-4372, ext. 2752



Murray Morgan (S. 11th Street) Bridge over the Thea Foss Waterway in Tacoma