

Lignin Parcel Script

Introduction:

Eleanor: Hi, I'm Eleanor Hines North Sound Baykeeper/Lead Scientist at RE Sources. Today we are at the Lignin Parcel where we will take a virtual tour, so Welcome! We are also on the Coast Salish People's lands and we are deeply grateful for their enduring care of the land and water here.

Kirsten: And Hi, I'm Kirsten McDade Pollution Prevention Specialist, also from RE Sources. And here we are standing in front of the Lignin Parcel which is a 3 acre piece of land that is a part of the greater 74 acre Georgia Pacific cleanup site. This area was used to store and process lignin and lignin was considered a byproduct of the pulp and tissue industry and it was made into such diverse things such as artificial vanilla flavoring, dust retardants, solvents, and even pharmaceuticals. The industrial practices that occurred here, though, led to contamination of soil and groundwater particularly with metals, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons as well as other petroleum hydrocarbons. It is not contaminated, however, with mercury largely because it is some distance away from the Chlor-Alkali site which was the source of the mercury contamination in the larger Georgia Pacific West cleanup site.

Eleanor: In this short video we will hear from staff from the Port of Bellingham, the Department of Ecology, and Mercy Housing so you guys can get the scoop on what's going to happen to this track of land in the near future. If you are interested in learning more about the Chlor Alkali plant at the GP West site here and/or the MTCA process in general, please check out the notes below this video where you can see the videos that we created last year on those - if you are interested in the public comment period it will be open June 20th through July 19th, and all the associated documents with the cleanup of this particular area of this site will be open then so stick around until the end if you would like to participate to learn more. Thanks!

Ben Howard, Port of Bellingham

Kirsten: The first person that we are going to talk to is Ben Howard, he is an Environmental Project Manager with the Port of Bellingham. The Port of Bellingham purchased this property from Georgia Pacific in 2005. Ben, can you tell us what the Port's role will be in the cleanup and development of this property?

Ben: The Port has been managing the cleanup activities at the former Georgia Pacific property since the acquisition in 2005. This property is within a larger cleanup project area known as the Chlor-Alkali Remedial Action Unit and we have negotiated an Agreed Order with the Department of Ecology to perform remedial engineering and design work for separate cleanup construction projects with this property being the first project. The Port is working with Ecology to complete the cleanup under an Affordable Housing Grant in order for the development project to be completed by Mercy Housing.

Kirsten: This 3 acre section is going to be cleaned up and developed much quicker than the rest of the GP West Chlor-Alkali site - can you explain why that is the case?

Ben: The Chlor-Alkali site includes separate cleanup projects that will be completed at different times due to complexity and land use. This project was identified as a priority to work together with Ecology and Mercy Housing to bring affordable housing to the waterfront district.

Kirsten: So, after the cleanup has been completed, what do you anticipate the role of the Port to be?

Ben: Following completion of the cleanup work, the Port will continue to monitor groundwater to ensure the effectiveness of the cleanup. A monitored natural attenuation (MNA) plan will be developed in coordination with Ecology and an environmental covenant will be in place to put restrictions on future groundwater use.

Sandra Matthews, Ecology

Eleanor: We are now going to talk to Sandra Matthews with the Department of Ecology.

Sandra, can you tell us what your and Ecology's role is in this particular cleanup project?

Sandra: Hello, I am a Geologist, Hydrogeologist and I am the lead in Ecology's NW regional office for Healthy Housing projects. I am acting as the site manager for the cleanup of the Lignin Operable Unit (OU) of the Chlor-Alkali Remedial Action Unit (RAU) of the GP West Site. John Rapp is the Site Manager for the entire GP-West site which consists of the Pulp and Tissue Mill Remedial Action Unit and the Chlor-Alkali Remedial Action Unit. Ecology's role for this project is to supervise the clean up to ensure that the site is cleaned up and is safe for its scheduled use.

Eleanor: Can you tell us what work has already been done at this site?

Sandra: The Port has been working with Ecology to investigate and clean up the GP-West site since 2009. The cleanup of the GP-West site is underway. In August of 2013, the site was separated into two Remedial Action Units (RAUs): the Pulp and Tissue Mill and Chlor-Alkali RAUs. The cleanup of the Pulp and Tissue RAU was completed in 2016. In September of 2021, Ecology issued a Cleanup Action Plan (CAP) for the Chlor-Alkali RAU or the Chlor-Alkali Cleanup Area. The Port of Bellingham is working on the engineering design for that cleanup. The Port has also been working with Mercy Housing to develop an affordable housing/ community space project in the northern portion of the Chlor-Alkali Area. In order to clean-up this area more quickly, the Lignin Operable Unit was created. Mercy Housing will purchase this portion of the Chlor-Alkali area for a site for Affordable housing redevelopment.

Eleanor: A Cleanup Action Plan has already been completed for this site but it was decided that changes needed to be made. What are those changes and why were they necessary?

Sandra: The cleanup action in this area in that 2021 Chlor-Alkali area Clean up Plan was capping for this area. Since this area is now going to be used for residential use, a more permanent and more protective cleanup action was decided for this site which is excavation and off-site disposal. The Clean up Action for this area was selected for the Lignin OU.

Eleanor: After the site has been cleaned up, what will Ecology's role be?

Sandra: After excavation and disposal is complete at the site, groundwater monitoring will continue at the site. Monitoring data will be used to evaluate how natural attenuation in the area is happening in the groundwater at the site, and validate that contaminants are not moving off site into the Whatcom waterway. There will be a covenant on the property to restrict the use of the groundwater from the site.

Eleanor: Thank you so much for joining us we are really happy that you could present this information to us today

Ellen Lohe, Mercy Housing

Kirsten: Next, we are going to talk to Ellen Lohe who works for Mercy Housing. Ellen, can you tell us a little bit about Mercy Housing and what this organization does?

Ellen: Mercy Housing is a non-profit affordable housing developer, owner, and service provider that owns over 2,500 apartment homes at 55 properties across the Pacific Northwest, serving over 6,700 residents. Mercy Housing is committed to building welcoming, equitable, and healthy communities by creating program-enriched affordable housing – we see housing as a platform from which we can provide programs and activities that help families and children succeed and thrive.

Kirsten: What plans does Mercy Housing have for this site and how was this site chosen for this particular project?

Ellen: We're excited to be partnering with the Port of Bellingham, the Whatcom Community Foundation and the City of Bellingham to create over 80 affordable family housing units as well as a ground floor early learning center in partnership with the YMCA. The building is designed for energy efficiency, and will include solar PV and an all-electric design. The project will provide much needed affordable family sized housing, and the waterfront district location will provide families with easy access to downtown, services, amenities, and transit, and will help ensure that the growing Bellingham waterfront is welcoming to all. Despite this great site location, the environmental issues present a major obstacle for affordable housing - the partnership with Ecology and the Port to remediate the site help Mercy make affordable housing for families and early learning for children a reality.

Kirsten: I know people will be curious to know WHEN all of this will happen - can you give us an idea of the timeline for this project?

Ellen: We are excited that the project received competitive funding from the Washington State Department of Commerce Housing Trust Fund as well as a tax credit allocation from the Washington State Housing Finance Commission in April. With those two key pieces of financing, the project is moving ahead through design and entitlements, with the goal of being in construction at the end of 2022. We're grateful for our many community partners here in Bellingham working alongside us to make this project possible.

Ian Fawley, Ecology

Hi, Ian Fawley here, Outreach Specialist with the Washington State Department of Ecology.

I'm here on the Georgia-Pacific West site in Bellingham, and behind me is the Lignin Operable Unit.

We have some good news to share with you about the cleanup progress here!

We have prioritized a cleanup of the Lignin Operable Unit, which means we have a draft Cleanup Action Plan and associated legal documents for your review. During Ecology's 30-day comment period, we will simultaneously host an in-person and online public meeting, and RE Sources will host an in-person walking tour through their Public Participation Grant from Ecology.

In this video, I'll explain how *YOU* can participate in those outreach opportunities.

The approximately 4 acre Lignin Operable Unit is located at the corner of W. Laurel Street and S. Cornwall Avenue in downtown Bellingham.

To expedite the Port of Bellingham's cleanup of this unit and enable Mercy Housing Northwest to purchase and redevelop the property after cleanup, an amendment to the legal agreement (called a Consent Decree) creates the Lignin Operable Unit within the Chlor-Alkali Area of the Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site that you see labeled here.

The Georgia-Pacific West cleanup site and the Lignin Operable Unit are continuing through the formal cleanup process which is directed by Washington's environmental cleanup law - the Model Toxics Control Act - or MTCA for short.

Public participation is built-in at specific steps – highlighted here in this infographic by orange comment bubbles - including our current step of public review and comment on drafts of the Lignin Operable Unit's Cleanup Action Plan and associated legal documents.

For 30 days, beginning **June 20th** through **July 19th of 2022** Ecology welcomes comments on three documents for the Lignin Operable Unit:

- A draft Cleanup Action Plan
- An amendment to a previous legal agreement called a Consent Decree between Ecology and the Port of Bellingham
- And a legal agreement called a Prospective Purchaser Consent Decree between Ecology and Mercy Housing Northwest

These documents are available for review and digital download from Ecology's cleanup site webpage listed here: [<http://www.bit.ly/Ecology-GPWest>] For other review options, please contact me directly. [ian.fawely@ecy.wa.gov; 425-324-5901]

During this 30-day comment period, you can comment in one of two ways:

1. You can submit a comment directly through Ecology's eComments online form via the weblink here: [<http://www.bit.ly/Ecology-Lignin-Comments>]
2. Or you can submit comments to Ecology's site manager, Sandra Matthews, through email or mail: [Email: sandra.matthews@ecy.wa.gov] [Mail: PO Box 330316 Shoreline, WA 98133-9716]

Commenter contact information is optional. However, if you want to receive future notices or responses, your contact information is necessary.

RE Sources will host a walking tour at the Lignin Operable Unit on **Wednesday, June 29 @ Noon**. The walking tour will meet at the property access gate off of West Laurel Street.

Ecology, Port of Bellingham, and Mercy Housing Northwest staff will join RE Sources to share information and answer questions.

Later that evening, Ecology will simultaneously host an in-person and online public meeting.

Starting at **6:30 pm on Wednesday, June 29**, Ecology and our presentation team will provide project information and answer questions. Following the presentation, you will have an opportunity to ask questions.

Ecology will host the in-person public meeting at our Bellingham Office at 913 Squaticum Way, Unit 101. Please visit our webpage to complete a health screening before joining.

Also starting at 6:30 pm, Ecology's online public meeting will use the Zoom application. We encourage you to join the meeting a few minutes early to connect your audio.

You can pre-register for this online public meeting by visiting Ecology's webpage listed here: [www.bit.ly/Ecology-GPWest]

Thanks for watching, and I hope to connect with you all through one of those outreach opportunities.

If you have any questions about this comment period or any future Ecology outreach, please feel free to contact me via email or phone listed below. [ian.fawley@ecy.wa.gov; 425-324-5901] Ecology wants to make sure you stay connected to the progress we're making on cleaning up Bellingham Bay.

Thanks again for watching and take care!