

STATE OF THE RIVER SUMMER 2021

DUWAMISH RIVER SUPERFUND CLEANUP: WHAT'S NEW?



Our *Duwamish River* has served as Seattle's major industrial corridor since the early 1900s. This has caused the sediments (river bottom) to be contaminated with toxic chemicals from many sources, ranging from stormwater runoff, wastewater, and industrial practices. The lower five miles of the Duwamish River was designated a federal "Superfund" Site by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2001. More than 40 chemicals in the river exceed environmental and human health standards, including arsenic, PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (cPAHs), and dioxins/furans. Responsible parties who are paying to clean up the Site include the Port of Seattle, City of Seattle, King County, and The Boeing Company. While the river is getting cleaner, contamination continues to threaten human health and the environment.

The EPA Record of Decision (ROD) that was issued in 2014 is a public document that explains the cleanup plan for the Site. When a significant change in the ROD needs to be made, a Proposed Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD) is issued. This spring, an ESD was issued which proposed lessening the cleanup standards for carcinogenic cPAHs because EPA scientists concluded that they are not as toxic as previously thought. DRCC consulted with community and Technical Advisors who expressed concern that there is too much uncertainty about the revised toxicity assessment to justify changing cPAH cleanup levels at the Site. Therefore, DRCC has concluded that the change may pose unacceptable risks to people's health and the environment.

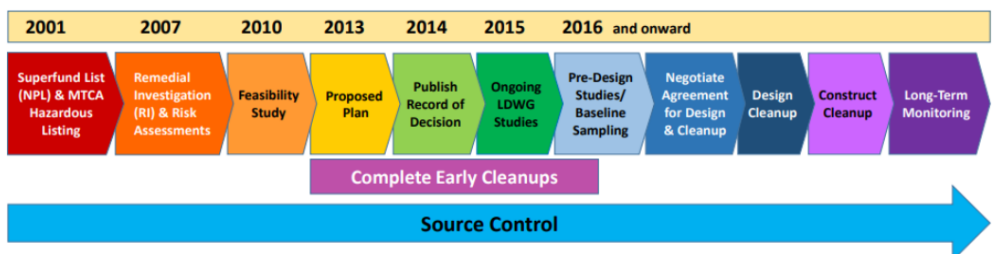
Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the difficult challenges and inequities faced by our communities, DRCC was able to engage people in the ESD decision in creative ways. We submitted a comment letter to EPA in April with our concerns. More than 300 community members signed on and/or sent EPA their own comments opposing the proposed change to the river cleanup. We continue to believe our *Duwamish River* must be recovered to high standards that protect the health of our community and fishing for future generations. It is unfair and inequitable for EPA to take a risk that could affect our health and the environment in an environmental justice community for a small reduction (0.33% or \$1,117,000) in the overall cleanup cost. **We demand health justice, especially for community members who have been historically marginalized, silenced, and disproportionately burdened with the legacy pollutants giving rise to this cleanup.**

WHO CONTINUES TO BE MOST IMPACTED BY THE CLEANUP?

The Duwamish Valley is the ancestral home of the Duwamish Tribe. It is one of the most diverse areas in Seattle. Roughly 42% of the Duwamish Valley's population are people of color and roughly 21% of the population lives below the poverty line. This cleanup will impact many groups, including the Georgetown and South Park neighborhoods; the Suquamish, Muckleshoot, and Duwamish Tribes; the business/industry community, and the many ethnic communities that catch and eat fish and other seafood from the River.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE SO FAR?

The cleanup of six "Early Action Areas" (places in the river where EPA fast-tracked cleanup because levels of contamination posed an immediate and unacceptable risk to human health) have been completed. EPA estimates that about half (50%) of the PCB contamination that was in the river has now been removed, though one of the sites (Jorgensen Forge) needs additional cleanup to remove PCBs that they left behind.



How Can You Help?

The cleanup of the *Duwamish River* must protect both our environment and the health of our community. For the River cleanup to meet these goals, EPA and DRCC need to hear from you! There are several ways you can help. DRCC continues to prioritize the voices of the community to ensure our well being is at the center of every decision:

Contact us with questions/feedback:
contact@duwamishcleanup.org
www.duwamishcleanup.org



Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram! Duwamish RiverCleanup Coalition
 #riverforall

Be informed. Learn about your River. Ask questions. Use your voice!

For questions or more information contact:
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This product is funded through a Public Participation Grant from the Department of Ecology. The content was reviewed for grant consistency but is not necessarily endorsed by the agency.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CONTAMINANTS OF CONCERN AND WHY?

Contaminant of Concern	Description	Reasons for Concern
PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls)	Human-made chemicals (for example, used in electrical equipment, transformers, caulk and paint) banned from use in most applications in 1979, PCBs stay in the environment for a long time and can build up in fish and shellfish.	PCBs may cause cancer in people who have been exposed over a long time. They can also affect learning abilities in children. PCBs are linked to other adverse health effects such as low birth weight, thyroid disease, and immune system disorders.
Arsenic	Naturally present at low levels in Puget Sound area rock and soil. Industrial activities have spread additional arsenic over much of the Puget Sound region.	Long-term exposure to toxic forms of arsenic may cause skin, bladder, and other cancers.
cPAHs (carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons)	Formed during the burning of substances such as coal, oil, gas, wood, garbage, and tobacco.	Long periods of breathing, eating, or skin contact with high levels of some cPAHs may increase a person's risk of cancer.
Dioxins and furans	By-products of burning, chemical manufacturing, and metal processing. Dioxins last a long time and can build up in fish and shellfish.	Toxic effects related to dioxins include reproductive problems, problems in fetal development or in early childhood, immune system damage, and cancer.

What can YOU do ?

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- **Attend Public Meetings:** The next one is for Jorgensen Forge's (JF) second cleanup, which will be held on August 23, 2021. Please attend and give EPA your input on the plan. Deadline for public comments on the JF will be **September 27th**.
 - **Attend DRCC Pre-Meeting,** and Post meeting on August 23rd, the September 6th at 6pm. Please submit your comments about the Jorgensen Forget by **September 25th, 2021**.
 - Help control ongoing sources of pollution: **Join the DRCC/JHA Source Control Advisory Group** -
 - Join **Roundtable Caucus meetings** created to provide recommendations to the EPA to develop a successful cleanup design and implementation of the LDW; Act as an inclusive, neutral, and transparent forum for input from all stakeholders - Tribes, residents, businesses, industries, labour groups, neighborhood groups, government agencies, waterway users, fishers, and others; (see events section website)
 - **Attend Tribes, Trustees and Community (TTC) meetings** (TTC is an opportunity for Tribes, Natural Resource Trustees, and Community members to meet with the EPA and Ecology).
 - Join our Kayak, boat tours, restoration events organized by our Duwamish Valley Youth Corps, Duwamish Alive and more!
- www.duwamishcleanup.org

WHY DO WE NEED TO CLEAN UP THE JORGENSEN FORGE SITE?

Just south of the 14th Ave Street Bridge and upstream of Boeing, Jorgensen Forge is a former steel and aluminum forging and distribution facility on the banks of the Lower Duwamish River. The riverbanks and sediments next to the factory are contaminated with toxic metals and PCBs, which were cleaned up under an EPA Early Action cleanup order in 2014 and 2015. However, tests showed that the company left pollution behind. EPA fined Jorgensen Forge for not completing the work correctly and a new plan is being developed to finish the cleanup. A public comment period on this plan is open now until September 27th.



WHAT ABOUT THE CLEANUP OF THE REST OF THE RIVER?

EPA has divided the Duwamish River into thirds (upper, middle, lower) to make it easier to stage the required cleanup for the rest of the River. EPA, the responsible parties, and the community are currently working together to design the cleanup of the upper third, a section which reaches from the end of the straightened waterway at Salmon Cove Park to Duwamish Waterway Park in the riverfront neighborhood of South Park.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT NEEDS TO BE CLEANED UP?

Studies and engineering designs are the next steps. Then, once pollution sources are sufficiently controlled, active clean up through dredging (removal) or capping (covering contaminated sediment with clean material) will begin. Construction is expected to take at least seven years. The rest of the River will be monitored to determine if it recovers through natural processes over an additional 10-15 years.

EPA finished a "Remedial Investigation" of the river in 2010. That study identified where most of the pollution in the River's sediments is found, but additional testing is underway to fill in the knowledge gaps. For the upper third of the River, EPA is currently finalizing a "Quality Assurance Project Plan" (QAPP) that will include all the data about what chemicals are present, where they are found, and in what quantity they appear. This information will guide the final cleanup design for the upper reach in the next few years.