

Claudia Reidener

Dear Kerry Graber,

In 1989, the citizen of Washington State enacted the toxic waste cleanup law. It sets strict standards to ensure that the quality of cleanup and protection of human health and the environment are not compromised. Under the Model Toxics Control Act, facility owners/operators are responsible for the cleanup.

The heavily polluted Hooker chemical site has and is affecting the Hylebos as well as Commencement Bay and thereby harming wildlife including endangered salmon which is violating treaty fishing rights. Fish tested in the Hylebos have unacceptably high tumor rates.

This is one of the worst polluted sites in the nation with toxins strong enough to melt rock into silica slime. Contamination does not stay in place and clearly already has moved beyond the site. It makes no pause at property lines. I am very concerned about the adjacent PSE construction site, which is being drilled to great depths and scraped at this very moment, with debris hauled off to other sites. It is my understanding that should the actual plume get tapped the resulting fumes rising are of imminent danger to human life.

The potentially deadly effects on wildlife in the bay cannot be underestimated. Should the plume break through and enter into the waters of the bay, hundreds of thousands of pounds of very dangerous toxins could cause a kill-off that would be difficult to recover from, if at all. The Love Canal incident, created by the very company that also so badly polluted Tacoma, is a national symbol of a failure to exercise a sense of concern for future generations. The containment system used there is still leaking and still causing harm.

I urge you to insist Occidental Petroleum clean up the pollution it caused at the soonest, the most exhaustive and with the best technology available. The company is still extremely profitable and must create a fund, bond or reserve account to ensure that a bankruptcy or other failure will not shift the burden onto the people of Tacoma. We have a long history of paying for the horrible pollution of companies who were simply allowed to walk away.

Tacoma and Pierce County already have some of the highest cancer rates in the nation. Reasonably we would look at the port situation in its accumulative pollution of land, air and water. That unfortunately not being the case, we must insist that the Hooker site is decontaminated to the maximum extent possible. Let's not be swayed by monetary pressures. Human and aquatic life cannot be mitigated.

We must remember that the entire Port once was Puyallup tribal land. Indigenous philosophy looks ahead and cares for the next seven generations. We cannot allow major ocean protein sources to go extinct if we care for the survival and wellbeing of the children and their offspring.

As a final note I'd like you to know I am a kayaker and enjoy paddling through the bay. As the second largest city on the Salish Sea with ever more population pressures, we also must respect the recreational aspects of our beautiful environment.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to Tacoma's concerns. Let's learn from the transgressions of the past and move forward with true stewardship, so that we leave the place better than we find it. Water is life. Mni Wiconi!

Regards
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