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WA State Department
of Ecology (SWRO)



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Kerry Graber, Site Manager
Washington State Department of Ecology
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Re: *Public Comments on Feasibility Study, Occidental Chemical Corp. Superfund Cleanup*

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide comments on the Occidental Chemical Superfund cleanup, the worst contamination left in Commencement Bay.

My name is Laure Nichols. I live with my family in North Tacoma and have been an executive at Franciscan Health System for over 25 years. I retired several years ago and now volunteer with Tacoma Garden Club and Forterra to help strengthen the health of our local environment. I am deeply concerned about toxic contamination from the Occidental Chemical Corporation.

Part of what I love about Tacoma is its story of moving from a historical legacy of industrial pollution to a community with a revitalized connection to its waters. Commencement Bay, including the Hylebos Waterway, is a source of pride for both myself and the larger community and it deserves a full and long-lasting cleanup.

The contamination from Occidental is staggering. Hundreds of thousands of pounds of toxic, cancer-causing chemicals are spread under the site, the Hylebos Waterway, and potentially Commencement Bay. The pollution is so bad, it actually dissolves rock into jelly.

In order to cut costs, Occidental Chemical Corporation is setting the stage to be able to walk away from this mess without a comprehensive cleanup. Occidental is proposing a cleanup plan that would leave nearly two thirds of their pollution in the ground – highly toxic pollution right underneath a vulnerable aquatic ecosystem.

This is absolutely not acceptable - this is not acceptable for me, for my family, for my community, or for my environment. Tacoma deserves better!

We cannot afford to let Occidental walk away from their mess – they must be held accountable for the strongest and quickest cleanup possible. I urge Ecology to choose a cleanup plan that removes as much toxic pollution as possible, as soon as possible. Further, Occidental must create a performance bond, reserve account or an equivalent fund to ensure that cleanup costs will be covered regardless of the company's future financial status. Ecology has the authority to order this via a unilateral order.

Occidental should not be able to argue that it's too big of a mess – they created it and they should clean it up. For the safety of our environment, Ecology needs to hold them fully accountable for a real cleanup to the "maximum extent practicable" as required by the Model Toxics Control Act. What Occidental is proposing is unacceptable. We cannot allow the profits of polluters to outweigh the importance of environmental protection.

Sincerely,

Laure C Nichols, 2703 North Yakima Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98406