

Debbie Hill

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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.

I am a long-time resident of Tacoma, Washington, and I am urgently concerned about the health of the environment here. I have worked to constantly educate myself about environmental pollution and toxins so that I do not buy or use herbicides or pesticides or pollute in other ways. I was very glad to see the smelter come down here in Tacoma, though I know that does not get rid of decades of arsenic residue in the north end of Tacoma that is very likely still here. Now, as you are aware, we here in Tacoma face another threat: Puget Sound Energy plans to locate a LNG facility in our Port in spite of the fact that the LNG comes from methane which will have 80-100 times more effects on global warming than CO₂, the Port of Tacoma is in a lahar, tsunami, and earthquake zone, and against all regulations in other areas that state that LNG facilities must be at least three miles from population centers.

So it should come as no surprise that 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. Tacoma should not have to suffer from dirty projects not wanted by other cities such as Seattle or Olympia that end up foisted off on us.

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, and Washington State, deserve better than this.

What message are you sending to other companies such as PSE, which proposes a LLC so that they can just walk away if the whole LNG facility poses a huge problem (like an explosion) if you allow Occidental off the hook? Companies must be made to clean up their messes. This precedent must be set here and now.

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,

Deborah Hill
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