

To: John Guenther
Site Manager
Department of Ecology
913 Squalicum Way, Unit 101
Bellingham, WA 98225
Transmitted Online: bit.ly/Ecology-HarrisAveShipyard-Comments

April 30, 2019

RE: Harris Avenue Shipyard Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study Public Comment

Dear John Guenther,

Thank you for taking the time to consider our comment on the Harris Avenue Shipyard Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS).

RE Sources for Sustainable Communities is a local organization in northwest Washington, founded in 1982. RE Sources works to build sustainable communities and protect the health of northwest Washington's people and ecosystems through the application of science, education, advocacy, and action. Our North Sound Baykeeper program is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the marine and nearshore habitats of northern Puget Sound and the Georgia Strait. Our chief focus is on preventing pollution from entering the North Sound and Strait, while helping our local citizenry better understand the complex connections between prosperity, society, environmental health, and individual wellbeing. Our North Sound Baykeeper is the 43rd member of the Waterkeeper Alliance, with over 300 organizations in 34 countries around the world that promote fishable, swimmable, drinkable water. RE Sources has over 20,000 members in Whatcom, Skagit, and San Juan counties, and we submit these comments on their behalf.

In the upland area preferred alternative 2, for AOC 2A and AOC 2B, the RI/FS mentions that where arsenic, copper, and zinc concentrations in unpaved areas exceed the CULs, one of two remedies may take place, depending on future intended uses. We recommend the first option of removing the first 2 feet of soil, adding a geotextile indicator fabric, and adding a cap to be more protective of the site, or otherwise the option that would remove the most contamination from the site and allow for the most diversity in future uses of the site. With Puglia's Fairhaven Shipyard off the site, the future use of this site is somewhat unknown. We also wonder if dredging will be needed in the future at this site, and if so, what will institutional controls look like?

We would also like to be assured that climate change and sea level rise have been taken into consideration when designing the alternative cleanup plans. Higher tides, bigger storm surges, and larger



rain events could all impact these cleanup efforts. The caps proposed in the preferred alternative will need to be able to withstand the expected increase of storm events and sea level rise. This is also why removal of contaminants, whenever possible, should be done. Other cleanup sites have had contaminant breaches, such as Burlington Industries Superfund site in the City of Cheraw, South Carolina from Hurricane Florence, as well as at Port Gamble and Sinclair Inlet here in Washington where storm events have compromised sediment sites. Additionally, Marine Park, the park adjacent to this property, has experienced some serious erosional events during storm surges in the last 5 years, exposing utility lines and requiring maintenance.

As the site is in Usual and Accustomed Fishing Grounds for the Lummi and Nooksack Tribes, we urge Washington Department of Ecology to ensure that the cleanup levels are truly safe for fish consumption, especially for more sensitive populations with compromised immune systems and/or those who eat fish more regularly than the current Washington state regulations are set to, such as these tribal populations. Consultation with these tribes is recommended if not already done.

We would like to additionally note that there has been forage fish spawning documented on the Harris Avenue Shipyard pocket beach. Sand lance have been found in December and January in the Fairbanks and Pantilla 2016 Bellingham Bay study¹. Surf smelt eggs have also been found on occasion at Marine Park during Whatcom Marine Resources Committee/WDFW surveys (per personal experience on surveys). These fish should be taken into consideration for construction windows in the future, as well as ensure that cleanup levels will be protective of them, particularly sand lance which burrow into the sand to spawn.

We appreciate that the public meeting presentation was made available online and that the disproportionate cost analysis (DCA) was further explained in more transparent detail. We also appreciate separating out the uplands and sediment portions for the DCA and alternatives for ease of comprehension and to ensure that one area of cleanup didn't sway the outcome of the other in the DCA. We look forward to the next step in this process, the Cleanup Action Plan.

Thank you for reading our letter and giving our concerns consideration. We value this public comment process and believe that it strengthens community engagement and involvement in the cleanup of Bellingham Bay.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Hines, North Sound BayKeeper, Lead Scientist
Kirsten McDade, Pollution Prevention Specialist
RE Sources for Sustainable Communities

References:

¹Fairbanks, Chris and Daniel Panttila. 2016. Bellingham Bay Forage Fish Spawning Assessment. Prepared for Port of Bellingham, Bellingham Bay Habitat Action Team.

<https://www.cob.org/Documents/pw/environment/restoration/Bellingham%20Bay%20Forage%20Fish%20Spawning%20Assessment%20-%20Final%20Report%20DRAFT%20003252016.pdf>