



Public Participation Plan Former WestRock Pulp and Paper Mill

801 E Portland Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98421

Solid Waste Management Program, Industrial Section

Washington Department of Ecology
Lacey, Washington

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This document is available on the Department of Ecology's Former WestRock Pulp and Paper Mill [cleanup page](#).¹

Related Information

- Cleanup site ID: 16842
- Facility site ID: 39

Contact Information

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ADA Accessibility

The Department of Ecology is committed to providing people with disabilities access to our information and services by meeting or exceeding the requirements of state and federal laws.

To request an ADA accommodation, email tara.roberts@ecy.wa.gov, call 360-280-4325 or call Ecology through the Washington Telecommunication Relay for services including text telephone (TTY) at 711 or through your preferred relay service provider. Visit Ecology.wa.gov/ADA for more accessibility information.

Language Access

The Department of Ecology offers free translation and interpretation services. If you need help in your preferred language, please call Tara Roberts at 360-280-4325 and request an interpreter, or email tara.roberts@ecy.wa.gov.

¹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/16842>

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Public Involvement in Contamination Cleanup

The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) developed this Public Participation Plan. The goal of this plan is to ensure meaningful community involvement throughout the cleanup of the former WestRock Tacoma Pulp and Paper Mill (site).

This plan outlines how Ecology will keep the public informed about contamination investigations and cleanup options at each stage of the process. Please review Appendix A for more information about the cleanup process. The plan also details when and how the community can participate in the cleanup process. We encourage the public to engage with the decision-making opportunities and provide input.

Site contacts

To be included in the site record, comments about the cleanup process must be submitted during comment periods. Questions and informal comments or information about the site's history are welcome anytime.

Ecology

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Responsible Parties

This is an Ecology-supervised cleanup. The parties below are responsible for the cleanup.

WestRock CP, LLC
Simpson Tacoma Kraft Company, LLC
International Paper Company

If you are unable to reach the Ecology contacts, please visit the cleanup site page² for up-to-date contact information.

² <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/16842>

Washington's Cleanup Laws

Ecology uses the [Model Toxics Control Act \(MTCA\)](https://www.ecology.wa.gov/mtca)³ and accompanying regulations for site investigation and cleanup activities.

This plan is required under MTCA. Passed in 1989, MTCA provides guidelines for contaminated site cleanup in Washington state. This law sets standards to ensure the cleanup protects people and the environment. MTCA requires the creation of this plan.

Model Toxics Control Act

MTCA began in 1988 as a citizen-led effort to clean up contaminated sites in Washington state. The law holds property owners or operators responsible for cleaning up contamination on, or coming from, their property.

Ecology carries out MTCA, making sure investigations and cleanups happen according to state rules and regulations. These rules are found in [Chapter 173-340 Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\)](#).⁴ Ecology investigates reports of contamination, and the property is placed on the [Contaminated Sites List](#)⁵ if the pollution is determined to pose a serious risk to human health or the environment. This starts the cleanup process at the site.

The investigation and cleanup process under MTCA includes several steps (Appendix A). Public involvement is a key part of MTCA's [cleanup process](#).⁶ Nearby residents, businesses, community groups, and other interested parties can review and comment on documents related to steps that make crucial decisions or plans about the investigation and cleanup process.

State Environmental Policy Act

Certain steps in MTCA cleanup require evaluation under the [State Environmental Policy Act \(SEPA\)](#).⁷ Under SEPA, the potential for significant adverse environmental impacts from a project or action must be evaluated by state and local agencies when making decisions. This evaluation is subject to public review and comment in parallel with cleanup documents.

³ <https://www.ecology.wa.gov/mtca>

⁴ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=173-340>

⁵ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/reports/cleanup/contaminated>

⁶ <http://www.ecology.wa.gov/MTCA-process>

⁷ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=197-11>

Site Information

Historical use

The site is a former Kraft and recycled pulp and paper mill that produced bleached and unbleached products. The mill was built in 1928 and permanently shut down in 2023.

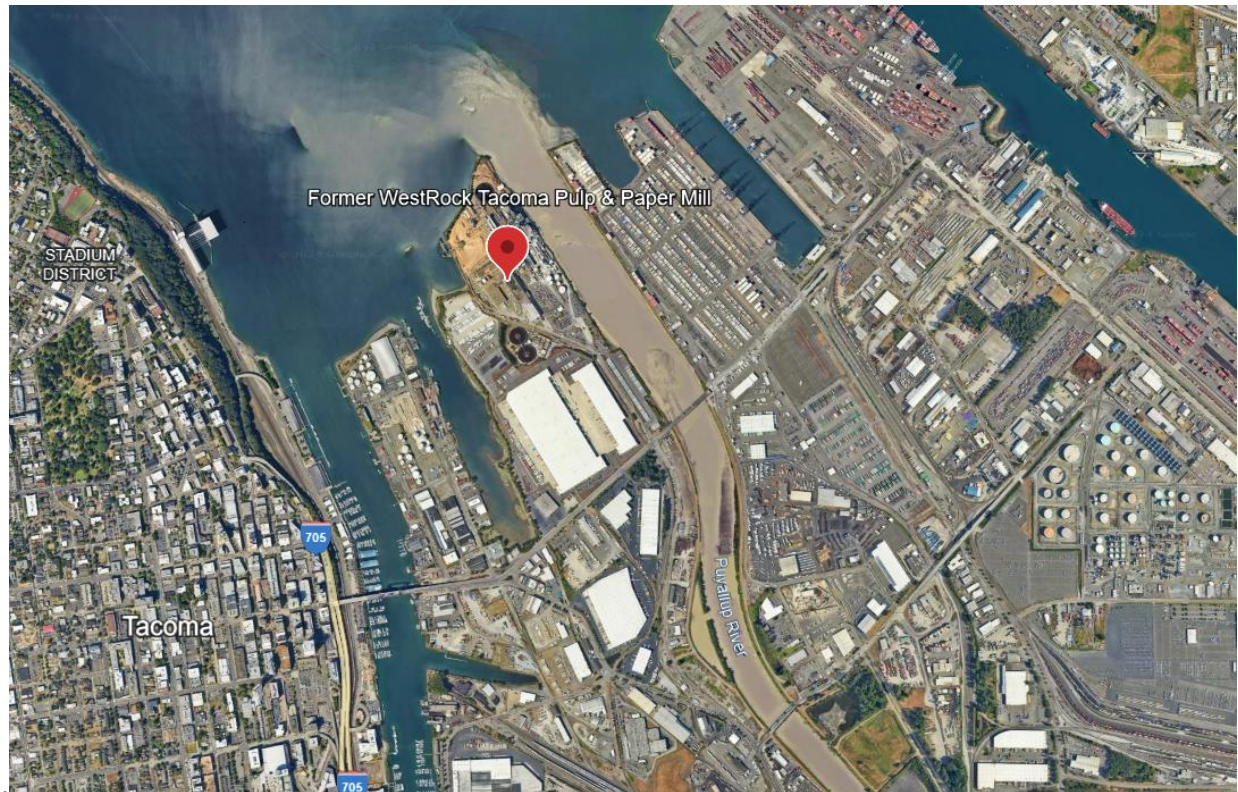


Figure 1. Site location

Investigation and Cleanup plans

At this point in the process, Ecology is focusing on the upland area of the site. Ecology is providing a draft agreed order for public review and comment. When in place, the agreed order initiates an upland investigation process under Ecology supervision. If the investigation shows that cleanup is required under MTCA, the cleanup process will occur under Ecology supervision. The public will have multiple opportunities to comment throughout the cleanup process, as indicated by the orange comment bubbles in Appendix A of this document. After the agreed order is finalized, the parties subject to the requirements of the agreed order (WestRock CP, LLC, Simpson Tacoma Kraft Company, LLC, and International Paper Company) are required to submit an upland site investigation and sampling plan to Ecology for approval.

Historical releases

There are records of releases of petroleum oils, acids, lime waste, and black liquor (spent pulping chemicals) on the upland area of the site.

The pulp and paper mill was operated prior to the existence of environmental regulations, including the 1976 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), the 1986 Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), and the 1988 MTCA initiative. Prior to these regulations, it is unclear if historical releases were reported or documented.

While there is a history of releases of hazardous substances at this site, to Ecology's knowledge, there has been no historical upland sampling investigation to determine the type and quantities of contaminants present. Ecology will update this section of the Public Participation Plan when more information is available.

Area community

The Site is located in the city of Tacoma adjacent to where the Puyallup River empties into Commencement Bay.

Zoning for the Site and areas surrounding the site is currently designated for industrial use. The site is within the "Tacoma Manufacturing and Industrial Center" as identified in the Tideflats Subarea Plan. More specifically, the Tideflats Subarea Plan designates the site as "Seaport Core Manufacturing".⁸

According to the Tideflats Subarea Plan, use priorities in the Seaport Core Manufacturing district include cargo shipping terminals, seaport-related container and industrial activity, seaport-related office, cargo and equipment storage yards, warehousing, transportation facilities, vessel fueling operations and support facilities, and intermodal yards. The subarea is served by road and rail corridors designed for large, heavy trucks and rail loads. Retail and commercial uses are ancillary and primarily serve the subarea's employees. Housing is allowed only for caretakers of allowed uses.

The neighborhoods near the Tacoma Tideflats have unemployment rates of 2 to 3 percent and 41 percent of the population is considered low income. The population is mostly white with the next largest ethnic groups being Hispanic (22 percent) and Asian (20 percent). Nearly all households (93 percent) speak English proficiently.

Ecology may reach out to cultural community organizations as part of our outreach and provide information in other languages as appropriate following federal guidance.⁹ The non-English

⁸ <https://tacoma.gov/project/tideflats-subarea-plan/>

⁹ Guidance to Environmental Protection Agency Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons, 69 Fed. Reg. § 35602 (June 15, 2004).

languages most widely spoken in the Tacoma area are Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Khmer, Korean, and Tagalog. When appropriate, Ecology will be prepared to provide outreach in Spanish, and if requested in Russian, Ukrainian, Khmer, Tagalog, Korean, and Vietnamese. The amount or types of outreach materials Ecology will provide in non-English languages will be determined on a case-by-case basis. We strive to make our public participation efforts as inclusive as possible and welcome your input about how to best reach the nearby community.

Tribal engagement

We have reached out to Tribes to offer opportunities to engage in the cleanup process that are separate from the public involvement process. This engagement is described in site-specific Tribal Engagement Plans, as required by [WAC 173-340-620](https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=173-340-620).¹⁰ We invite Tribal members and other indigenous peoples to engage in the public involvement process as well.

The Tribal Engagement Plans for this site will be available once they are finalized on our website for the Former WestRock Tacoma Pulp and Paper Mill cleanup¹¹.

Public Participation Activities

Members of the public may ask questions, submit informal comments, or share site information at any time. Interested parties do not need to wait for a formal public comment period to contact Ecology.

However, to be included in the formal site record, comments about the site investigation, cleanup alternatives, or cleanups must be submitted during formal comment periods. In addition, the public is invited to review site documents before they become final. This is the most direct and influential way to learn more about the site and be involved in the cleanup's decision-making.

How we share information with the community

During specific stages of investigation and cleanup process, Ecology will provide notice that documents are available for review and comment. These notices will provide general information about the site, contact information for submitting comments, and times and locations of public meetings or hearings or how to request one if not yet scheduled.

Ecology may also develop documents outside of comment periods to keep the community updated on the site's status. These informational documents will be available online and at

¹⁰ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=173-340-620>

¹¹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/16842>

document repositories (see “places to see print documents”). Print copies may be mailed to the nearby community if we feel the message warrants the associated cost and resources.

Comment period notices and other site announcements may also be posted in various locations throughout the community (for example, local businesses, schools, or libraries).

The different ways we will communicate are further detailed below.

Email lists

Ecology maintains an email list to update interested persons about this site. If you would like to be added to the email list for this site, please contact Tara Roberts at 360-280-4325 or tara.roberts@ecy.wa.gov.

Postal mailing list

Ecology maintains a mailing list that includes addresses within a 1-mile radius of the site and relevant local, state, and federal government contacts.

People on the mailing list receive public comment notices when draft documents are available.

We will add additional individuals, organizations, and other interested parties to the mailing list as requested. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for this site, please contact Tara Roberts at 360-280-4325 or tara.roberts@ecy.wa.gov.

Contaminated Site Register

Public comment periods, events, and other cleanup notices are published in Ecology’s [Contaminated Site Register](#).¹² To receive the *Contaminated Site Register* by email, please [subscribe online](#),¹³ or contact Sarah Kellington at sarah.kellington@ecy.wa.gov or 360-280-3167.

Newspaper display ads or legal notices

We announce public comment periods and events for this site in ads or notices published in the Tacoma News Tribune. We will also publish notice on our [Public Input & Events Listing](#).¹⁴

Ecology’s website and social media platforms

We maintain a website for the former WestRock Pulp and Paper Mill cleanup site.¹⁵ The website provides site information, and you may download cleanup documents. On the upper right hand corner of the website, there is an option to “subscribe to this site”. When you

¹² <https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Guidance-technical-assistance/Site-Register-lists-and-data>

¹³ <https://ecology.wa.gov/site-register>

¹⁴ <https://ecology.wa.gov/Events/Search/Listing>

¹⁵ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/16842>

subscribe, you'll receive a weekly email if we change the site's status, add documents to the site's webpage, or open a comment period.

We may also share information about cleanup sites through [news releases, our blog, and social media](#).¹⁶

Places to see print documents

During public comment periods, you can find print documents at the following locations:

Tacoma Public Library, Main Branch
1102 Tacoma Ave S
Tacoma, WA 98402

Washington Department of Ecology
Headquarters Office
300 Desmond Dr SE
Lacey, WA 98503

To schedule an appointment to review documents at the Department of Ecology, please contact Connie Naotsuka at 564-669-4474 or connie.naotsuka@ecy.wa.gov.

Signs around the cleanup site

We may also install signs displaying information about project status, traffic impacts, and health risks around the cleanup site.

How you can share information with us

To be included in the site record, comments about the cleanup process must be submitted during comment periods. Questions and informal comments or information about the site's history are welcome anytime, or during public events.

Public comment periods

Formal comment periods allow interested members of the public to comment on draft documents, legal agreements, and proposed cleanup actions. At a minimum, MTCA requires 30-day public comment periods for draft cleanup documents and 14-day comment periods for SEPA documents. SEPA documents are often made available for public review with other cleanup documents. In that case, we combine the comment periods, and they last at least 30 days. We may hold comment periods longer than 30 days if there is significant interest.

¹⁶ <https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Get-to-know-us/News>

Members of the public can submit comments during public comment periods in one of two ways: in writing by following instructions Ecology will provide when public comment periods are announced, or orally during a public hearing held as part of a public comment period.

If a public hearing is not scheduled during the public comment period, a hearing can be requested. We will schedule a public hearing if at least 10 people request the hearing. This may cause us to extend the public comment period to meet the public hearing notice requirements. Public hearings are held at locations close to the site that meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Public hearings are always announced in advance using a variety of methods.

Following a comment period, we publish all the input we received in writing during the public comment period and all comments we received orally during a public hearing and respond to significant comments and questions. If the comments result in significant changes to the cleanup documents, then the documents will be revised and re-issued for public review. If the comments do not result in significant changes, then they become final.

Public events

We may also hold public meetings, workshops, and open houses based on community interest outside of the public comment period. If Ecology is holding a public event that is not associated with a public comment period, the public event is an informal way for the public to provide information to Ecology. Ecology will not publish input received during these informal events or respond in writing. Public events are held at locations close to the site that meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards and are announced in advance using a variety of methods.

We may also identify public concerns and cleanup goals by meeting with and soliciting information from interested community members and organizations. To collaborate with us about this site, please contact Tara Roberts at 360-280-4325 or tara.roberts@ecy.wa.gov.

Ecology will provide instructions for how public meeting attendees can request Spanish interpretation at these events in advance of the events.

Public Participation Grants

Grants may be available to neighborhood committees, non-profits, and other groups interested in the site. For contaminated sites, these funds can be used to:

- Hire an expert to help interpret technical information
- Conduct activities that enhance the public's understanding of, and participation in, the cleanup process

For more information about public participation grants, please contact Laura Busby at 360-280-5088 or laura.busby@ecy.wa.gov and Maria Marlin at 360-407-6083 or maria.marlin@ecy.wa.gov. You may also visit the [Public Participation Grant webpage](#).¹⁷

Plan Amendments

Ecology developed this plan following MTCA regulations (WAC 173-340-600). We review it as the cleanup progresses and amend it as necessary. You may suggest amendments to Tara Roberts at 360-280-4325 or tara.roberts@ecy.wa.gov.

We intend for this plan to provide the public with information on opportunities for public involvement and comment. The outreach activities discussed reflect Ecology's current plans to keep the public informed. It also provides ways for those interested in the site to communicate their concerns and questions to us.

If you feel the planned outreach activities and mechanisms found in this plan are insufficient or would like to modify them in some way, please contact us. We will work to find solutions. We can implement new activities or outreach tools right away, with or without amending this plan.

¹⁷ <https://ecology.wa.gov/PPG>

Appendix A. Steps in the MTCA cleanup process

The cleanup process is defined in the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA), Washington's cleanup law. See the attached, accessible PDF for details.

Washington's Cleanup Process



Public participation plans and comment periods are only required for cleanups under a legal agreement with Ecology. Otherwise, all cleanups follow the same steps. The steps are defined by Washington's cleanup law, the Model Toxics Control Act.

