

Jon Hamilton

I am submitting the attached letter summarizing a thematic analysis of all unique public comments posted to the Department of Ecology's portal through August 8, 2025, regarding the Rayonier Mill site cleanup.

This analysis, conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2022) approach, identifies seven recurring themes from residents, business owners, environmental organizations, and local governments. Across these perspectives, there is consistent and overwhelming support for Cleanup Alternative SL-5 as the only solution that is permanent, climate-resilient, and aligned with long-term community and environmental well-being.

I respectfully urge the Department of Ecology to adopt SL-5, in alignment with the positions of the Port Angeles City Council, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, and the clear consensus reflected in the public record.

Jon Hamilton
1116 Eckard Ave.
Port Angeles, WA 98362

August 12, 2025

Marian Abbett
Washington State Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Subject: Public Comment Summary and Thematic Analysis – Rayonier Mill Site Cleanup Plan

Dear Ms. Abbett,

I am writing to provide a consolidated thematic analysis of the public comments submitted to the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) regarding the proposed cleanup of the former Rayonier Mill site in Port Angeles, WA. This synthesis is based on all unique public comments posted to DOE's public portal through August 8, 2025. My intent is to ensure that DOE's decision-making process fully considers the breadth and depth of the community's expressed priorities, concerns, and recommendations.

The analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2022) approach to thematic analysis, systematically reviewing each public comment, identifying recurring codes, and grouping them into coherent themes. The result is a transparent, data-driven summary that reflects the consensus of residents, business owners, environmental organizations, and local government representatives.

1. Only SL-5 Offers True Permanence

Community members overwhelmingly reject capping (SL-3) as a temporary measure prone to failure. Full removal (SL-5) is viewed as the only safe and final solution.

"The Port Angeles community does not want toxic waste capped on site."

2. The Site is Too Vulnerable for Half Measures

Many comments cite sea level rise, tsunamis, earthquake risk, and liquefaction potential as reasons SL-3 is unsafe.

"What happens when a Cascadia event causes the site to sink and re-release contaminants?"

3. The State's Math Doesn't Add Up

Commenters challenge DOE's cost-benefit analysis, citing undervalued habitat restoration, uncounted disaster risks, and inflated SL-5 costs.

"Please do not sacrifice our long-term benefits for short-term cost considerations."

4. Restore the Creek, Restore the Coast

Restoration of Ennis Creek and adjacent estuary is a recurring priority for salmon recovery, orca food supply, and biodiversity.

"Our habitat deserves to have all hazardous material fully removed."

5. Our Health and Our Children Come First

Public health, especially child safety, is a central concern—raised by parents, educators, and childcare providers located near the site.

“We want the area clean so our children can safely explore it again.”

6. Clean Land is Good Business

SL-5 is linked to long-term economic opportunity—parks, housing, commercial spaces, and a revitalized waterfront.

“A park, walking paths, and restaurants would be an awesome change for Port Angeles.”

7. Trust is Earned by Doing the Right Thing

Comments express skepticism about the process and urge DOE to follow the unified positions of the Port Angeles City Council and the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe.

“They broke it; they should fix it.”

Across all perspectives—residential, commercial, environmental, and governmental—the call is clear: adopt SL-5, the full cleanup alternative. This approach protects public health, restores vital habitat, ensures long-term site stability, and honors the overwhelming public consensus and the City and Tribe’s positions.

I urge the Department of Ecology to listen to the community it serves, integrate these themes into your decision-making, and commit to a cleanup that is permanent, comprehensive, and just.

Thank you for your time and for considering this summary as part of the public record.

Sincerely,
Jon Hamilton
Port Angeles, WA