

Cheryl Baumann

Public Comment on Proposed Rayonier Clean Up, August 12, 2025

Dear Department of Ecology Clean Up Staff,

As a City of Port Angeles resident who was here when the Rayonier Mill closed, It is extremely frustrating to know we have waited almost 30 years for a massive clean up on our waterfront, only to learn that what is being proposing is a non-permanent solution which involves covering up the site and fencing it off, rather than an actual and total clean up. This is unfair to the citizens of Port Angeles and other state residents who think that polluters should be accountable for not only cleaning up their messes, but doing so in a timely manner. That is the message we want to send to those whose work results in polluted lands and waterways.

What is being proposed in Port Angeles does the exact opposite. It is literally more of a cover up than a clean up, and it has dragged on for decades. What's worse, the proposed alternative involves covering over 10 acres of toxins with dirt and fill, capping a 7 foot high mound and fencing off that site along the water's edge. We are not comfortable with the non-permanence and ramifications of toxins leaching out over time or having a toxic eyesore of a mound spoiling the view for residents and tourists alike. With sea level rise and more frequent and intense storms as a result of the climate crisis, that could mean a serious storm washing away the polluted sediments, releasing and spreading toxins in the environment, and then forcing another decades long "clean up" process.

That makes no sense. I agree with the City of Port Angeles whose consultant asserts that the analysis provided does not accurately reflect realistic proposed costs for the capping alternative, while overestimating the cost of carting the toxins off site, and not considering the costs of being unable to use that land or the views it blocks or the harm to endangered species like ESA-listed salmon and forage fish impacted as a result. While it will take many truckloads to haul the contaminated soils offsite, how is that different then the many trucks which used to carry products from the Rayonier Mill or the many dangerous chemicals previously trucked in for the Mill's paper-making process? Collecting and hauling off the polluted sediments makes much more sense compared to just collecting it and capping it at the water's edge, resulting in an unstable problem being left for the next generation of Port Angeles residents. Not to be forgotten is how much less expensive this project would have cost had it occurred 30 years ago when the mill closed. The attempt to run out the clock has resulted in significant cost increases. That does not mean the good people of Port Angeles should now be shortchanged in terms of clean up.

We have but one chance to get this right and that time is now. I support proposal SL-5 which is an actual full site clean up. The City and its residents deserve no less and it's the company's responsibility to right this wrong. We expect our state government to advocate for us in terms of protecting our lands, air, waters and viewscapes. We deserve no less.

Thank you for your consideration of this comment.

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