

Duwamish River

Superfund

Fact Sheet

WHAT IS SUPERFUND?...

Superfund is America's environmental cleanup law for our most highly polluted lands. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) places a site on the Superfund "list" after determining that it is one of the country's most contaminated waste sites. The law then requires those who are responsible to clean up, in order to protect the environment and human health.

The Duwamish River was added to the Superfund list in 2001 for a toxic slew of chemicals. More than 100 years of industrial dumping, sewage and runoff from city streets is responsible for the pollution.

WHAT'S IN YOUR RIVER?

In 1999, EPA conducted a "site investigation" to determine the extent of contamination in the Duwamish River. The results showed toxic pollution levels so high the river was listed as a Superfund site – one of the most contaminated sites in the nation. Here are some of the findings of the investigation and other recent studies.

- **PCBs**

Levels of PCBs are up to **20 times** higher in Duwamish River fish than in fish from clean areas of Puget Sound.

- **LEAD**

100% of all samples taken show trace levels of lead in the river's sediments.

- **MERCURY**

Sediments at the river bottom exceed state standards for mercury by up to **400%**.



- **ARSENIC**

Pockets of arsenic in the sediments exceed state standards by more than **1,000%**.

- **SEWAGE**

Seven sewer/stormwater outfalls dump over **600 million gallons** of untreated sewage and stormwater into the river each year.

- **OTHER CHEMICALS**

Samples have also found hydrocarbons, pesticides, phalates (plasticizers), other heavy metals, and more.

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT...

Many people in Seattle are unaware that a living river runs through the city. Entering the city from the South and flowing all the way to Elliott Bay, the Duwamish River travels past the diverse neighborhoods of South Park, Georgetown and West Seattle, passing under the West Seattle Bridge before meeting the bay. The Duwamish is not just a shipping channel, but a vibrant, living river that ultimately provides passage to the Green River and on to the Howard Hanson reservoir – a major drinking water source – high in the Cascades.

Over the past century, the river has been drastically altered. 1,200 miles of river were diverted away from the Duwamish to North Seattle or Tacoma, and the last 10 miles of the river's course to the Sound was straightened, deepened and shortened to a 6-mile long shipping canal.

Despite these alterations, the Duwamish remains home to migrating salmon; osprey, eagles and peregrine falcons; river otters and visiting sea lions. Dungeness crab share habitat with bottom-dwellers such as English sole and rockfish; herring teem in the shadows of piers and pilings; and great blue herons feed in the shallows with sandpipers and other shorebirds seeking the hidden clams and mussels that survive in this "industrial waterway." The Duwamish has always been – and continues to be – a living river.

Unfortunately, the Duwamish – and the life it supports – is also polluted.

☠ HEALTH ADVISORY ☠

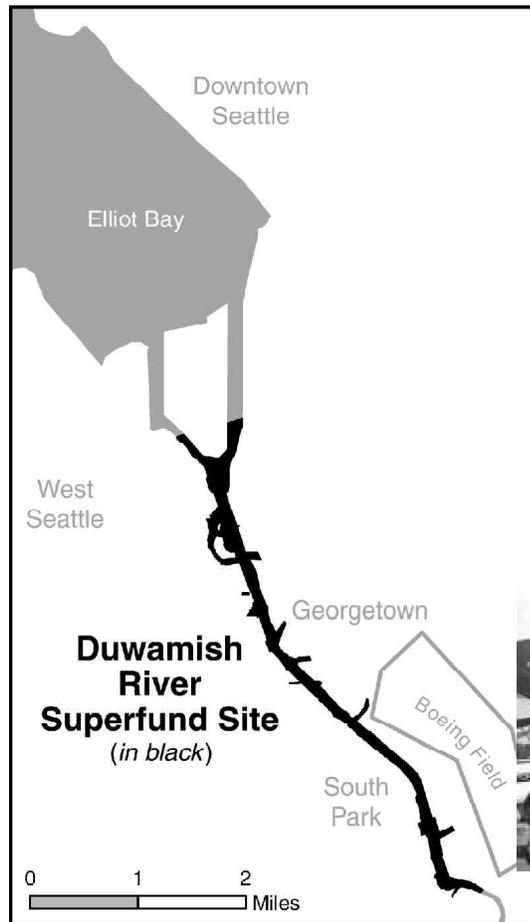
King County has issued health advisories against (1) **eating** crab or bottom fish from the Duwamish and (2) **swimming** near a sewer/stormwater outfall within 3 days of a rainstorm.

TODAY'S CHALLENGE

100 years of industrial dumping and urban runoff has left a legacy of toxic pollution in the river bottom. Bottom-dwellers, such as crab and sole, transport these toxins to the eagles, Puget Sound orcas – and people – that use them for food. Today, fish and crab from the Duwamish have up to seven times more cancer-causing chemicals in them than those from clean sites nearby.

PCBs – an industrial carcinogen – are found in nearly all salmon in the river. Heavy metals – like mercury – are up to 400% over state standards.

It has taken a century to create the pollution threatening the Duwamish today. It is the job of this generation – and the parties responsible – to clean it up.



WHO WE ARE The Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition

This Fact Sheet is provided by the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition - an alliance of community, environmental, tribal and small business organizations – to give you the information and tools you need to be informed, track progress and participate in the cleanup. *Our mission is to ensure a Duwamish River cleanup that is accepted by and benefits the community and protects fish, wildlife and human health.*

We are a formal Community Advisory Group to EPA, representing the interests of the community. We are involved in all aspects of the cleanup and are working to ensure that the cleanup meets *community* standards.

HOW DOES SUPERFUND WORK?

Now that the Duwamish River is a Superfund site, we all have a chance – and a responsibility – to help clean it up.

EPA and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) are working together to guide the cleanup of the river and identify the responsible parties. Boeing, the Port of Seattle, the City of Seattle and King County have taken responsibility for the early phase of cleanup studies and are currently preparing a plan to identify “early action” cleanup sites for the most toxic hot spots that can be cleaned up quickly. Once early action sites are identified, studies (and determining responsibility) for the river-wide cleanup will begin.

We have an important voice in how these cleanup decisions are made. How we use the river, what fish and wildlife we value, how our children may one day use the river, where people fish, who is contributing to pollution of the river, and “how clean is clean enough” – these are all important factors in the Duwamish River Superfund cleanup. We, as community members, must speak up in order to protect the river’s salmon, its fishermen and our children from the toxic legacy we have inherited.

WHAT CAN I DO?

The Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition was formed to be your guide to getting involved in the cleanup. Whether you are a fisherman, longshoreman, business owner, resident, kayaker, or are concerned about endangered species, salmon, eagles, orcas, economic impacts or human health, there is a role for you in the river cleanup.

We present **up-to-date briefings** to churches, community centers, neighborhood groups and schools to keep you informed. We offer **boat tours** and opportunities to participate in river projects. We host **community forums** on important upcoming decisions and help *you* prepare your letters, comments or testimony on how Superfund decisions affect you, your family and your community. And we will let you know when EPA is planning a **public meeting** or is making an important decision on cleanup plans that **need your input**.



NUTS & BOLTS

Since the Superfund listing, EPA has been reviewing studies and plans conducted by Boeing, the Port of Seattle, King County and the City of Seattle (the Lower Duwamish Waterway Group) as part of the Superfund cleanup. To date, the following documents have been (or are being) prepared for review:

- **Ecological Risk Assessment**
evaluates risk to fish and wildlife from river pollution
- **Human Health Risk Assessment**
evaluates risk to human health from river pollution
- **Early Action Site Identification & Prioritization**
describes process and technical criteria for selecting potential early action sites

The Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition has reviewed and provided technical and policy critiques on each of these documents. Public review drafts are due out in the summer of 2002, and will be shared with the community.

Watch for the following dates:

- **JULY 17, 2002**
Early Action Cleanup (RI) Plan/Report
- **AUGUST 1, 2002**
Early Action Candidate Site Identification
- **AUGUST 21, 2002**
Data Gaps Identification

During the spring and summer we will be reviewing drafts of the above documents, and welcome your participation; just let us know that you are interested, or join one of our many river tours and events.

We are tracking other related projects and reports as well, including Boeing’s “Plant II” cleanup,

cleanup of the Duwamish/Diagonal Way Combined Sewer Overflow on the river, ongoing dredging activities, Long Painting and Philip Services closures and cleanups, and the Department of Health’s Duwamish River Public Health Assessment. For more information on any of these documents or how to get involved –

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