SUPERFUND Fact Sheet

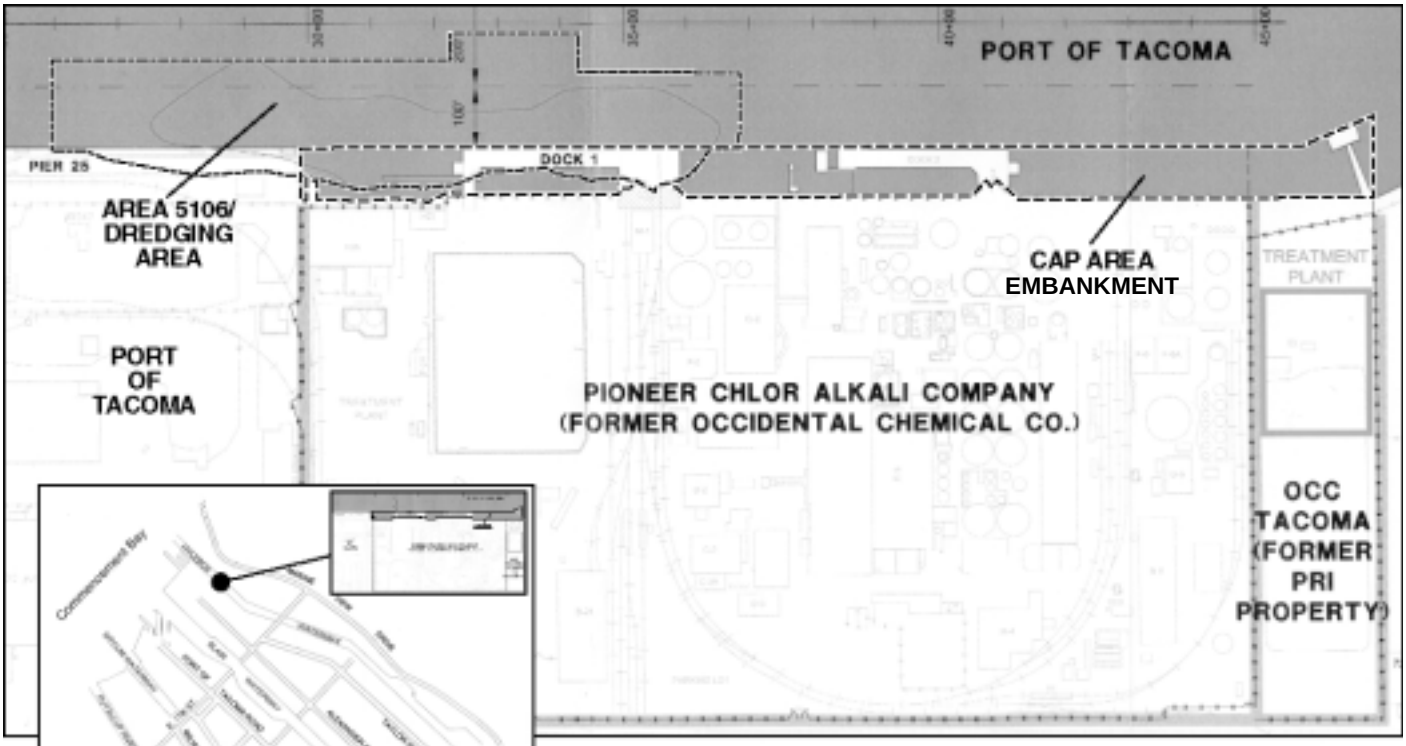
COMMENCEMENT BAY NEARSHORE/TIDEFLATS

Tacoma, Washington

EPA U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY July 2002

Cleanup work at Hylebos is Starting in August.

Beginning in September, 2002 Occidental Chemical will remove contaminated sediments from off shore of its former facility known as Area 5106. Beginning in winter of 2002, a trial cap will also be installed on a portion of the embankment area located at 605 Alexander Avenue near the mouth of the Hylebos Waterway.



INSIDE:

A Closer Look at Dredging Area 5106 . . .

Dredging

About 32,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments will be removed from an area off shore of the former Occidental facility known as Area 5106. These sediments are heavily contaminated with VOCs (volatile organic compounds) and SVOCs (semi-volatile organic compounds).

Marina residents and tenants should note that Area 5106 extends from the former Occidental facility to the edge of the navigation channel (see map). Contaminated sediment will be removed using a suction dredge and a mechanical dredge, if necessary. A boom line will be installed to keep people away from the dredging operation (see map). The waterway will remain open to boat traffic during dredging because the work will be conducted on the edge of the waterway. Water quality around the dredging operation will be monitored frequently and there should be no odors or effects on boats around the project areas.

Treatment

Unlike other parts of the Hylebos cleanup, the sediments at Area 5106 need to be treated before disposal. Sediments removed from Area 5106 will be treated using slurry aeration, which is a common treatment process to remove organic compounds and allow for safer disposal of the dredged material.

A new treatment plant will be built and will operate 24 hours a day for about four months. The plant will be located on the Occidental parcel formerly owned by PRI. The treatment plant will consist of a series of tanks and piping, and will blend with existing structures at the Pioneer facility. Noise from the treatment plant should not be noticeably different from noise generated by the Pioneer facility during operation.

Disposal

Once the sediment is treated and can be safely disposed of, it will be taken to Blair Slip 1 by truck. The Blair Waterway, adjacent to the Hylebos Waterway, has been identified by EPA as one of three acceptable disposal sites for dredged material from the Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Site. Filling Slip 1 will allow the Port of Tacoma to expand its container storage area.

What's the Schedule for Dredging Area 5106?

Preparation and construction of the treatment plant to be located on the Occidental parcel will begin mid-July. Dredging and treatment is scheduled to begin mid-September (2002), and it should be complete by mid-December (2002). Dredging will occur during normal business hours (8-hour days). Transfer of the treated material to Blair Slip 1 will begin after all the material has been treated, and as soon as Slip 1 becomes available for use.

How does slurry aeration remove VOC's and SVOC's from sediments?

Sediment is dredged and pumped to a large, enclosed, upland tank and mixed with water. The slurry is then pumped to two tanks where it is mixed, heated and air is blown through it.

Treated slurry is then dewatered, stored on site, and taken to Slip 1 for disposal. VOC's and SVOC's separate from the slurry as a gas which is trapped in the treatment tanks, and then removed in carbon scrubbers. The entire process is self-contained. Pipes and tanks are connected and closed to the environment.

Blair Slip 1 Disposal Site Being Readied for Use

This summer, the Port of Tacoma and Occidental will work together to begin demolishing existing pier structures in Blair Slip 1. Pier demolition and related activities are necessary first steps in preparing the slip to be used as a disposal site for dredged sediment from the Commencement Bay Nearshore/Tideflats Site, including the Hylebos Waterway. EPA will provide more details about other Hylebos Waterway cleanup projects and schedules later this year. Cleanup work in the Hylebos Waterway is currently expected to occur over the next three years.

The Embankment Will be Capped to Protect Human Health and the Environment

The embankment extends from the top of the shoreline at the Pioneer facility and the adjacent Occidental property to the low tide line (see map). The area is heavily contaminated with a wide mix of contaminants including metals (mostly lead), PCB's (polychlorinated biphenyls) and pesticides. Capping sediments is done by placing a cover or cap over an established layer of contaminated sediment. This covering seals the sediments physically and chemically, preventing pollutants from moving into the surrounding water. The cap will protect human health and provide better habitat than is currently in place, but is not designed as a "habitat site" since the area is still heavily industrial.

A Test Cap will be installed first

The cap will be constructed in phases. In phase one, a portion of the cap, about 200 ft. in length – a test cap – will be installed and monitored for one year to determine if the cap is performing as expected. If the test cap is effective, the cap will be extended to cover the remaining portions of the bank (approximately 1,500 additional lineal feet of cap). If problems are detected with the test cap, designs will be improved before the final cap is installed in phase two.

Schedule for the Embankment

Installation of the test cap is scheduled to begin in winter of 2002 and will take approximately 6 weeks to complete. Monitoring of the test cap will take place through fall of 2003 with the final cap being placed in winter of 2003.

EPA is planning a public meeting

Although not yet scheduled, EPA is planning a public meeting to update the community on the latest developments associated with the overall Commencement Bay cleanup this fall. We will keep you informed and send you an invitation to this event.

Please contact us if you need to be included in our mailing list or to update your contact information.

Where Can You Find Documents?

Information Repositories

In Tacoma:
Tacoma Main Public Library*
1102 Tacoma Avenue South
Northwest Room

Citizens for a Healthy Bay
917 Pacific Avenue, Suite 406
(253)383-2429
Please call for an appointment if information is needed after business hours.

In Seattle:
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency*
1200 Sixth Avenue
Records Center - 7th Floor

* Indicates Information Repository, where the official Administrative Record can be found.

Web Site:

You can also find documents related to the Commencement Bay Nearshore/ Tideflats Superfund site at the web address: http://www.epa.gov/r10earth. First select "Index," then "Commencement Bay Superfund Sites, Nearshore/Tideflats."

For More Information, please contact:

contreras.peter@epa.gov, Project Coordinator for Hylebos Waterway Cleanup
206-553-6708

marcy.ken@epa.gov, Project Coordinator for Area 5106 and Occidental Chemical Embankment
206-553-2782

serrano-velez.lilibeth@epa.gov, Community Involvement Coordinator
206-553-1388

You may also call our toll free number:
1-800-424-4372

EPA strives to provide you with useful environmental information. Please feel free to call, write or e-mail us to let us know how we can improve our fact sheets to suit your needs. You can e-mail Lilibeth Serrano at Serrano-velez.lilibeth@epa.gov Also contact Lilibeth if you have changes, additions or deletions to our mailing list.

For people with disabilities: please call Lilibeth Serrano to make reasonable disability accommodations requests. For TTY users: please call 1-800-977-8339. Please give one week of advance notice for requests.