



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Port Angeles Harbor Natural Resource Trustees Sign Agreement**

PORT ANGELES -- Local environmental restoration projects will get a boost thanks to an agreement signed today by federal, state and tribal natural resource trustees to jointly conduct Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) activities within Port Angeles Harbor.

The NRDA process involves evaluating injuries to natural resources due to releases of hazardous materials and, potentially, asserting legal claims for compensation for those injuries on behalf of the public. Here, the trustees will be assessing injuries related to contamination within Port Angeles Harbor, including pollution from the former Rayonier pulp mill.

The agreement sets up a Trustee Council that will undertake the assessment, including selecting any restoration projects that may ultimately be implemented to restore and compensate for the injured natural resources.

The six trustees involved are the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. Each of the six trustees has designated representatives to the Trustee Council.

Under the agreement, all trustees have an equal status and voice in decision-making, and will work together to make the best possible decisions. The Trustee Council will operate by consensus.

The federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) is the law that authorizes the federal government, states, and tribes to act as trustees and to seek compensation on behalf of the public for natural resource injuries. CERCLA also outlines the assessment process that the trustees will use to quantify the injury to natural resources.

Over time, many different activities likely contributed to contamination of the harbor. There is evidence that this contamination harmed natural resources and supporting habitats such as the subtidal, shoreline, estuary, and upland areas of the site. The parties who conducted those activities, known as potentially responsible parties, or PRPs, under CERCLA, would share in the responsibility for funding restoration activities.



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As provided in the CERCLA regulations, the trustees routinely work with the PRPs throughout this process, with the goal of reaching a legal settlement to compensate the public for any injuries.

Compensation takes the form of projects performed by the PRPs to restore injured resources, or monetary damages to be paid by the PRPs, that the Trustees must use solely to undertake such projects.

The NRDA process is different and separate from the process for environmental cleanup of Port Angeles Harbor. Ecology is currently overseeing cleanup work in the harbor. Any parties responsible for natural resource damages may also have liability for environmental cleanup.

The Trustee Council will keep the public informed about important milestones in the ongoing NRDA, including the opportunity to comment on any draft Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan.

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General information about Natural Resource Damage Assessments:

[www.darrp.noaa.gov/about/nrda.html](http://www.darrp.noaa.gov/about/nrda.html)

Information about environmental cleanups being managed by Department of Ecology:

[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites\\_brochure/rayonier/rayonier\\_hp.htm](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites_brochure/rayonier/rayonier_hp.htm) and

[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites\\_brochure/portAngelesHarborSed/paSed\\_hp.htm](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites_brochure/portAngelesHarborSed/paSed_hp.htm)

For a copy of the Trustee Council agreement, please contact Debbie Nelson at Ecology's Southwest Region Central Records, 360-407-6365, [Debbie.Nelson@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:Debbie.Nelson@ecy.wa.gov).