

# Occidental Chemical Pollution Cleanup

***The cleanup of the worst unaddressed toxic contamination in Commencement Bay is starting to take shape. Occidental Chemical Corp., formerly operating on the Hylebos Waterway in the Port of Tacoma, contaminated the soil and groundwater with a massive plume of dangerous chemicals. As officials decide on a cleanup plan, the company responsible is pushing for a cheap option instead of an effective one. We can't let that happen.***

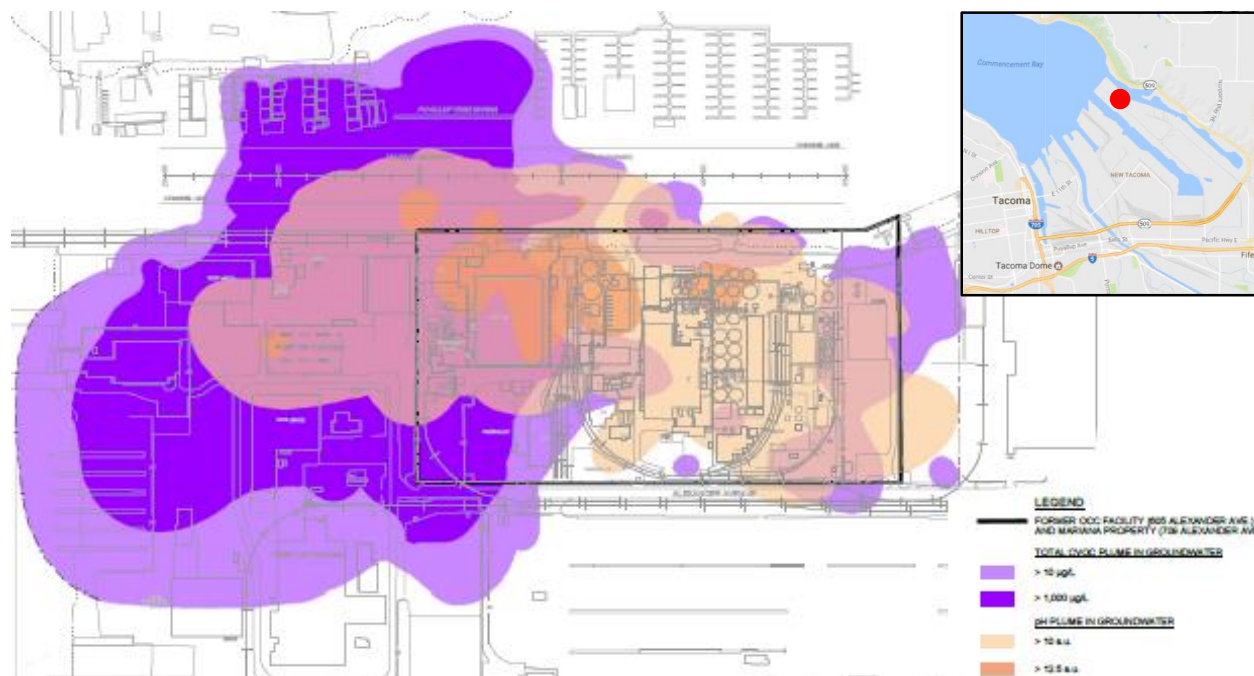


Photo: Aerial view of massive Occidental pollution plume.; Credit: WA Dept. of Ecology

## **Worst Pollution in Commencement Bay**

For nearly 100 years, Occidental Chemical Corp. manufactured a slew of different hazardous chemicals along the Hylebos Waterway in the Tacoma tideflats. *Decades of poor housekeeping practices and waste dumping has resulted in groundwater and soil being highly contaminated with harmful, cancer-causing pollutants.*

The resulting pollution plume is practically incomprehensible, and is by far the worst unaddressed contamination in Commencement Bay. Today, the pollution plume is the size of five CenturyLink Fields, is deeper than the Tacoma Dome is tall, and stretches underneath the Hylebos to Marine View Drive. It includes heavy metals, PCB's and a range of highly dangerous volatile organic chemicals. *In some places, the pH is as high as 14, which is stronger than drain cleaner and enough to dissolve the rock into jelly.*

This pollution poses an immediate threat to both people and the environment. If it enters the waters of the Hylebos, contaminants would be swept out to Commencement Bay where they would threaten all wildlife, from oysters to orcas. The Hylebos also leads to a creek that supports salmon and trout. Humans can be exposed to toxics by breathing in or swallowing contaminated materials, or by eating contaminated fish and shellfish. The pollution plume can also eventually release the toxic, cancer-causing gas vinyl chloride into our air and water.

## **Pushing for Effective Cleanup**

The severity of Occidental's pollution landed the site on the federal list of Superfund cleanups in the early 1980's. Decades later, we are finally

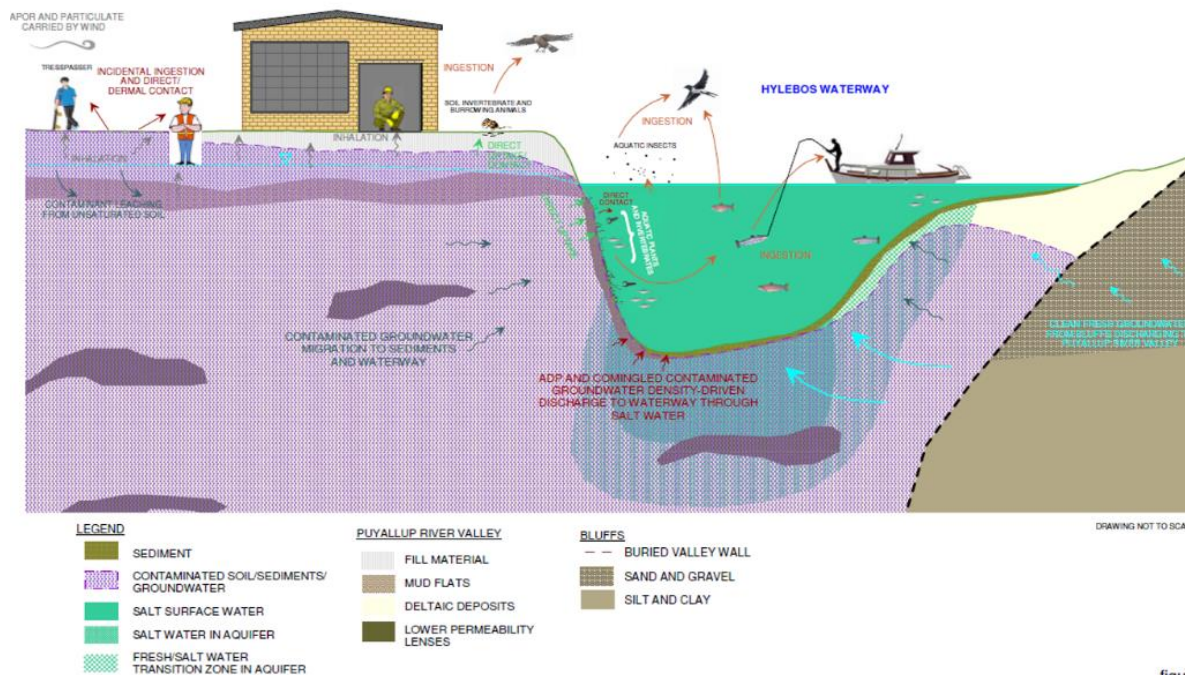


Photo: Exposure to Occidental Chemical Pollution Plume; Credit: WA Dept. of Ecology

figure 1

nearing the start of a cleanup. The Washington Department of Ecology is currently deciding on a cleanup plan. This will determine how much pollution gets removed, and how much will be stay in the environment forever.

However, the company responsible is setting the stage to walk away from this mess *without a comprehensive cleanup*. Occidental Chemical is pushing for a cleanup that would remove only 41% of the toxic pollution. **Cleaning less than half of this dangerous contamination is unacceptable.** Despite the fact that Occidental brought in a whopping \$117 million in pre-tax profits during last quarter alone, the company is advocating for a cheap option instead of an effective one. *We cannot afford to let polluters walk away from their mess.* That's why we need you to push for the strongest cleanup possible.

## Take Action!

Time is running out to ensure an adequate cleanup. The State Department of Ecology is hosted a public hearing on March 8<sup>th</sup>, and is

accepting public comments until April 27<sup>th</sup>. Add your voice to this cause and send a strong message that 41% clean is not clean enough.

Comments should relate to the draft Feasibility Study (<http://bit.ly/1NYwYMg>), which is the document that compares cleanup plans. Send your comments to:

Kerry Graber, Site Manager  
Washington State Department of Ecology  
PO Box 47775, Olympia, WA 98504-7775  
[Kerry.graber@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:Kerry.graber@ecy.wa.gov)

## About Us

Citizens for a Healthy Bay has been involved in the Occidental cleanup process for nearly two decades. As the local clean water leader, we will continue to work with stakeholders and the community to ensure a sustainable future for Tacoma and our waters.

With questions or to receive updates on this issue, email  
Ryan Cruz at [rcruz@healthybay.org](mailto:rcruz@healthybay.org)  
Learn more at [www.healthybay.org](http://www.healthybay.org)