

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 a threat to both people and the environment. Chemicals may be seeping into Commencement Bay right now, and an earthquake or underwater landslide could result in an immediate and catastrophic release into the water. The pollution is so harsh and unsafe that, over time, it can also release the toxic, cancer-causing gas vinyl chloride.

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 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 stay in the environment forever.

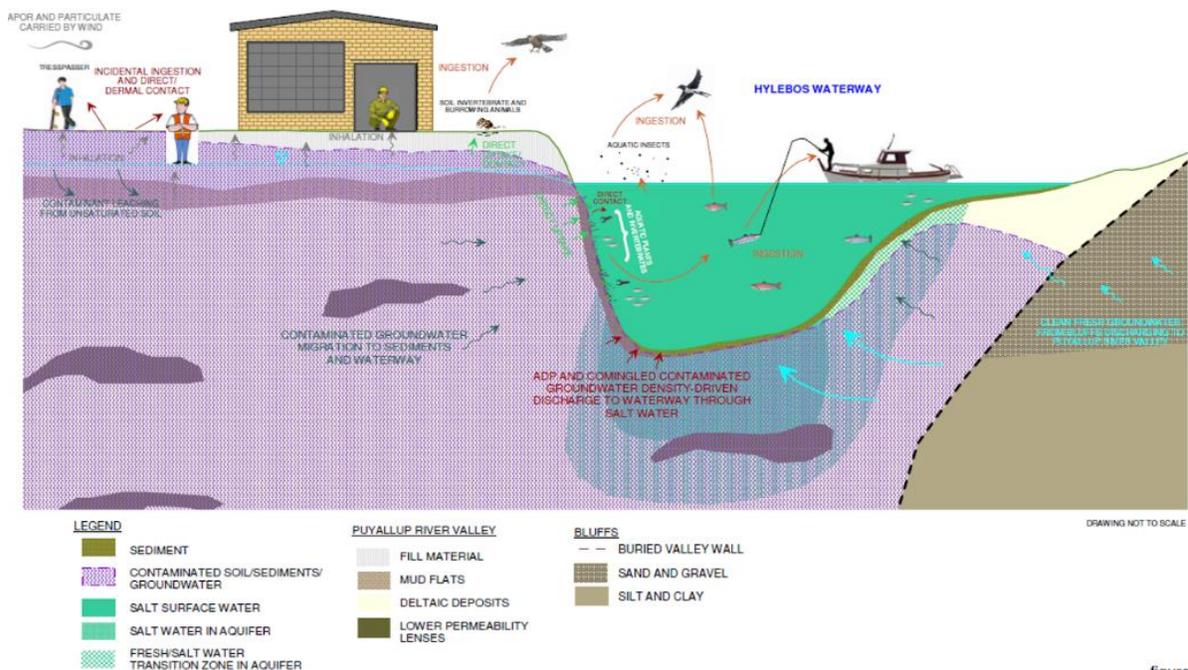


Photo: Exposure to Occidental Chemical Pollution Plume; Credit: WA Dept. of Ecology

figure 1

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 \$152 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 accepting public comments until June 26th!** As the cleanup decision maker, Ecology has the authority to order a comprehensive cleanup. Visit healthybay.org for a comment template, and send your 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:

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With questions or to receive updates on this issue, email Ryan Cruz at rcruz@healthybay.org.

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