

# Lower Duwamish Waterway Superfund Site Fact Sheet November 2007

DOH PUB NO. 334-139 Revised 10/2008

## Background

The Lower Duwamish Waterway is currently undergoing cleanup under U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Superfund program. The site includes a 5.5 mile portion of the Lower Duwamish River which flows into Elliott Bay near Seattle, Washington and was added to EPA's National Priorities List of Superfund sites on September 13, 2001.

Contaminants have been released into the river over the past 100 years, and residential areas such as South Park and Georgetown have a history of heavy industrial use. Contaminants in the waterway sediments include polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, mercury and other metals, and phthalates.

## Contaminants of Concern

The primary contaminants of concern in the Lower Duwamish Waterway seafood are polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). PCBs were banned in 1977 due to their impacts on health and persistence in the environment. Children exposed to PCBs may develop learning and behavior problems later in life. PCBs can also impact the immune system.

The main pathway for exposure to contaminants in the Lower Duwamish Waterway is through seafood consumption. Soils and sediments at public access areas along the river may also contain PCBs and other toxic contaminants.

The following recommendations will lower your exposure to contaminants from sediments and seafood from the Lower Duwamish Waterway until cleanup activities effectively lower contaminant levels in sediments, crab, shellfish, and fish.



Duwamish River seafood consumption advisory sign at Terminal 105

## How to Reduce Exposure to Contaminants in Sediments and Seafood

Although health risks from recreational activities on the Lower Duwamish Waterway beaches are relatively low, common sense approaches can reduce exposure to contaminants. People may swallow small amounts of soil and dust (and any contaminants they contain) without realizing it. Young children often put hands, toys, pacifiers, and other things in their mouths swallowing dirt or dust.

### Keep Clean

- If you go to the beach, wash your hands and face with soap afterwards, especially before eating.
- Clean dirt from under your nails.
- Wash soiled clothing separately.
- Young children are especially sensitive to contaminants. Remember to wash your children's hands, toys, and pacifiers.
- Keep pets clean.

### **Avoid Bringing Contaminants Home**

- Remove shoes before or immediately upon entering the house. Place a wipe-off mat outside and a place for shoes inside.

### **Stay in Public Use Areas**

- Trespassing on private property may expose you to higher contaminant levels.

### **Swimming in the Lower Duwamish Waterway**

- You can swim in the river, but be aware there are several combined sewer overflows that can discharge waste water into the waterway during periods of heavy rain.
- Public Health-Seattle & King County recommends against swimming near combined sewer overflows for a period of 48 hours (2 days) after the last heavy rain.

### **Healthy Seafood Eating Advice for the Lower Duwamish River Waterway**

The following seafood eating recommendations are for the general public, especially young children, and women who are pregnant, may become pregnant, and nursing mothers.

**DO NOT EAT** any crab, shellfish, or fish (the exception is salmon) from the Lower Duwamish Waterway.

### **Salmon Are Safe to Eat**

Salmon spend a short time in the Duwamish River and have similar contaminant levels as salmon caught elsewhere in Puget Sound.

One meal is 8 ounces of fish uncooked.

**Chum, Coho, Pink, and Sockeye** - You can safely eat 2-3 meals per week.

**Chinook** - You can safely eat 1 meal per week.

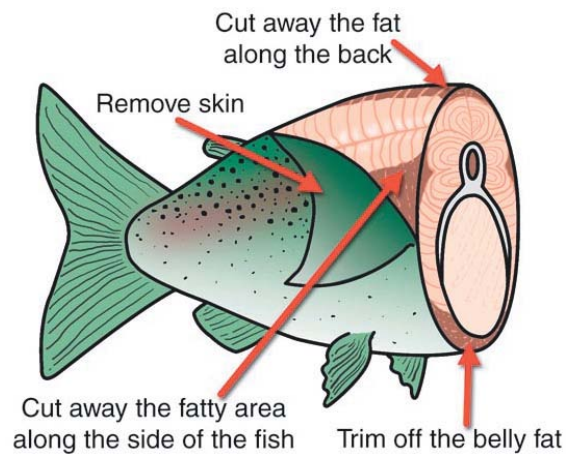
**Blackmouth** (resident Chinook) – Limit your consumption to 2 meals per month.

For more information visit [www.doh.wa.gov/fish](http://www.doh.wa.gov/fish)

### **DOH Fish Preparation Recommendations**

The following recommendations can reduce, by up to 50 percent, PCBs and other contaminants that collect in the fat of fish. Mercury is stored in the muscle (fillet) and cannot be reduced by preparing this way.

- When cleaning salmon remove the skin, fat, and internal organs before cooking.
- Grill, bake, or broil fish so that fat drips off while cooking.
- Do not use the fat drippings for sauces or gravies.



### **For more information contact:**

Washington State Department of Health  
Office of Environmental Health Assessments  
Toll Free 1-877-485-7316  
[www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/oehas/](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/oehas/)

**Fish Advisories in Washington State**  
Toll Free 1-877-485-7316  
[www.doh.wa.gov/fish](http://www.doh.wa.gov/fish)

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