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Dredging next step in paper mill cleanup project

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by Joan Pringle

The former Scott Paper Mill cleanup project kicks into high gear this week with major dredging in Fidalgo Bay and excavation along the shoreline.

Nearly \$21 million will be spent on this second and largest phase of the three-part project that is expected to extend through the early part of 2011. Funding is coming from the Washington State Department of Ecology, former land owner Kimberly-Clark Corporation and insurance claims. The Port of Anacortes, which currently owns the land, is coordinating the project.

The former mill site is east of Q Avenue between Seafarers Way and 20th Street in the South Basin of the Cap Sante Boat Haven.

Pacific Pile and Marine of Seattle, which dredged the Dakota Creek Industries ship basin for the Pier 1 redevelopment project, was expected to start mobilizing marine equipment in the water next to the Seafarers' Memorial Park this week.

Phase 2 will involve major excavations of soil along the shoreline and uplands and dredging of sediments inside the inner harbor line, about 600 feet from the shore, to remove contaminated material left behind from the mill, which closed down in 1978. In the marine area, a small dock and derelict timber piles will also be removed.

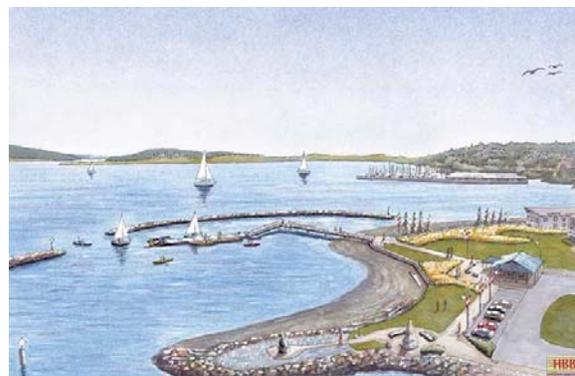
"Then we start putting things back together," said Bob Elsner, port engineering director.

The area will be capped with clean fill, the shoreline restored and habitat mitigation done. A minimum of 2 feet of clean sand, gravel and beach cobble will be used to restore 2 acres of intertidal beach for forage fish. In addition, the small craft dock will be replaced.

Some dredging work will be done at night due to the higher tides at that time, Elsner said. The work will be done with an excavator and will be relatively quiet.

The dredged material will be taken to an approved open water disposal site. However, some concern has been raised by the contractor that some of the excavated debris could float. If it does, the port would be in violation of its permit.

"This would result in a significant changed condition to the project," Elsner said.



A schematic of the former Scott Mill site at Seafarers' Memorial Park shows the restored beach area, new small craft dock and two wave attenuators that will replace the current wooden breakwater once the major environmental cleanup by the Port of Anacortes is completed. Below: One of four excavation areas, adjacent to R Avenue on the northeast side of Parcel 1, was about 30 feet by 30-feet and 10 feet deep. Groundwater encountered during the excavation shows a sheen of petroleum contamination.

At the port commission's July 16 meeting, Elsner said the port was against open water disposal for all the Scott site debris, but staff was unsuccessful at restricting all the materials to inland disposal in agreements with Kimberly-Clark.

Workers should know pretty quick if the material does or does not float, Elsner said. If it floats, the material will have to be transferred to an approved upland landfill using the port's Pier 2 sediment handling/storage facility.

The material not suitable for open water disposal will be barged or trucked to Pier 2. Underneath a 120-foot-by-260-foot white canopy constructed on the pier earlier this year, the material will be drained through an on-site dewatering system and sorted much as it was done for the dredged DCI ship basin. The contaminated material will be taken to an upland disposal site while the cleaner sediment will be recycled for fill, Elsner said.

The possibility of finding more contaminated material than anticipated was a bigger concern in Phase 1 of the project, Elsner said. In Phase 2, the port has conducted a great deal of sampling and the area to be dredged is within a defined depth in a defined area basically from the edge of the wooden breakwater and south to the land owned by MJB Properties.

Two rock breakwaters that will serve as wave attenuators will be constructed starting this fall at the south end of the cleanup area during the first of two fish windows. Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife requires work near the water to be done only from July 15 through Jan. 15 of each year to ensure fish habitat is protected.

Port consultant John Herzog said the south structure and a good part of the north one will be completed before the work will have to be put on hold until the next window opens in July 2010.

"By January 2010, we'll have a good sense of how this is going to look," Herzog said.

Once completed, the old wooden breakwater will be dismantled and removed.

As part of the project the port will purchase \$300,000 in monitoring and field equipment, half of which will be reimbursed back to the port by Ecology. It will then lease the equipment, including a small boat, underwater cameras and a Global Positioning System, back to the construction management team for monitoring and oversight work.

To clear the way for work in the park area, the port will pay about \$120,000 to have the Seafarers' Memorial building wrapped and moved temporarily to the port boat trailer parking lot east of McDonald's at 14th Street and Q Avenue. The move is expected to be done the week of Sept. 21. The building will be moved back to the same site once the cleanup is done or possibly to the North Basin to serve as part of the Anacortes Small Boat Center.

"They want something up there and this would be a cost-effective way to make it happen," Elsner said.

Phase 1 work consisted mainly of cleaning out four upland remediation areas – two in the Northwest Educational Service District parking lot, one next to Thrive Community Fitness and another on the site to be occupied by the marine technology skills center on the port's Parcel 1.

Less contaminated material than expected was found in all the locations, Elsner said.

One area adjacent to R Avenue on the northeast side of Parcel 1 was originally estimated to have 700 cubic yards of contaminated soil. But RAM Construction General Contractors working

on Phase 1 was able to reach cleanup levels within a much smaller area and only had to remove approximately 300 cubic yards of material, said project manager Becky Darden.

Additional Phase 1 work included installing a construction access road along 17th Street from Q Avenue and a wheel wash system, relocating sewer, water and gas lines, and replacing a sanitary sewer lift station, which, when completed in October, will be turned over to the city.

Phase 1 of the project had about 20 full-time employees working directly with the project, Darden estimated. Phase 2 will have more than 50 job positions, from professionals to construction workers, directly associated with the work for 18 to 24 months. Local longshoremen will also be getting additional work due to the material sorting process on Pier 2.

The Scott Paper mill cleanup project is part of Gov. Christine Gregoire's Puget Sound Initiative to clean up the region's waters by 2020 in conjunction with Ecology's Model Toxics Control Act.

The port, which owns the northern end of the property, Kimberly-Clark, which purchased Scott Paper Company in 1995, and MJB Properties, which purchased the southern portion in 1990, were identified as potential liable parties by Ecology, which is overseeing the cleanup.

Permitting and design work for the project began in fall 2008. The first phase work began in June.

Scott operated a lumber and/or pulp mill on the cleanup site from 1940 to 1978 but commercial use of the property began in the late 1800s.

Soil samples from the uplands have shown high levels of metals, petroleum hydrocarbons, dioxins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls, more commonly known as PCBs. Tests on the marine sediments showed metals, PCBs and wood debris.

The north end of the property is now occupied by the Cannery Building, Northwest Educational Service District 189 and the park. The southern portion has been used for oil field equipment, boat manufacturing and storage.

Final site restoration, including the installation of a small boat hand launching facility, landscaping and pedestrian amenities such as a paved esplanade, benches, lighting and signage, will be in the third phase of the project.

The port will conduct long-term monitoring on the cleanup for eight to 10 years by taking water and soil samples, tracking the success of transplanted eelgrass on the cap, and checking to make sure the beach is stable and the breakwater remains in place.

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