



Washington State Department of Ecology News Release

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Ecology adopts changes to standards for sediment cleanup

OLYMPIA – The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) has adopted changes to the state's standards for cleaning up contaminated in-water sediments. The changes take effect Sept. 1, 2013.

In 1991, Ecology first adopted the Sediment Management Standards (SMS) for guiding the management of sediments. The SMS rule is used to conduct environmental cleanup work, manage the dredging of sediment for navigation and cleanup, and manage sources that contaminate sediment.

In 2012, Ecology proposed changes to the SMS to clarify requirements for cleanup of contaminated sediment sites to make the cleanup process more effective.

Ecology Director Maia Bellon signed the revised rule on Feb. 22, 2013. The newly adopted changes include:

- Clarifying requirements for cleanup of bioaccumulative chemicals that pose risks to human health and the environment. Bioaccumulative chemicals are a concern because they get into the food chain. Examples of such chemicals include polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dioxins and mercury.
- Integrating the cleanup requirements in the SMS and Model Toxics Control Act rules. The Model Toxics Control Act is the state's cleanup law, which stems from a voter-approved citizens initiative in 1988.
- Adopting freshwater standards to protect aquatic life that lives in and on sediments.
- Clarifying requirements for coordinating source control and cleanup actions at cleanup sites.

During a lengthy and thorough public process in 2012, Ecology held public hearings on the proposed changes in Seattle, Bellingham, Lacey, Spokane Valley, and Richland. The agency also held a six-week public comment period.

The rule changes do not include a revised fish consumption rate for sediment cleanup projects. Ecology heard a number of concerns about identifying a specific rate, including questions about how it could impact a separate process to update water quality standards.

After reviewing public comments, Ecology decided to clarify that site-specific cleanups use a “reasonable maximum exposure” standard. This is based on protecting Washingtonians who eat large quantities of fish, which in turn will protect all those who eat fish from Washington waters.

An announcement will be published in the State Register on March 20, 2013. The rule will go into effect on Sept. 1, 2013.

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For more information: [Sediment Management Standards webpage](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/regs/2011-SMS/2011-SMS-hp.html)
(www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/regs/2011-SMS/2011-SMS-hp.html)

[Toxics Cleanup Program](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/cleanup.html) (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/cleanup.html>)

[Ecology’s social media](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/about/newmedia.html) (www.ecy.wa.gov/about/newmedia.html)

Broadcast version:

The Department of Ecology has adopted changes to the state’s standards for cleaning up contaminated in-water sediments.

Ecology first adopted the Sediment Management Standards in 1991. They guide how sediments are cleaned up, how dredging of sediments is managed and how sources that contaminant sediment are managed.

The changes take effect September 1, 2013.

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