



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Michael P. Slevin III, P.E., Environmental Services Director  
**COPY:** Government Performance and Finance Committee;  
 Andy Cherullo, Finance Director/Executive Liaison  
**PRESENTER:** Mary Henley, Civil Engineer, P.E.  
**SUBJECT:** Thea Foss Waterway Presentation  
**DATE:** April 4, 2023

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**PRESENTATION TYPE:**

Informational Briefing

**SUMMARY:**

Environmental Services will present an overview of the Thea Foss Waterway sediment cleanup project being performed under a Consent Decree (CD) with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**BACKGROUND:**

In 1983, Commencement Bay nearshore and tideflat sediments were placed on the National Priorities List for cleanup by the Environmental Protection Agency. The Thea Foss Waterway was identified as a problem area within the site, and the City of Tacoma’s (City) storm drains were identified as sources of contamination. Under an Administrative Order signed in 1994, the City took the lead in studying the extent of contamination in the waterway and development of a plan for the cleanup of the sediments. In 2002, after finalization of the cleanup plan and agreement on a cost-sharing approach with other parties responsible for the contamination, the City entered into a CD with EPA to perform cleanup and monitoring in approximately 80% of the waterway. The sediment remediation project began in 2002 and was completed in 2006.

Under the Consent Decree, the City has a perpetual obligation for monitoring and maintenance of the cleanup to ensure that it remains protective. Monitoring work required through 2028 is described in a Long-Term Monitoring Plan and includes of a variety of monitoring activities to be performed every five years. Prior to expiration of that plan, another plan will be negotiated with EPA for the next monitoring period.

When maintenance issues affecting the performance of the remedy are identified through monitoring or inspection, the City has an obligation under the Consent Decree to address the issue. One such issue was identified during a site inspection with EPA in 2020. Erosion requiring repair was identified in two shoreline areas near the St. Paul Waterway Confined Disposal Facility where contaminated sediments dredged from the Thea Foss Waterway are contained. The City is currently completing the design for this repair project and planning for construction in the summer/fall.

Sources of Contaminants of Concern (COC) continue to exist in the drainage basins and are conveyed to the waterway via stormwater (municipal and private), aerial deposition, marinas, and groundwater discharges. The contaminants identified as having the greatest potential to affect sediment quality following the cleanup action include polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and phthalates.

Since stormwater is one of the potential sources, the City has been implementing a comprehensive monitoring and source control strategy in the Foss Waterway Watershed since 2001. Stormwater monitoring is required to be conducted under a Stormwater Work Plan Addendum to the Consent Decree and currently by Section S8.C of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and State Waste Discharge General Permit for Discharges from Large and Medium Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (Permit issued by Washington State Department of Ecology).



The Thea Foss Post-Remediation Source Control Strategy implemented under the CD uses a multifaceted approach consisting of aggressive source control efforts, continuation of the comprehensive monitoring program, and a decision matrix to identify the need for additional source controls. This monitoring information is used to guide control of contaminant sources in the drainage basins. The intent of this program is to help provide long-term protection of sediment quality in the waterways and to fulfill NPDES requirements.

An annual report outlines the City's existing programs completed for that water year and includes a status update on ongoing source control investigations, as well as an evaluation of the need for any new stormwater management actions. Annual source control evaluations are completed for the seven major outfalls discharging to the waterways: Outfalls (OF) 230, 235, 237A, 237B, 243, 245 and 254. The evaluations include a drain-by-drain assessment incorporating the review of ongoing studies, source control investigations, water quality data, and Stormwater Suspended Particulate Matter (SSPM) Monitoring data for that outfall/basin.

**ISSUE:**

The presentation will provide an overview of the Thea Foss Waterway sediment remediation work that has occurred, on-going obligations for monitoring and maintenance, and current funding overview. The work in the waterway has been underway for more 30 years and the City will have some level of ongoing responsibility in perpetuity.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

This is an information briefing only. There are no alternatives presented.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

This is an informational briefing only. There is no fiscal impact.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

This is an informational briefing only. There is no recommendation.