

The Role of the Municipality in Cleanup of Contaminated Sediments, Lessons from the Thea Foss Waterway in Tacoma, Washington

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Introduction: Municipalities occupy a unique space in the world of contaminated sediment cleanup. They are often responsible for the long-term overall health of the urban waterfront yet, depending on circumstances, may or may not have a voice in how sediment cleanup takes place. The cleanup of the Thea Foss Waterway, which encompasses the core of the City of Tacoma's waterfront, began to take shape in 1994 with an agreement between the City and USEPA. The cleanup project itself took place between 2002 and 2006. The planning and execution, as well as monitoring and source control follow up, provide an example of significant municipal involvement in the entire cleanup process. Now nearly a decade on, we can reflect on the efficacy and value of the City's involvement and investment in the process. Through this analysis we hope to provide insight which may be instructional to other cities as they face similar sediment cleanup actions.

Methods: The cleanup of the Thea Foss Waterway has been well studied from a scientific standpoint and is much discussed for its successful and not so successful aspects. However, little has been written or presented on the effects of the cleanup on the municipality itself, along with its citizens. Through direct interviews and analysis of publically available information, we explore both the environmental and non-environmental outcomes attributable to the cleanup.

Results and Conclusions: The research indicates that there can be significant positive social and economic effects stemming from waterfront cleanup. But these effects are not automatic. Careful planning and commitment of resources is needed to ensure a good outcome.

Conclusions: The view of contaminated sediment management must be broadened from the narrow perspective of industrial legacy remediation to one that embraces the goal of urban waterfront revitalization. Municipalities have much to gain through providing leadership in the process.