

UW centers co-host Duwamish River Superfund cleanup forum

By Sara Mishamandani

The University of Washington (UW) hosted approximately 70 attendees for an educational workshop April 29 in Seattle, to discuss the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [Duwamish River Superfund cleanup proposal](http://www.epa.gov/region10/pdf/sites/ldw/pp/ldw_pp_022513.pdf). (http://www.epa.gov/region10/pdf/sites/ldw/pp/ldw_pp_022513.pdf) Organized by the UW [Superfund Research Program \(SRP\)](http://depts.washington.edu/sfund/) (<http://depts.washington.edu/sfund/>) and the [Center for Ecogenetics and Environmental Health \(CEEH\)](http://depts.washington.edu/ceeh/ccmeeting-2013/index.html), (<http://depts.washington.edu/ceeh/ccmeeting-2013/index.html>) the meeting was part of the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition's outreach plan to educate the university community about the cleanup during the public comment period, and it marked the most recent of three collaborative efforts between the UW SRP and the CEEH.

Linked Video

[Watch a series of seven short videos of presentations at the meeting](#)

The meeting included students and staff from Seattle Pacific University and UW; a Duwamish tribal member; EPA staff; the Washington State Department of Ecology; the City of Seattle, representing the Lower Duwamish Waterway Group; and the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition/Technical Advisory Group (DRCC/TAG).

Representatives from each group presented their perspectives on the EPA proposal for cleanup of the Duwamish River. After hearing from several stakeholders, meeting participants were encouraged to submit [public comments](http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/lduwamish) (<http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/lduwamish>) by June 13, to provide input for the EPA cleanup proposal.

The cleanup effort

In 2001, a 5.5-mile stretch of the lower Duwamish River was declared a federal Superfund site. More than 40 different toxicants contaminate the river, mostly in the river bottom sediment, including polychlorinated biphenyls, dioxins and furans, carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and arsenic.

Because of contamination, state and local health departments warn against eating crab, shellfish, or bottom-feeding fish from the river. However, the waters in and around the site are used by the Muckleshoot and Suquamish Tribes, as part of their usual and accustomed fishing areas. According to spokespersons, the well-being of these tribal members, and others living nearby, are intimately tied to the health of the river.

EPA estimates the cleanup proposal will reduce the risk associated with eating contaminated fish and shellfish by 90 percent. The proposed plan includes dredging to remove contaminated sediment, pursuing natural recovery of contaminated sediment by covering it with six or more inches of clean material, and monitoring the river's recovery. DRCC/TAG, the EPA official community advisory group, developed a comprehensive set of recommendations to the EPA plan, which are highlighted in the latest [UW SRP e-bulletin](http://depts.washington.edu/sfund/forthepublic/news.html#partners). (<http://depts.washington.edu/sfund/forthepublic/news.html#partners>)

Other outreach activities

As part of the effort, UW toxicologist [Evan Gallagher, Ph.D.](http://deohs.washington.edu/research-centers/faculty-directory-and-research-interests/evan-gallagher), (<http://deohs.washington.edu/research-centers/faculty-directory-and-research-interests/evan-gallagher>) presented information about his NIEHS-funded Superfund research during a tour of the Lower Duwamish River Superfund site, as part of the NIEHS Environmental Health Science (EHS) Core Centers meeting April 17-19 in Seattle (see [story](#)). Gallagher's UW SRP project focuses on mechanisms of metal and pesticide-induced olfactory injury in salmon, and applications in Superfund site biomonitoring. In May, his student, Chase Williams, described his research findings on fish behavior and responses to cadmium as part of an [SRP Trainee Webinar](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/dert/cris/programs/srp/training/webinar/index.cfm) (<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/dert/cris/programs/srp/training/webinar/index.cfm>)



Participants of the workshop listened intently to panel presentations. (Photo courtesy of Jon Sharpe)



Allison Hiltner, EPA's manager for the Duwamish cleanup, second from right, answered questions following the presentations. (Photo courtesy of Jon Sharpe)



UW COEC director [Kelly Edwards, Ph.D.](http://depts.washington.edu/bhdept/facres/kfe_bio.html), (http://depts.washington.edu/bhdept/facres/kfe_bio.html) moderated the event. (Photo courtesy of Jon Sharpe)

The UW SRP also worked alongside the CEEH Community Outreach and Ethics Core (COEC), to support a Public Health Café April 18 for the Seattle community, during the EHS Core Centers meeting.

(Sara Mishamandani is a research and communication specialist for MDB Inc., a contractor for the NIEHS Superfund Research Program and Division of Extramural Research and Training.)

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