



**PORT OF KLICKITAT**

**For Immediate Release**

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## Port Closes Door on RAMCo Cleanup

**Bingen, Washington** – After nearly a decade of effort, the Port of Klickitat is closing the door on the environmental cleanup of the Recycled Aluminum Metals Company (RAMCo) disposal site located at its Dallesport Industrial Park. From 2007 through 2010, over 90,000 tons of waste material were removed from the site at a cost of nearly \$4.1 million.

Events leading to the cleanup began in 1980 at the height of a global recession that had driven the national unemployment rate to 10.8% and left many in Klickitat County without work. The decision by Dow Chemical Company to abandon its plans for the construction of a plant in Dallesport added insult to injury. “People were feeling desperate,” recalls Port Commissioner Bill Schmitt. “We would have jumped at pretty much any opportunity for increased employment that presented itself.”

With the promise of forty new jobs and over a million dollars in private investment, the Port secured U.S. Economic Development Administration grant funds and constructed a building to facilitate RAMCo's relocation to Dallesport. Shortly after startup, RAMCo began looking for a place to dispose of the byproduct created by its secondary aluminum smelting process (a material known as “saltcake” because of its high sodium content and tendency to harden after cooling).

Based on a Southwest Washington Health District determination that the waste material was non-hazardous and land-fillable, the Port Commission and Klickitat County granted approval for the disposal site in early 1982. However, concerns surfaced a decade later when tests performed on the saltcake material in 1993 showed it to be an aquatic toxin. This led to its reclassification as a “dangerous waste” and, ultimately, to closure of the disposal site.

As a consequence, RAMCo began stockpiling waste material on the property it leased from the Port. Port Commissioner Wayne Vinyard, newly elected when RAMCo closed down in 1994, remembers that it took all of the \$230,000 bond posted by the company just to clean up the building and property. “As a result, there were no monies left the Port could have used to deal with the disposal site,” he said before adding, “You have to remember that, at the time, the Port was cash poor and already struggling just to fund the construction of its first building at Bingen Point.”

In 2005, the Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) found that samples from the monitoring wells it had drilled around the disposal site contained trace amounts of ammonia, cyanide, fluoride, nitrate, nitrite, and chromium. In response, DOE established an Interim Remedial

**At A Glance...**

**Who:**.....Port of Klickitat

**What:**.....RAMCo Disposal Site

**When:**.....June 25, 2016

**Where:**.....Dallesport, Wash.

**Quick Facts:**...Port gets Wash. Dept. of Ecology “No Further Action” letter and Hazardous Sites List delisting after a four-year cleanup that removed 90,000 tons of waste material at a cost of nearly \$4.1 million.

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Action Plan in 2006 and conducted cleanup work at the site in 2007, 2008, and 2009, removing nearly 71,000 tons of the material.

With state cleanup funds running low, the DOE turned the project over to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2009. The EPA's own inspection of the material revealed that spent pot lining (SPL) had been improperly placed in the disposal site along with the permitted saltcake material. The likely source of the cyanide and fluoride found in 2005, SPL is a waste product of smelting aluminum and classified as a "hazardous waste". The EPA also found various polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, cobalt, vanadium, and other metals and removed the final 19,000 tons of material in 2010.

In February 2013, a few months before the statute of limitations would have prevented it, the EPA served the Port with a demand for reimbursement of \$2.1 million in cleanup costs under the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980. In response, the Port engaged special legal counsel to protect its interests and turned the claim over to the insurance companies responsible for the policies in effect at the time the disposal site was in use. After two years of discussions failed to produce an agreement between the EPA and the insurance companies, the EPA filed a civil lawsuit against the Port with the U.S. District Court for Eastern Washington in March 2015.

Five months later the parties agreed to a settlement, bringing the lawsuit to a close before it went to trial and avoiding costly litigation. "I'm very pleased with the outcome," said Port Commissioner Jim Herman. "I'm also relieved. Over the years, the Port has spent nearly \$32,000 in legal fees and an unknown number of staff hours to satisfy the EPA's demands, but it could have been much worse." With the EPA under pressure to recover more of its cleanup costs and the difficulty in getting multiple insurance companies to agree with each other on a settlement, the Port worried it could get stuck with a bill for \$1 million to \$2 million. "We could have survived that," added Herman, "but it would have crippled us for years."

With the EPA claim resolved, the Port turned its attention back to the DOE, seeking a "No Further Action" (NFA) determination for the site. "A NFA determination means the DOE considers the remedial work completed to have sufficiently altered the site so that it no longer poses a threat to humans or the environment and, as a result, *no further action* is necessary," explained Port Executive Director, Marc Thornsburry. However, a NFA determination is neither final nor binding and the DOE may rescind it under certain circumstances including changes in the condition of the site or the development of new detection methods or cleanup technologies.

To address the DOE's post-cleanup concerns, the Port entered into an environmental covenant to insure the existing monitoring wells on the site are protected and no other wells are drilled. It also agreed to prevent contact with any residual contamination. To accomplish the latter, the Port used approximately 17,000 cubic yards of concrete rubble from the Oregon Department of Transportation's 2015 Interstate 84 reconstruction project in The Dalles, Oregon, to fill the site before placing another 6,000 cubic yards of native soil on top to cap it. The work was completed in October 2015 at a total cost of nearly \$72,000.

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After evaluating the site, the DOE issued the NFA determination on May 13, 2016. A couple months later on June 25, the site was removed from the Washington State Hazardous Sites List, bringing the RAMCo era to an end. “It has taken the Port nine years, countless hours, and over \$100,000 to get to this point,” said Thornsby, “but the effort has been worthwhile and the outcome is a positive one for the Port and its constituents. We wish to thank the many people that have assisted the Port throughout this process including current and former staff of the Toxics Cleanup Program at the Washington Department of Ecology Central Regional Office.” The Port Commission will celebrate the delisting of the RAMCo site at the conclusion of its next meeting on August 23, 2016, and invites the public to attend. Refreshments will be served around 5:30pm.

#### **Additional Resources:**

Site Information: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/gsp/Sitepage.aspx?csid=3658>

Remedial Action Plan: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/gsp/DocViewer.aspx?did=889>

EPA Report: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/gsp/DocViewer.ashx?did=8748>

Consent Decree: [http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/enrd/pages/attachments/2015/08/13/klickitat\\_lodged\\_consent\\_decree.pdf](http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/enrd/pages/attachments/2015/08/13/klickitat_lodged_consent_decree.pdf)

Wash. Dept. of Ecology Toxics Cleanup Program: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/cleanup.html>

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#### **About the Port of Klickitat**

Economic development, transportation, and marine-based recreation are key functions of the Port of Klickitat. These are achieved through leasing industrial-zoned property, developing and renting industrial and commercial facilities, developing and maintaining rail spurs and dock facilities, assisting companies with an interest in locating in Klickitat County, creating and managing marine-based recreational facilities, and working closely with various partner organizations and agencies.

The Port of Klickitat is located in Klickitat County, Washington and was created in 1944. It is one of several port authorities located in the mid-Columbia region. It owns two industrial parks and several buildings, leases industrial property and space, operates a barge dock, and holds property set aside for a park and marina. Transportation access is provided via rail, river barge, highways 14, 35, and 197, and Interstate 84. More information can be found on the Port's web site at [www.portofklickitat.com](http://www.portofklickitat.com).

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