Boeing Joins Partnership to Address Lower Duwamish River Cleanup

The Boeing Company, the City of Seattle, the Port of Seattle and King County announced Wednesday that they had created a public-private partnership to assess the environmental condition of the lower Duwamish River and to evaluate potential clean-up options.

Under the agreement, the parties will take a creative approach that is more efficient and cost-effective than a Superfund listing. The group is entering into a legally binding process with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) to assess existing data, identify possible actions and to evaluate long term clean-up options.

The four partners, together called the Lower Duwamish Waterway Group, (LDWG) are each already involved in a variety of environmental clean-up and habitat restoration efforts along the Duwamish. With this agreement, the LDWG members can clearly focus their resources on action that can improve the river's health.

"The Lower Duwamish River is an important economic resource and an important environmental resource," said Port Executive Director Mic Dinsmore. "By partnering with King County, the City of Seattle and Boeing we will have the opportunity to develop a comprehensive plan for addressing this waterway's needs. The Port has for years been a steward of the environmental well-being of the Duwamish, and we have gone above and beyond in restoring and enhancing this vital area."

Dinsmore said the group hopes to avoid having the area listed as a federal Superfund clean-up site because the listing process alone can last for years, and getting to clean-up can sometimes take decades.

"Our goal is to achieve the same high level of success in cleaning up and restoring the Duwamish that a Superfund listing might eventually achieve, but in a shorter amount of time with less process," he said.

Executive Ron Sims said King County has already undertaken several efforts to restore the Duwamish.

"The partners have already spent millions to control sources of pollution, cleanup damage and restore habitat to this river that has been so vital to our economic well-being and to the health of fish and wildlife," Sims said.

"This evaluation of the Duwamish will take us another giant step closer toward our goal of a healthy river," he said. "We know it will take a lot of money and a period of time to achieve this goal. King County is committed to seeing this cleanup through to the end."

Mayor Paul Schell added that early clean-up action makes both economic and environmental sense.

"This agreement renews Seattle's commitment to improving our waterways and to bringing back healthy salmon runs and wildlife habitat, while valuing our working waterfront," Schell said. "By avoiding a Superfund listing, we get more bang for our environmental buck. We will spend more of our resources cleaning up the Duwamish not on litigation and administrative costs. This is an example of working smarter."

Kirk Thomson, director of energy and environmental affairs for the Boeing Company, lauded the agreement.

"This partnership is a creative approach that shows trust and cooperation between public and private entities," he said. "It allows us all to bring our best resources together to continue this complex clean-up project."

###

For further information:
Dean Tougas
office: (425) 865-5879