

Skykomish Scoop | September 2009

Welcome to the Skykomish Scoop!



This newsletter helps keep you informed about cleanup and construction activities in Skykomish. BNSF Railway (BNSF) and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) are currently working on this year's cleanup effort. See inside for more details about cleanup progress to date, ongoing cleanup work, and answers to frequently asked questions. Content for this edition of the newsletter is provided by BNSF, Ecology, and the Town of Skykomish.

Status of cleanup work

Many components of the 2009 cleanup work have been completed, while others are still underway. Major work activities completed in June and July include the relocation of post office operations, demolition of the SkyRiver Inn and office buildings, permanent relocation of the former Bishop house and temporary relocation of the Martin and Sarno houses.



Crews use hoses to push oil into areas where it can be collected and recovered.

Additional activities that have been accomplished since July include:

- Removing more than 40,000 gallons of oil. The majority of this oil will be recycled into ship fuel.
- Excavating and backfilling 4th Street and the Martin and Sarno properties, removing sheet pile and excavating near the Whistling Post, and excavating the southwest corner of the Skykomish Community Church property.
- Returning Martin and Sarno houses and other structures to their properties and beginning restoration work.
- Temporarily relocating the Skykomish Hotel, excavating contaminated soils and backfilling on that property.
- Returning the Skykomish Hotel to its property and beginning restoration work.
- Temporarily relocating the Wheatley rental house to the east end of Railroad Avenue.
- Constructing a temporary ramp from the 5th Street Bridge to East River Road and rerouting traffic to allow excavation of 5th Street.
- Excavating contaminated soils on the Wheatley property and excavating a small area along the eastern edge of the Moore property and south edge of the Mitchell property.
- Completing all archeological monitoring for the 2009 cleanup work.

Ongoing or remaining cleanup activities scheduled for the 2009 construction season include:

- Continued rerouting of traffic using temporary ramp from 5th Street Bridge to East River Road.
- Backfilling with clean soils on BNSF, Town, Wheatley, and portions of Mitchell and Moore properties.
- Returning the Wheatley house to its property and beginning restoration work on Wheatley, Mitchell, and Moore properties.
- Operating the temporary construction water treatment system and oil recovery system.
- Controlling dust and monitoring river turbidity, air quality and noise levels.
- Coordinating cleanup work with the construction of the Town's community wastewater treatment system.
- Continuing conversions to underground utilities.
- Loading out rail cars with contaminated soils. Cleanup crews are now consistently loading out 20 to 25 rail cars a day, five days a week.



Excavation and backfilling on 5th Street and surrounding areas in mid-September.



In August, crews started work on foundations for homes on 4th Street.

Community wastewater system construction update

The Town of Skykomish contractor, Plats Plus, Inc., is continuing installation of collection lines for the community wastewater system and has completed the force main connecting the pump station to the wastewater treatment plant. The contractor has completed trenching and side sewer connections on East Old Cascade Highway from Dean Avenue to the east end of town, and on 3rd Street South and 4th Street South.

Upcoming work includes trenching on the remaining side streets off East Old Cascade Highway, as well as trenching and storm drainage work on West Old Cascade Highway. The contractor will try to minimize disruption of access to the post office on Thelma Street.

Please be alert for instruction from flaggers about detours that will be necessary during the two or three days of work in that area. Permanent road repairs and patching will begin in early October.

Customer connections will not begin until the treatment plant, drain field and pump stations are active in October. Construction on private properties is scheduled to continue into summer of 2010. Plats Plus Inc. and Strider Construction will continue coordinating their efforts to find efficiencies and minimize disruption to traffic and residents. For questions about the community wastewater system construction or for general questions about the wastewater system, please call the Town of Skykomish at 360-677-2388.

Frequently asked questions

As cleanup work progresses, BNSF and Ecology staff are often asked questions about how excavation and backfilling operations work and how Ecology determines that excavation work meets cleanup standards. Some answers to frequently asked questions are below. For more information, please contact Ecology at 425-649-4486.

Who is responsible for ensuring that cleanup standards are met?

Ecology, as the regulator of the cleanup, is responsible for ensuring that cleanup work is meeting the set standards. This is done through soil sampling and testing.

What are the cleanup standards?

How clean is “clean”?

The Cleanup Action Plan, part of the Consent Decree, specifies that the soil throughout the cleanup site must contain less than 3400 parts-per-million (mg/kg) of petroleum to be considered “clean” and safe. This standard is based on state regulations called the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA). These regulations specify minimum requirements for soil, air, and water, and all cleanup actions must meet them. Strategic sampling is done once an area is excavated and backfilled, and this data is provided to Ecology. If sampling shows a concentration greater than 3400 mg/kg, Ecology will direct the contractor to excavate further until that number is reached.

Why did excavation continue further into 4th Street than originally anticipated?

As excavation progresses, the soil in the excavation area is tested until Ecology confirms that soil samples meet cleanup standards. Because contamination was found outside the expected area of cleanup, crews continued removing contaminated soil until soil samples were confirmed to be clean.

In the excavation area, clean backfill is being installed near contaminated water, so how does the contractor ensure this clean backfill is not contaminated?

Sometimes the soil remediation level, or the level at which crews stop digging, is below the groundwater level. In this case, samples are still taken from the soil at the bottom of the excavation area. Once soil exceeding 3400 mg/kg is removed, there is often still some amount of free product floating on the water’s surface. The contractor

places clean fill soil below the water, while the oil recovery contractor, MarVac, prevents the oil on the surface from contaminating the clean fill soil.

How does MarVac keep the oil on the surface from contaminating the clean fill soil?

MarVac uses spray hoses, prevailing winds, sorbent booms, tarps, and other techniques to keep the surface oil away from the clean fill. They push any surface oil into a still-contaminated corner of the excavation, where they vacuum up and remove the oil. AECOM also observes and visually confirms that the groundwater surface is free of oil during backfilling operations. MarVac staff is onsite working any time that oil is present on the water’s surface.

How does Ecology know the clean backfill is not accidentally contaminated during this process?

Ecology is present on most days of the cleanup, and is in constant communication with MarVac, AECOM, and Strider to ensure that no contamination occurs during this process. Ecology also attends weekly meetings with the contractors to address any and all issues with the cleanup. If clean backfill were to become contaminated (this has not occurred), Ecology would direct the contractor to remove it and replace it with clean backfill, and to adjust their process so that it would not occur again.

How else is oil removed from the cleanup site?

While MarVac removes oil floating on the surface in the excavation site, the majority of free product and other contamination is removed along with the contaminated soils that are excavated, stockpiled, and removed on rail cars.



Backfilling and restoration work near the intersection of 5th Street and Railroad Avenue in mid-September.

What's next?

After 2009 cleanup work is completed and restoration is underway, the next steps are for BNSF and Ecology to release the 2010 Engineering Design Report (EDR), detailing the work that will occur in 2010. A community meeting will be scheduled for later this fall to discuss the draft 2010 EDR with the Skykomish community. Notice of this meeting will be mailed and emailed to the cleanup mailing list and posted in Skykomish and on the website.



Hauling material across Railroad Avenue in late July.

Who do I call for questions about...?

Cleanup construction:

Call the Skykomish Cleanup Call Line at
1-800-228-1849

Cleanup approach:

Call Ecology at 425-649-4486 or visit website at
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/bnsf_sky/bnsf_sky.html

Community wastewater system construction:

Call the Town of Skykomish at 360-677-2388

For additional information or to be added to the project mailing list, please visit www.skykomishcleanup.com or email us at info@skykomishcleanup.com.