

Budd Inlet – Research Vessel

FAQ Questions

Why has the Port commissioned a research vessel in Budd Inlet?

The Port of Olympia (Port) has commissioned a research vessel to collect sediment samples from throughout East Bay to inform the cleanup strategy for Budd Inlet. The collected sediment samples will be sent to an accredited lab for chemical analysis. The work is required as part of an [Agreed Order](#) between the Port and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology).

This is an exciting milestone toward a restored Budd Inlet. The data resulting from the sediment sampling is vital for designing an effective sediment cleanup action that prioritizes the public and ecological health of Budd Inlet.

How long will the research vessel be in Budd Inlet, and how can we identify it?



The research vessel will collect sediment samples in the area for around six to eight weeks. It is an approximate 30-foot boat that resembles a small fishing vessel, is grey, and is marked "Research Vessel" along the hull.

What is the goal of the sampling process?

Ultimately, the sampling process will help lay the groundwork for cleaning up and restoring Budd Inlet. The process allows us to gather detailed information about the type, extent, and distribution of contamination within the sediment of Budd Inlet. This research builds on the sampling completed in 2013, providing up-to-date and more extensive information. Once data is collected, it will be used to remap contamination so the Port and Ecology can develop a cleanup action plan.

What methods are used for collection?

Beginning in East Bay, the research vessel will be used to collect sediment samples from various locations and depths to provide a detailed understanding of contaminant distribution in the sediments. The location of every sample will be precisely recorded, allowing the creation of a detailed 3-dimensional map of contamination and sediment types throughout the sampling area.

Surface Sampling

For surface sediments, environmental scientists and engineers use what is called a "grab sampler," which is essentially a small clamshell bucket that can obtain a sample from the top 1 foot of the seabed.

Sub-Surface (Vibracore) Sampling

Deeper sediment samples will be collected using a 4-inch diameter aluminum tube that is vibrated into the sediment at a high frequency. This technique is referred to as *Vibracoring*. The vibration liquefies the sediment, allowing the tube to advance up to 10 feet beneath the seabed, providing a profile of deeper sediment layers.

Where will the sediment samples be analyzed?

After samples are collected, they will be stored in specially prepared jars, some with chemical preservatives to maintain the integrity of the sample until chemical analysis

can be performed. Samples will then be sent to a laboratory specializing in sediment analysis.

What measures is the Port taking to protect the local marine life during sampling?

The Port is working in close collaboration with Ecology, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Marine Fisheries Agency to ensure that the work is protective of marine organisms and in compliance with all environmental protection guidelines. Sampling has been carefully scheduled to avoid sensitive periods for marine life such as fish spawning seasons. This consideration helps protect vulnerable species during critical life stages.

The use of precision equipment ensures that minimal sediment is disturbed.

Why is the data from sediment sampling important for the cleanup and restoration of Budd Inlet?

The data collected from sediment sampling provides a scientific foundation for all subsequent cleanup actions. It helps determine the extent and concentration of contamination in the sediments within Budd Inlet, which is critical for selecting the appropriate remediation techniques. Understanding the specific types of contaminants present allows the Port to tailor cleanup efforts most effectively.

How does sampling align with the overall timeline for the Budd Inlet cleanup?

While the goal is to begin physical cleanup activities as early as possible, the Port and Ecology acknowledge the need for an adaptive approach. Factors such as funding availability, permitting, and the results of the sampling may influence the timeline. The Port's focus is on maintaining momentum and a sense of urgency, while also ensuring that the work is done safely, correctly, and effectively and

continuing to comply with the conditions of the Agreed Order between the Port and Ecology.

Who else is involved in the sampling process?

This is a collaborative effort bringing together local, state, federal government, and Tribal partners with a vested interest in the health and future of the inlet.

How can the public stay informed about the progress and findings of the research vessel?

Sign up for [email updates](#) to hear the latest on efforts to restore Budd Inlet.

You can continue to follow along by visiting the Port's website at <https://portolympia.com/buddinlet/> as well as information from Ecology <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/2245>

How is the Port of Olympia prioritizing the health of Budd Inlet?

The Port is taking a data-driven approach to the cleanup, ensuring that every action is guided by scientific research and evidence. This begins with the detailed sampling process to understand the extent and locations of contaminants in the sediment.

If contaminated sediment is not addressed, the environmental, economic, and community value of the waterway will continue to diminish. The sediment can harm aquatic animals, referred to as "benthic organisms," such as shellfish that live on or in it. Other animals that eat these benthic organisms can also be harmed, including orcas, salmon, bald eagles and other birds, harbor seals, and people.

The Port is exploring all remediation options to achieve maximum safety and efficiency for people and habitats.

How is the sampling process a positive step in the Budd Inlet cleanup project?

By undertaking this comprehensive sediment sampling, the Port is demonstrating its commitment to not only addressing pollution but also to restoring the environmental integrity of Budd Inlet. It is a tangible action that shows the Port's dedication to making positive environmental changes.

The data gathered will enhance our understanding of the current state of sediment contamination within the inlet. Knowing the types and concentrations of contaminants in sediments is essential for planning a cleanup that is both thorough and minimally invasive to the marine environment.

Sampling is a mandatory step that helps to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to remediation. By knowing what we're dealing with, the Port can deploy resources more intelligently, which is both cost-effective and environmentally prudent.

A healthy Budd Inlet has far-reaching benefits for the community, from economic growth to recreational opportunities and wildlife conservation. The sampling process is the first step toward reclaiming the inlet for the people and wildlife that depend on it.