

## Selling or Buying Land or a Home in the Upper Columbia River Valley?

### CONTACTS

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### WEBSITES

#### Seller Disclosure Form 17:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=64.06.020>

**Dirt Alert:** [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites\\_brochure/dirt\\_alert/2011/dirt-alert-hp.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites_brochure/dirt_alert/2011/dirt-alert-hp.html)

#### Upper Columbia River Cleanup Site Information

**Ecology:** <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/gsp/Sitepage.aspx?csid=12125>  
*Find this fact sheet and more!*

**EPA:** <https://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/cleanup.nsf/sites/upperc>

**Teck:** <http://www.ucr-rifs.com/>

**Cleanup site ID:** 12125

**Facility site ID:** 17013

Soil in the upper Columbia River valley of Stevens County, Washington, may contain unnaturally high levels of metals, including lead and arsenic. Concentrations depend on many factors, including land-use history and soil disturbances such as landscaping and grading.

Metal ore smelting during the last century emitted metal particles into the atmosphere and broadly dispersed them across this area. The Teck Metals smelter (Teck), less than 10 miles across the U.S.-Canadian border in Trail, British Columbia, is the main source. Smaller contributions also came from the now-closed and cleaned up Le Roi, or Northport, smelter.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is directing a far-reaching metals contamination investigation that includes soil and water in the upper Columbia River valley from the Grand Coulee Dam to the U.S.-Canadian border. Analyses of soil samples show that some soil in this area can be unnaturally high in lead, arsenic, and other metals due to past smelter air emissions, primarily in the area highlighted in Figure 1 (page 3). Soil here may contain levels of metals above concentrations considered safe by health specialists and Washington cleanup standards.

### How does this affect me if I am selling?

- **Sellers and realtors must comply with real estate disclosure law.** [Chapter 64.06 Revised Code of Washington](#) (RCW) creates seller disclosure forms with questions about the property being sold. Real estate transactions include a seller disclosure statement, known as Form 17. You can get this form from your real estate agent, or copy the questions from [RCW 64.06.020](#). Form 17 asks if the seller knows of any soil contamination. Soil along the upper Columbia River valley (Figure 1, page 3) may be contaminated with metals. Sellers also are required to disclose “adverse material defects,” which could include soil contamination. The disclosure requirements apply to both improved and unimproved properties, with some exceptions. If you have questions about Form 17, please seek legal advice.
- **EPA-directed soil sampling is ongoing in the upper Columbia River valley** (Figure 1, page 3). Learn more in [EPA’s 2014 update](#) and [Teck’s 2016 soil sampling plan](#). More information is available on the websites listed to the left.
- **You may test your soil.** [Ecology’s Dirt Alert website](#) has [guidance](#) about sampling soil for residential and commercial properties. For help understanding sampling procedures or results, you may contact the Washington State Department of Ecology (see left).

## WHY IT MATTERS

Potential buyers have the right to know about possible hazards in their environment, and sellers are required to disclose information about their property.

High concentrations of lead or arsenic in soil pose a long-term health risk. People are exposed primarily through hand-to-mouth contact with contaminated soil. This includes eating food or mouthing toys with traces of soil or dust, and breathing in dust.

Children are especially sensitive to toxins. Lead in children can cause behavioral problems, permanent learning difficulties, and reduced physical growth. Long-term exposure to arsenic has been associated with various health problems including cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

### Special accommodations

To request Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations, or printed materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at (509) 329-3546 or visit [www.ecy.wa.gov/accessibility.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/accessibility.html). Persons with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. Persons with speech disability may call TTY at (877) 833-6341.

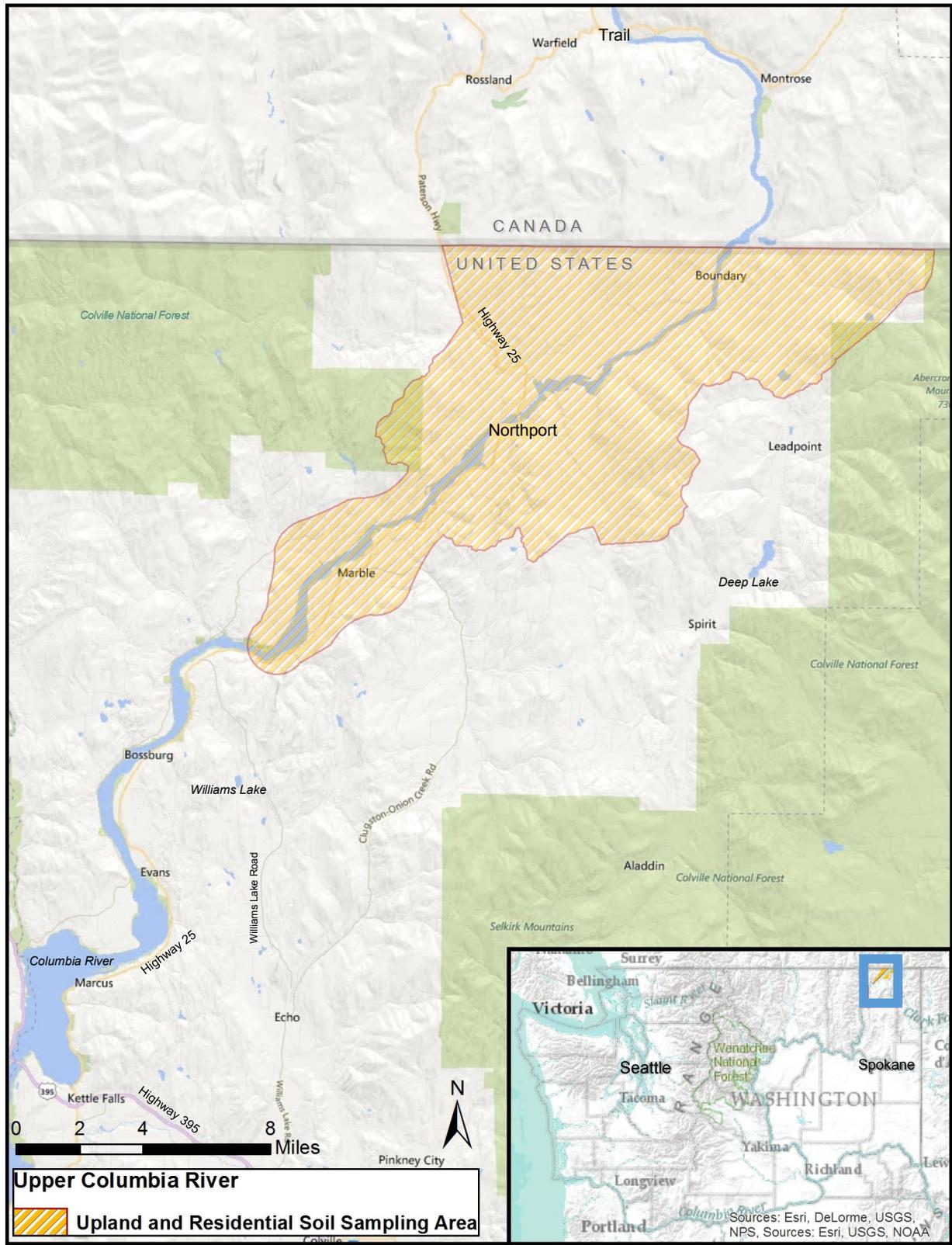
## How does this affect me if I am buying?

- **Check the seller disclosure form.** Unless the buyer expressly waives the right to receive the disclosure statement, the seller must provide Form 17 ([RCW 64.06.020](#)). A buyer cannot waive the right to Form 17 if the answer to any of the questions in the Environment section are “yes.” The buyer can ask the seller and realtor if they are aware of any soil testing for metals on or near the property.
- **Ask the seller if you may test the soil.** [Ecology’s Dirt Alert website](#) has [guidance](#) about sampling soil for residential and commercial properties. For help understanding sampling procedures or results, you may contact Ecology (page 1, left sidebar).
- **Learn more.** [Simple actions](#) can help your family avoid potential exposure to metals in soil. Visit [Ecology’s Dirt Alert website](#), or contact Ecology (page 1, left sidebar).



**Above:** Gathering a soil sample at a residential property in the upper Columbia River Valley.

**Left:** Bagging a soil sample for analysis.



**Figure 1.** Approximate area of the upper Columbia River valley where soil has been sampled and metals may be above normal as of 2016.

## What's in your soil?

Soil in the upper Columbia River valley may contain unnaturally high levels of metals, including lead and arsenic, from metal ore smelting.



## Look inside to learn:

- The facts about buying and selling land or a home in the upper Columbia River valley of Stevens County, Washington.
- Where to get more information about simple actions to protect your family from lead and arsenic contamination in soil.