# **Public Involvement Staff Responses to STAG Questions**

## **Q: What are some common questions the Toxics Cleanup Program receives at public meetings?**

* How do you decide cleanup alternatives?
* Why do we get no say in picking the cleanup alternative?
* How do you decide which cleanup sites are a priority?
* Where are we in the cleanup process? And what are the steps?
* When will the actual cleanup work on the site begin vs. planning? And why is it taking so long?
* Why can’t we have a more protective cleanup vs. the preferred alternative selected?
* Who pays for the cleanup?
* What is the difference between residential and industrial cleanup standards/levels? I.e. is it safe to use the site after cleanup?
* What are the contaminates and how will they be cleaned up? (The public often assumes “cleanup” means they will be *removed* vs. *addressed* which can often be the case with capping, etc.)
* What constitutes a site?
* What does “clean” mean?
* How does “piecemealing” cleanup help the environment? An area (regardless of ownership) should be cleaned up all at once.
* Why isn’t industry responsible for removing all contamination?
* Who are the volunteers who enter into the VCP program and who is making sure they do a good job?
* I find most questions are site-specific and concern contaminants and people’s health and drinking water quality. If we are to the draft cleanup action plan stage, then, of course, there are questions about the cleanup plans and how long it will take to complete cleanup. However, one common question is who’s paying. People typically do not like their taxes paying to cleanup someone else’s mess, especially if we have large companies, such as railroads, associated with a site. Fortunately in these cases, the PLP is typically paying, so that is an easy question to answer.
* Tacoma Smelter Plume: Most of the outreach I do is around the Residential Yard Sampling and Cleanup Program (Yard Program). We offer soil replacement to homeowners in our service area that have high levels of arsenic or lead in their yard from the former ASARCO smelter that was located in north Tacoma. People have questions about their sampling results, what their sampling results mean, and what this might mean for their health. They also want to know when they will get soil replacement and what to do while they wait.

## **Q: How often does the public ask why cleanup is taking so long during a public meeting?**

* This is a common question.
* At least 80% of the time.
* Every… single… time we have a public meeting or in-person interaction.
* When a comment period has numerous submitted comments (10+), there are typically a few comments about why the cleanup is taking so long.
* Tacoma Smelter Plume: The public asks this question every time we have a meeting. Variations on this for us are when is their property going to get soil replacement up and why is it taking so long to get to their yard.