

Creosote on Beaches

How Did It Start?

One type of armor that has commonly been used in bulkhead construction are creosote logs. Creosote treated lumber has been popular since the 1850s when it was introduced to protect railroad ties. Soon after, it became a popular marine wood preservative as it prevented decay of bulkheads and other marine structures around Puget Sound.



What is it?

Creosote, also known as coal tar, is a thick black or dark brown liquid or semisolid with a strong odor. Three hundred chemicals have been identified in the mix, but depending on processing, as many as 10,000 other chemicals may be in a creosote mixture.

In addition to its foul odor, the toxicity of creosote causes damage to many marine organisms. One organism that is particularly impacted by toxic creosote is herring, a critical food source for migrating Chinook salmon in Puget Sound. Herring that were spawned on creosote-treated piles had a 100% mortality rate. Other fish species have suffered reproductive impairment, growth abnormalities, and suppressed immune functions after being exposed to creosote contamination in sediment.

Why Does It Matter?

With the impact of creosote being detrimental to many marine species, it greatly affects the food web. This means that larger organisms like eagles, orcas, and humans may not have enough to eat if the smaller organisms like herring and salmon are suffering from creosote toxicity.



Creosote is not only dangerous to marine life, but to humans as well. People can be exposed to creosote vapors on a hot day or through direct contact when playing, sitting on, or burning the treated wood. That's why Shore Friendly Kitsap and our partners are making an effort to remove creosote treated bulkheads.



Taking Action

In 2007 DNR enacted the Creosote Removal Program. Since then, they have removed 14,461 pilings and over 21,300 tons of creosote from Puget Sound. Shore Friendly Kitsap utilizes DNR's program when working with landowners who need removal of creosote treated lumber. DNR will pick up the wood and properly dispose of it.

You can help too! If you have creosote logs on your property or have seen them while walking on the beach, there is a way to report it via a phone app called MyCoast. Check out the link at the bottom of this newsletter.

The combined effort towards the removal of creosote will create safer beaches for both humans and our Puget Sound marine ecosystem for years to come.



About Shore Friendly Kitsap

Shore Friendly Kitsap is your waterfront partner.

Our mission is to empower Puget Sound waterfront landowners to create beautiful, environmentally friendly shorelines for themselves and generations to come.

Join our new Facebook group! Link below...

Contact us: 360.307.4242 or shorefriendly@co.kitsap.wa.us

STAY INFORMED

Want to learn more? Sign-up to receive future issues of this newsletter or join our Facebook group. You can find the links below!