

Aberdeen Site Chosen as Preferred Site for Pontoon Construction, EIS Continues

Local News

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ABERDEEN, Wash. - Good news spread fast yesterday as the Washington State Department of Transportation announced that Aberdeen had been selected as the preferred location for the pontoon construction site.

Aberdeen Mayor Bill Simpson said this morning's news is good for Grays Harbor "sure we're glad to have it, and it will be a great benefit to the city, but it will be great for [Grays] Harbor" and that selection of the the Aberdeen site would not solve immediate budget issues, it certainly lightens the load on future budgetary concerns.

The Washington state Department of Transportation is evaluating two potential sites for the construction, The Aberdeen Log Yard owned by Weyerhaeuser, and the Anderson & Middleton site in Hoquiam.

Julie Meredith, Program Director with the DOT said "we've been analyzing both sites, and both sites are good sites, but the Aberdeen Log Yard site has stronger soil, and less porous soil, and so it's less risky for development purposes" Meredith stressed that as part of the Environmental Impact Statement process both sites will continue to be evaluated, the final EIS is planned to be released in 2010, with a new casting basin for the construction scheduled to get under construction by the end of 2010, and construction to begin on the new pontoons by 2012.

We want to thank the entire community and its leaders for their support for building a pontoon construction site in Grays Harbor County. We worked closely with the Port of Grays Harbor, the Cities of Aberdeen and Hoquiam, legislative leaders and the Quinault Indian Nation to identify potential pontoon construction sites. Ultimately, we picked the Aberdeen Log Yard site as our preferred site based on information we have gathered from investigations to date," said Paula Hammond, Washington Transportation Secretary. "With the preferred pontoon construction site identified, we can begin construction in 2010, and we are one step closer to replacing the aging SR 520 bridge by 2014."

The Aberdeen Log Yard was identified as WSDOT's preferred site because the site development is less costly, and the conditions below ground pose fewer construction and schedule challenges. WSDOT has also been evaluating a project site in Hoquiam. A number of risks and opportunities weighed in favor of the Aberdeen site, including environmental effects, engineering constraints, construction and schedule risks, and coordination with regulatory agencies and Tribal nations.

WSDOT will issue a request for proposals on August 24 to contractors to construct pontoons at the Aberdeen Log Yard. A short list of contractors will be asked to submit bids for design and construction at the preferred site. The design-build contract will be worth \$300 million to \$500 million. The project is expected to create more than 2,000 project-related jobs at the height of construction.

Testing of potential pontoon construction methods will begin in September at Satsop Business Park.

Identifying a preferred alternative allows WSDOT to pursue early environmental consultation and permit coordination with regulatory agencies. Both the Aberdeen and Hoquiam sites will be fully evaluated in the environmental process to ensure either one can be used if further investigations uncover new information. Fieldwork at both sites will continue through the summer, including in-depth cultural resources investigations. A draft environmental impact statement evaluating both sites will be released for public and agency comment at the end of this year.

For more information, visit the SR 520 Pontoon Construction Project site at www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr520/pontoons.