

Port of Tacoma Off-Dock Container Support Facility FAQs

Why are you building this project?

The Off-Dock Container Support Facility will improve efficiency and provide surge capacity for marine cargo managed by The Northwest Seaport Alliance. Off-dock facilities free up on-dock space by providing an area for storing and staging containers and chassis. The facility will help maintain a fluid supply chain and support exports from Washington's agriculture producers.

Where will the project be built and why did you choose this location?

The project is on 24.5 acres of Port-owned land east of Thorne Road and north of Maxwell Way. Due to a shortage of available land in the Tideflats it was determined that this is the only viable location for the new facility. As part of the permitting process, a site alternatives analysis of properties in the Tideflats was completed. The site criteria included approximately 25 contiguous acres located within one mile of the Husky and Washington United Terminals entry gates and excluding property already used for port logistics, major infrastructure/manufacturing, or mitigation sites.

I've seen this site called "Cottonwood Park" on social media. Why would you tear down a park?

This property is not a park. It is not currently, nor is ever intended to be, used for public access or recreational purposes. This site is composed of three parcels of land in the middle of an industrial zone and is fenced around the perimeter for security. Much of the property is currently used for truck and trailer parking, container storage, and material/equipment transload. This site is surrounded by busy seaport and industrial operations and heavy truck and rail traffic.

I heard on social media that this site contains "old growth" cottonwood trees. Why would you tear down these trees?

While the project site does contain tall trees, within a near monoculture of black cottonwoods, they are not considered "old growth." The trees on this site sprouted on a lot that had previously been filled as part of the industrial development of the Tideflats in the 1950s-60s. The tree understory is over 50 percent non-native plants and noxious and invasive weeds, predominantly Himalayan blackberry. We understand the concern over the removal of trees associated with this project, and it is not a decision that we take lightly. The Port constructed the Lower Wapato Creek habitat site as advance mitigation for development projects, like the off-dock container support facility. The Lower Wapato Creek

site preserved more than 110 native trees, including large cottonwoods, and was planted with a diverse array of approximately 150,000 trees, shrubs, and emergent/ground cover plants, in addition to a mix of more than 40 species of native grasses. The Lower Wapato Creek habitat site is larger, has a direct connection to other natural areas, and provides a much higher function and value for fish, birds and wildlife than the project site. Creation of the Lower Wapato site was done in partnership with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians and their Historic Preservation Office.

If you remove the trees for this project, won't you be removing bird and wildlife habitat?

The portion of the property containing trees has been thoroughly examined for soil, hydrology, and vegetation and is considered low-scoring Category III isolated wetlands, meaning it is smaller, less diverse, and more isolated from other natural resources than higher-scoring wetlands. The wetlands and habitat functions the project site provides are minimal due to its location within the industrial area and having no direct connection to other natural areas. While it is true that migratory birds can be found there, these urban species of birds have the ability to relocate to nearby locations that will provide a much higher-quality and more contiguous habitat. In addition, terrestrial species are unable to disperse from this site effectively due to its location adjacent to heavily trafficked roads, railroads, and security fencing. The Lower Wapato Creek advance mitigation site creates new fish and bird habitat and provides a much higher function and value than the project site. The functions of the trees at the project site, including habitat and carbon sequestration, will be improved and replaced by the existing trees and the installation of approximately 150,000 trees, shrubs, emergent/ground cover plants, and a mix of over 40 species of native grasses at the Lower Wapato Creek habitat site. To date, the Port has constructed or preserved more than 213 acres of habitat, including the planting of thousands of trees. More information can be found [here](#).

I also saw on social media that this site is a “habitat for bald eagles.”

This site was thoroughly examined by the Port biologist; there are no eagle nests at this site.

Why don't you use the large lots on Taylor Way and Marshall Ave to store containers?

The Taylor Way and Marshall Ave lots are leased by two separate private companies providing auto transporting and after-market installation services; these lots are rated for auto use only, not containers.

Won't this project increase air pollution?

The new facility is expected to have positive impacts on air quality and reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions from terminal operations by reducing the wait time for ships to come into the berth; burning less fuel in yard equipment by reducing the number of times a container is moved on the dock; reducing the number of and time trucks sit idling while waiting to get in/out of the terminals; and minimizing train backlogs. The National Pollution Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Assessment (EA) will evaluate air quality as part of the assessment.

Why do you need to expand container storage? Aren't supply chain issues a thing of the past?

While supply chain congestion is not a current concern, the Port must provide surge capacity for future needs. Because of the operational efficiencies the facility will bring, we do not need to be facing a global supply chain crisis to feel the benefits. Cargo will move smoother with less congestion around the Port, decreasing pollution. This investment will also help the Port of Tacoma and The Northwest Seaport Alliance remain competitive in the global shipping industry. A vibrant container port helps meet the public's need for goods and provides family-wage jobs for thousands of people in our community.

If tariffs increase and trade slows, does this facility really need to be built?

Trade can be cyclical, but it is the responsibility of the Port of Tacoma to build for the future, which includes providing adequate surge capacity for when trade increases. Because ours is a discretionary port, meaning that most of the imported goods go beyond the Puget Sound region, it is critical that the Port of Tacoma and The Northwest Seaport Alliance remain competitive, so that when trade recovers after a slowdown, that business is not lost to another West Coast port.