

Why are you building this project?

The new off-dock container support facility is being developed to help alleviate congestion that has impacted every stage of the global supply chain, including at the Port. Given the container throughput issues up and down the West Coast, near-dock support yards, such as this one, are now seen as critical to improving container port operations and the efficiency of the supply chain. The project site is on three Port-owned parcels (total of 24.5 acres) east of Thorne Road/north of Maxwell Way in the Tideflats.

Off-dock container facilities are a critical infrastructure need that help decrease supply chain congestion by improving container port operations and efficiencies that, in turn, ease impacts on the rest of the supply chain (i.e., ship, terminal, rail, road congestion). Off-dock facilities free up on-dock space by providing an area away from the dock for uses like the storage, staging, preparing, and processing of containers and chassis. The new facility will not only help relieve supply chain congestion but also decrease air emissions (from ships, trucks, rail and yard equipment) and improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the movement of goods in and out of the Port.

Why did you choose this location?

Due to a shortage of available land in the Tideflats it was determined that this site 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 approx. 25 contiguous acres located within one mile of the Husky and Washington United Terminals entry gate and excluding property already used for port logistics, major infrastructure/manufacturing, or as mitigation sites.

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

This location is not a park. The property is not currently, nor 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 of the properties 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 over 110 native trees, including large cottonwoods, and will be planted with a diverse array of approximately 150,000 trees, shrubs, and emergent/ground cover plants, in addition to a mix of over 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.

FAQs: Off-dock container support facility

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

The portion of the property containing trees at the project site 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 this 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 over 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 on?

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?

International container ports up and down the West Coast, including the Port of Tacoma, have become congested, contributing to increased cargo handling costs and excessive greenhouse gas emissions and air quality impacts. The purpose of the off-dock container support facility is to help relieve congestion and improve marine container terminal capacity and efficiency at the Port in order to meet the public's need and demand for increased cargo movement. 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 dock; 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? Now that the pandemic is winding down, aren't supply chain issues going to be a thing of the past?

While supply chain congestion issues related to the pandemic are starting to ease, consumer demand is not expected to decline and the Port must continue to plan and implement projects that increase cargo capacity and operational efficiencies, like off-dock container support facilities. The rise of e-commerce adds to the need for increased cargo capacity, reliability, and faster service. Continuous improvement in operational efficiencies will allow the Port to remain competitive while improving service to meet the public's need and demand for increased cargo movement and the more than 42,000 jobs supported by Port-related operations.