THE PROBLEM:
Bellingham has a dilapidated waterfront: a 237-acre brownfield that houses the now-closed Georgia Pacific Paper Mill. In 2006, Georgia Pacific sold the site to the Port of Bellingham for $10 in exchange for Bellingham being responsible for its cleanup. Ten years later, the area remains a Superfund site that is a blight upon the waterfront and unsafe for our community. The Port and the City of Bellingham are finally addressing the site's much-needed revitalization of this site and are currently in the first phase of waterfront development. They are responsible for contracting with the cleanup agency standards and selecting subcontractors.

THE OPPORTUNITY
Bellingham's waterfront development presents a unique opportunity for our community to create a working waterfront that protects the environment and brings good jobs to Whatcom County. We can clean up toxic material that was left behind, turn the waterfront into an asset for the entire community, provide jobs and increase our tax base.

Working people and environmental groups created the Blue-Green Waterfront Coalition to advocate for a waterfront that characterizes our community values: a clean environment, economic justice for workers and sustainability. The Bellingham waterfront belongs to our community, the residents of Bellingham and Whatcom County. The land is publicly owned, our tax dollars will finance the clean-up, and we will pay for the roads, sewers and other infrastructure at a projected cost of more than $400 million. As the financiers of the waterfront’s redevelopment, we must ensure that what is built benefits us all.
We want a safe environment for citizens to work and play, but the Port does not appear to be listening to community input about the property. One of the central sticking points is building a marina in the ASB Lagoon, which is filled with toxic sludge. This plan would prohibit the full and necessary clean-up of the dangerous mercury contamination at the location. Despite vigorous testimony from the public opposing this piece of the development, all the plans put forward by the port and confirmed by the city have included this marina and a less than full clean-up of the site.

The first phase of the waterfront development has already been contracted to Harcourt Developments. Details are not publicly known, but this piece is expected to include a mix of retail, office and residential buildings, with a new facility for Western Washington University described as a “community learning center.” This will constitute the first 11 acre piece of the area’s 237 acres.

The second piece of development is now in play. It includes the next 100 acres at or near the water. It is our understanding that Harcourt wants to develop this piece of property as well. From what we have seen, their ideas for development are not in line with what working people and the environmental community have outlined in our principles. The developers and the Port Commission are taking a narrow view of development – high-rise condos, low-wage service jobs, luxury marinas and other features that serve an exclusive, transient slice of our population and tourists.

**WE CAN DO BETTER!**

If we spend our tax dollars well and fulfill this multi-use vision, we will have a waterfront that benefits all of us in Whatcom County, not just an elite few.

Our community is paying for the waterfront development. In order for it to serve as many people as possible, we would like to see a mix of parks, light industry, and family-wage marine-dependent jobs.

At a time when our community is divided over developing a coal port, we have an opportunity to work together to achieve a project that will bring thousands of jobs to Whatcom County. We must seize this opportunity to improve our waterfront, protect our environment and create family-wage, long-term careers.

**TOP TEN VALUES FOR THE WATERFRONT**

1. Allowance for sea level rise
2. Park with public access to the water
3. Full clean-up done in a sensitive way for unlimited use and to extend into the waterway. Currently, Bellingham Bay is in bad shape, and we need to eliminate the dead zone and restore fishing.
4. Habitat Connectivity: Whatcom Creek is an important salmon stream
5. LEED buildings
6. Transit, pedestrian and bike friendly with connections to downtown
7. Diverse employment opportunities
8. No turn-key development, Davis-Bacon principles: Local Hire, Prevailing Wage with benefits, Apprenticeship Utilization
9. Preference for marine-specific industries
10. Affordable housing, live/work community

The next phase of development must include a Community Benefits Agreement that ensures these values are met for the people of Bellingham and Whatcom County.

We are asking to partner with the Port, the City and Washington State to create a waterfront the works for working families and the environment. Instead of a luxury marina, condos and minimum wage jobs, let’s bring good jobs to Bellingham and a waterfront that is safe for people to live, work and play.