

The Audit Management Requested, Then Cancelled

A 2023 Independent Environmental Compliance Audit That Was Never Conducted

Citizens for Safe Water and Air - Port Townsend

PORT TOWNSEND, WA

This research has been compiled to the best of our ability from named public sources. If you believe any fact presented here is incorrect or incomplete, please contact safewaterandair@gmail.com so it can be reviewed and corrected.

1. The Core Finding

In early 2023, Port Townsend Paper Company (PTPC)'s own management requested an independent environmental compliance audit of the facility. A small group of independent, experienced wood products industry environmental audit professionals was prepared to conduct it. The day before the audit was scheduled to begin, the auditors were contacted by upper company management and told the audit was cancelled. It was never conducted [1].

This account comes from John Gross, one of the auditors who was prepared to take part. Gross confirmed the account in his own public social media post, and separately in direct communication with this campaign on July 21, 2026 [1]. Document metadata on the original audit scope document he shared, PTP_Audit.docx, shows it was created January 19, 2023 and last modified the following day, January 20, 2023, consistent with his account that the cancellation came just weeks after the scope was finalized [2].

2. Who Confirmed This

John Gross is a career environmental engineer and contractor. His background includes roles as a Senior Environmental Contractor at Weyerhaeuser for approximately 11 years, Senior Associate Engineer at Landau Associates, Environmental Executive at Jorgensen Forge, and Environmental Project Manager at the Port of Portland, with education at the University of Portland and Oregon State University. This campaign reached out to him in July 2026 after seeing his account of the cancelled audit in a public social media post [1].

Gross has no facility-specific PTPC records of his own; his account is a limited-access, firsthand source, not a verified internal company record. This document presents his account as exactly that, and does not claim independent confirmation from PTPC or from any regulator.

3. What the Audit Would Have Covered

The scope document Gross shared, PTP_Audit.docx, describes two areas of planned review [2]:

- Primary scope: oil and bulk chemical storage and handling, including tank inspection and integrity testing, compliance with Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC), Risk Management Program (RMP), and Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90) requirements, containment basin management, and material transfer and satellite storage practices.

- Secondary scope: a comparison of PTPC's then-current Air Operating Permit against the prior version, covering permit changes, the effectiveness of recordkeeping and monitoring, and source testing requirements.

4. In His Own Words

Asked what the audit might have found, Gross wrote: "Would we have uncovered environmental issues? Who knows, but I suspect we could have helped mitigate some of the concerns now being expressed." [1]

5. What We Don't Know

This account does not establish why upper company management cancelled the audit, what internal reasoning was given to the auditors at the time, or whether any other compliance review took the cancelled audit's place. Those remain open questions.

Sources and Citations

All factual claims in this document are drawn from the following sources, verified during research for this document.

1. John Gross, career environmental engineer and contractor, in communication with Citizens for Safe Water and Air, July 21, 2026, and in his own public social media post describing the cancelled 2023 audit.
2. PTP_Audit.docx, the original audit scope document shared by John Gross, document metadata confirming creation January 19, 2023 and last modification January 20, 2023.