

**Disposal at Sea**

Disposal at sea is the deliberate disposal of approved materials from ships, aircrafts, platforms or other structures. These materials mostly consist of sediments dredged from harbours and channels. Other materials that may be considered for disposal are: fisheries waste, ships, inert matter (substances that have no chemical reactivity), uncontaminated organic matter and bulky substances.<sup>1</sup>

Environment Canada administers the disposal at sea program under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*.<sup>1</sup> The program involves permit applications, testing of disposal materials, a 'Notice of Intent' process, fee structures, expert advice, compliance and enforcement monitoring, and ongoing site monitoring procedures that are the responsibility of Environment Canada and the disposal permit applicant.<sup>2</sup> All proposed ocean disposal projects are reviewed under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, registered in an on-line public registry and published in the Canada Gazette before a permit is issued or amended. Changes to the disposal at sea program require public consultation.<sup>1</sup>

Historically there have been more than 140 disposal at sea sites in BC, including approximately 40 in PNCIMA.<sup>3,4</sup> These were mainly distributed around the west and east coasts of northern Vancouver Island and around Prince Rupert, with a few sites at Oceans Falls and Bella Coola on the Central Coast, and in Haida Gwaii.<sup>3</sup> The primary waste materials disposed of at these sites were mud, sand, gravel, wood wastes and wood debris.<sup>3,4</sup> Most of these sites have become inactive.<sup>5</sup>

**Current Disposal at Sea Sites**

Currently, selection criteria for disposal at sea sites include consideration of fishery resources and habitat, adjacent marine uses, evaluation of mixing and transport (e.g. current) characteristics at the site, feasibility of monitoring the site and First Nations' concerns.<sup>5</sup> There are now 36 designated sites in BC, half of which are used routinely.<sup>4</sup>

Three of the ten disposal sites within PNCIMA are active as listed (from south to north):

- Johnstone Strait-Hickey Point - designated in 1980 to dispose of dredged material from log dump and marine-based log sorting facilities.
- Johnstone Strait-Hanson Island - designated in 1980 to dispose of mud and wood waste from log storage and dredging material from Port McNeill harbour and Sointula Marina.
- Brown Passage, west of Prince Rupert - established in 1946 to dispose of ammunition and scrap metal. More recently, it has primarily been used to dispose of dredged material from Prince Rupert port facilities.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Environment Canada. 2010. Disposal at sea. <http://ec.gc.ca/iem-das/Default.asp?lang=En&n=00478595-1> (Accessed December 2010).  
 2 Environment Canada. 2010. Applying for a permit. <http://ec.gc.ca/iem-das/default.asp?lang=En&n=11663f70-1>. (Accessed December 2010).  
 3 Ward, A.B. and Sullivan, D.L. 1980. A review of existing and historical ocean dumpsites in the Pacific region. Regional Program Report 80-5. Environmental Protection Service, Environment Canada, Pacific Region.  
 4 Sullivan, D. 1987. Compilation and assessment of research, monitoring and dumping information for active dump sites on the British Columbia and Yukon coasts for 1979-1987. Manuscript Report 87-02. Prepared for Pacific Region Ocean Dumping Advisory Committee.  
 5 Environment Canada. 2009. Fact sheet: disposal at sea in British Columbia. [http://www.portmetrovancover.com/Libraries/PROJECTS\\_Dredging/Disposal\\_at\\_Sea\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_Feb\\_09.sflb.ashx](http://www.portmetrovancover.com/Libraries/PROJECTS_Dredging/Disposal_at_Sea_Fact_Sheet_Feb_09.sflb.ashx) (Accessed December 2010).

