



FACT SHEET

Disposal at Sea In British Columbia

What is Disposal at Sea?

Disposal at sea is the deliberate disposal of approved material from a ship, an aircraft, a platform or other structures at sea. In British Columbia, the material is primarily dredged sediment from river or marine sources, or excavated native material from Metro Vancouver.

Disposal at sea is permitted by Canadian law under Part 7, Division 3 of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA 1999). The permit system allows Canada to meet its international obligation to prevent marine pollution by regulating the disposal of wastes and other matter in accordance with the London Protocol.

What is Disposed of at Sea?

In British Columbia, approved material for which no beneficial use or practical land-based disposal options can be identified may be disposed of at designated disposal sites. This material includes:

- Dredged material;
- Inert, inorganic geological matter;
- Uncontaminated organic matter;
- Inert, bulky items such as concrete, steel; and
- Ships, aircraft, platforms, or other structures.

CEPA 1999 prohibits the disposal at sea of material which may be harmful to human health and the marine environment. The disposal of hazardous wastes in Canadian marine waters is prohibited.

How is Disposal at Sea Regulated?

Environment Canada regulates disposal at sea by means of a permitting process in accordance with the requirements and regulations of CEPA 1999. All proposed disposal at sea projects are also reviewed and assessed in accordance with the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and are registered in an on-line public registry. This registry is available at www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca .

Permit applications to load and dispose of material are reviewed and assessed by Environment Canada. Permit applications must include proof of publication of a Notice of Intent in a newspaper local to the proposed project area. The public is invited to comment on the proposed loading and disposal activities during the application process.

Only material that has been rigorously tested and meets CEPA 1999 regulations may be considered for disposal at sea. Guidance for sampling and testing is updated to keep pace with new methods and technology.

All disposal at sea permits and permit amendments are published in the *Canada Gazette* before issuance and are subject to a 30 day public comment period.

Once the permit is issued, Environment Canada Enforcement Officers may conduct surveillance monitoring and inspections at both loading and disposal sites to ensure compliance with disposal at sea permit conditions.

Why is Disposal at Sea Necessary?

All practical land-based and beneficial-use alternatives to disposal at sea must be considered and evaluated before an application for disposal at sea is considered. In British Columbia, coastal topography and the availability of suitable landfill sites are key constraints to waste management alternatives.

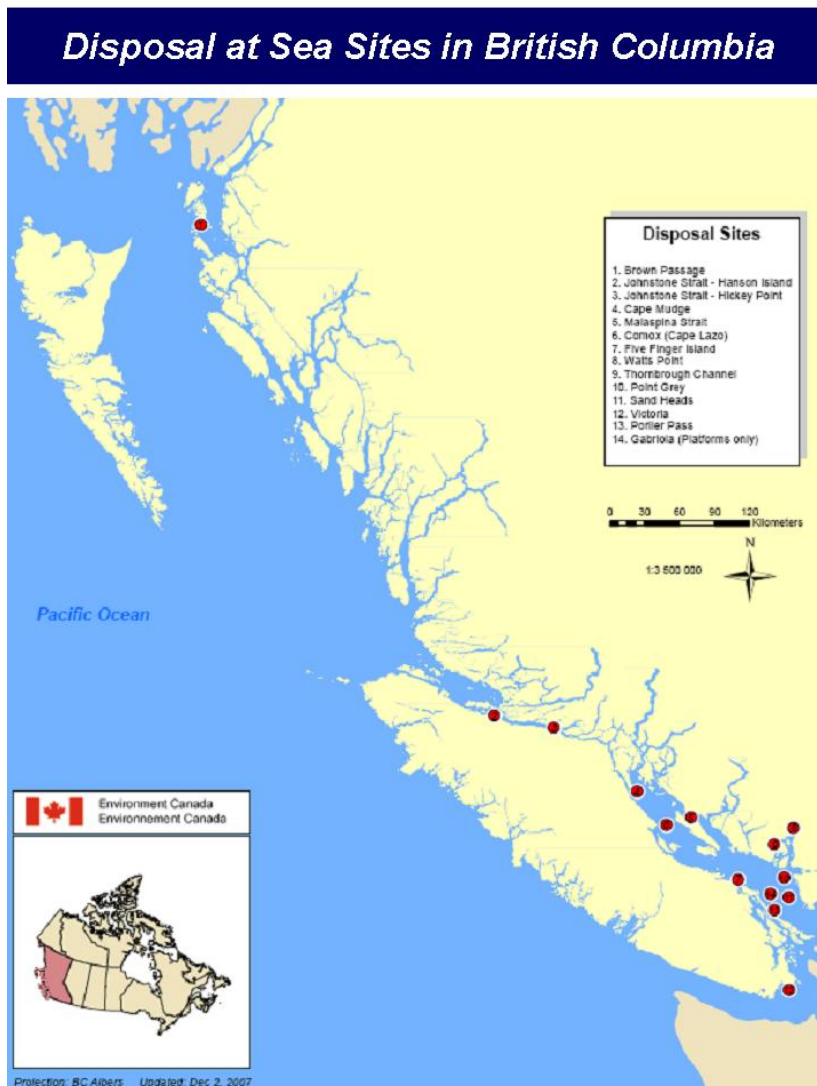
To maintain navigational channels in British Columbia approximately 1.6 million cubic meters of material must be dredged annually. The annual volume of dredged as well as excavated material from Metro Vancouver cannot be accommodated by existing landfill sites. Consequently, disposal at sea is the preferred waste management option for this type of material for practical, economical, and environmental reasons.

Where are the Disposal Sites?

In British Columbia, there are 14 designated sites. Disposal sites are designated according to selection criteria established by CEPA 1999. The disposal site selection criteria include:

- Proximity to fishery resources and habitat;
- Interference with marine use in the area;
- Evaluation of mixing and transport characteristics at the site;
- Feasibility of monitoring the disposal site; and
- First Nations concerns.

Disposal at Sea Sites in British Columbia



What is Disposal Site Monitoring?

Disposal site monitoring is an integral part of the disposal at sea program. Monitoring helps ensure that the permit conditions are met by the permit holder, and that assumptions made during the permit review and site selection process are accurate and sufficient to protect human health and the environment. Monitoring activities provide important feedback to resource managers about the permit and assessment whereby terms and conditions may be modified as necessary to ensure adequate environmental protection.

Disposal sites in British Columbia have been routinely monitored over the past thirty years. Sediment from the disposal sites is collected and analyzed for chemical, biological and physical parameters. The results indicate that the marine environment at disposal sites has not been significantly affected by disposal at sea activities.

Want More Information?

For more information about Environment Canada's disposal at sea program in British Columbia, please contact:

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