



Ministry of Environment and
Climate Change Strategy

Ministry of Energy, Mines
and Petroleum Resources

REGULATORY PROPOSAL PAPER

PLACER MINING WASTE CONTROL REGULATION

July 2018

Waste discharges from placer mining are regulated by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV). Placer mine operations are further regulated by the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources (EMPR). This document outlines proposed changes to the Placer Mining Waste Control Regulation (PMWCR) (BC Reg. 107/89) under the *Environmental Management Act* (EMA). The regulation has been in place since 1989 and broadly authorizes waste discharges associated with placer mining operations across the province of British Columbia. No additional site specific permit is required to discharge waste from placer mines. The PMWCR is currently under review, specifically with respect of the requirements associated with placer mines in the Atlin and Dease Lake areas.

What is the issue?

- With the exemption of placer mines specifically located in certain areas of the province, gold hand panning operations, and those testing for minerals by hand, placer mines are required to ensure that suspended solids do not enter water bodies.
- Placer mines located in the northwest of the province which do not use mercury or chemicals are *excluded* from the specific requirement to control suspended solids downstream of their operations.

Why is a change necessary?

Hearing concerns from First Nations and other stakeholders, the government wants to ensure that water sources and fish are protected. Although the federal *Fisheries Act* regulates discharges to fish bearing waters and the *Environmental Management Act* does not allow pollution, direct treatment works and controls are not required for placer mines on certain streams in the northwest of the province (the regulation identifies the streams). The government would like to see water treated as a valuable resource and would like a level playing field across all placer mines in the province.

What changes are proposed?

- The portion of the PMWCR related to the exemption of sediment control for certain streams in the northwest of the province is proposed to be rescinded in 2019.
- The result is existing placer mines can finish their current permitted works under the existing PMWCR with the current Notice of Works permits issued by EMPR.
- By 2023 all placer mines across the province will be subject to the same requirements for waste discharges.
- New placer mine operations will not be able to discharge directly into a water body as of 2019.

How will the process proceed?

- During the summer of 2018 EMPR is leading an engagement process with local First Nations, industry, and local communities in the area directly affected by the proposed changes.
- Specific affected placer mines will be asked to voluntarily supply information about the nature of their placer mine operations to better understand the extent of their discharges.
- Information gathered will inform future decisions.

Questions on the proposed regulatory review process can be directed to:

ENV by emailing Chris.Jenkins@gov.bc.ca or
EMPR by emailing Peter.Wijtkamp@gov.bc.ca

Anyone directly impacted by placer mining activities can contact:

24-hour Spill/Environmental Emergency Reporting:
1-800-663-3456 (Provincial Emergency Program)

24-hour RAPP (Report All Poachers and Polluters) tip-line:
1-877-952-7277 (Conservation Officer Service)

Environmental Complaint Line:
environmentalcomplaints@gov.bc.ca

