

# Addressing Abandoned Vessels, Marine Debris and Marine-sourced Plastics

FALL 2019 PROGRESS REPORT

## Introduction

Marine debris pollutes our waterways and threatens the health and economies of coastal communities. Thousands of abandoned vessels are deteriorating in B.C.'s marine waters, dangerously close to sinking, along with all the pollutants they carry. Our ocean floor and shores are littered with marine-sourced debris and plastics. So much of the pollution we create sits just beyond our view, beneath the surface.

That's why the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy is exploring ways to prevent vessels from being abandoned in the first place and find recycling solutions to keep salvaged marine debris out of landfills. Sheila Malcolmson, MLA for Nanaimo and parliamentary secretary for environment, was tasked by Premier Horgan to investigate the solutions the Union of BC Municipalities has been proposing for years: vessel licensing, end-of-life recycling, old boat turn-in programs, and better regulation of debris from docks and aquaculture.

Visiting coastal communities this summer to learn about innovative solutions that address abandoned vessels and marine debris, we are encouraged by what we are hearing. Innovative research into fibreglass recycling is coming to light. There is inspiring collaboration happening between industry and non-profits to clean-up debris.

And although there's been some federal action on marine debris lately, we are hearing that there might be a role for the Province to play too. People are encouraging us to use our prevention, reduction and recycling tools to their full capacity, so we can help remove roadblocks for communities and organizations. For example, we've heard marine debris might challenge landfill capacity – we want to learn more about that.

## Snapshots of What We Have Heard

### ACTIONS UNDERWAY

- Coastal Restoration Society and Clayoquot CleanUp removed over 1.5 million pounds of marine debris from the ocean last year.
- Ocean Legacy's *Marine Debris Solutions Centre*<sup>TM</sup> in Delta sorts marine debris from around the world, finding markets and repurposing as much as possible, cleaning and grinding marine-sourced plastics to create marketable products, such as packaging for Lush Cosmetics and alternative fuel.
- The Association for Denman Island Marine Stewards removed tonnes of marine plastics in 2017 and stewarded the reuse and recycling of all but one truckload.
- The Dead Boat Disposal Society has removed 60 boats from BC shorelines and plans to remove another 29 shortly.



## AREAS SHOWING ENCOURAGING PROGRESS

- While *Styrofoam*<sup>™</sup> continues to be a problem in recreational and legacy docks, encased foam is now the industry standard for commercial docks and shellfish aquaculture.
- There is increased consumer awareness about marine debris and an impressive movement for community beach cleanups.
- Projects tackling ghost fishing gear are locating lost nets and raising the profile of this issue.
- Transport Canada is funding select abandoned vessel removals and has now regulated penalties for abandonment in the new *Wrecked, Abandoned and Hazardous Vessels Act*.
- Plastic, fishing gear and fibreglass recycling research is occurring around the world, and the Province could help foster innovation in this area.

## IDEAS FOR MEETING THE CHALLENGES

- Alternatives to landfilling boats and marine debris exist but challenges (e.g., technology and transportation) are still present in connecting these networks.
- Improving vessel licensing and tackling unauthorized mooring buoys has been suggested by some local governments, community groups and recreational boaters. Both are federal government tools.
- A B.C. boat dismantling industry could provide lasting jobs, but transportation and disposal/recycling issues need to be examined.
- Extended producer responsibility programs are tools that some jurisdictions are employing to tackle marine plastics.

## REPORTING OUT AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION

Over the next several weeks, Parliamentary Secretary Malcolmson will be reviewing the findings of this summer's conversations and site visits, and further analysing previous calls for action from the BC Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities, and Union of BC Municipalities. She will then prepare her recommendations to Minister Heyman. Join the conversation at: [gov.bc.ca/MarineDebrisProtection](http://gov.bc.ca/MarineDebrisProtection) or email: [MarineSpecialAdvisor@gov.bc.ca](mailto:MarineSpecialAdvisor@gov.bc.ca).

This work is being done in parallel with Minister Heyman's broader work on plastics. Through the Province's *engagement on plastics*, options to further prevent, reduce and recycle plastic waste from all sources are being explored.

Visit [cleanbc.ca/plastics](http://cleanbc.ca/plastics) to have your say.



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