

No Sewage Treatment is Unacceptable



Clover Point sewage outfall, Victoria, B.C. Post Media news files.

Current sewage discharge is grossly inadequate. CRD needs to proceed with the current sewage treatment plan to prevent further harm to the marine environment & to meet deadlines to avoid loss of funding.

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For the past decade, the Capital Regional District (CRD) has been under increasing pressure to implement at least a secondary level of sewage treatment. The provincial and federal government require treatment by 2018 and 2020, respectively. Otherwise, the CRD risks losing \$500 million in funding for the \$783 million sewage treatment project from both governments if treatment deadlines are not met.



Map of sewage outfalls and potential sewage treatment plant site. Keith Thorpe/Peninsula Daily News.

Currently, in 2014, 130 million litres of raw sewage is discharged per day (that is 1,500 litres per second) into the Strait of Juan de Fuca at the Clover and Macaulay Point outfalls. Both have a 6 mm screen that only function to filter out solids and are located at a depth of about 60 m more than 1 km offshore.

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Not only is improving sewage treatment the right thing to do in this day and age, a variety of environmental concerns exist regarding the current discharge of raw sewage:

- Sediment samples from the outfalls have failed provincial standards for contamination;
- Hazardous levels of fecal coliforms found near the outfalls, contributing to Environment Canada's banning of shellfish harvest in the area;
- The variety of toxic contaminants from the sewage is picked up and amplified by the marine food chain;
- Marine life is endangered by depleted oxygen (eutrophication) around the outfalls from the increased levels of organic material and dissolved nutrients;
- Possible harm to killer whale health and destruction of parts of killer whale critical habitat is in violation of the Species At Risk Act;
- Chronic or cumulative effects of pharmaceuticals in the environment are still largely unknown.

The CRD provides wastewater management for a population of approximately 330,000 in the southern tip of Vancouver Island. Their sewage treatment plan, eight years in the making, would meet and exceed regulatory requirements. The plan includes a treatment plant that will provide enhanced primary and secondary sewage treatment, which will address some of the environmental issues (organic matter and less chemical waste). However, the plan has come to a stop as the Esquimalt has refused to allow the sewage treatment plant to be built along their waterfront at McLoughlin Point.



Clover Point. Skyscraper Source Media.

While no plan is perfect, the inability to implement a sewage treatment plan for the communities in the CRD results in inaction over the untreated sewage. It is recommended that the current plan proceeds in conjunction with exploring other alternatives. Delaying the sewage treatment project not only causes further pollution of the receiving waters but also may result in the residents of the region footing the project's enormous costs if the deadlines are not met.

References

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