

Addressing community concerns with respect to wastes disposed of in Ekalugad Fjord water bodies near the FOX-C DEW line site

Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) Canada

An extensive public consultation process has been initiated as INAC proceeds with the remediation action program for the abandoned FOX-C DEW Line site at Ekalugad Fjord. The Department has made a considerable effort to identify community concerns early in the program so that input could be taken into consideration as the project design is developed.

One community concern was the potential disposal of wastes, including heavy equipment and barrels, in some water bodies around Ekalugad Fjord. During the period when the DEW line site was operational, it was common practice to dispose of waste in the surrounding water bodies.

The Department of National Defence (DND) set precedence to this issue during their DEW Line remediation program, initiated in the 1990's. Throughout their program, DND did not carry out studies to determine whether or not these wastes were present in the water bodies surrounding their DEW Line sites, but rather focused on sampling the water bodies and sediments to determine if any contaminants associated with this waste disposal practice could be detected.

Heavy equipment would typically contain only a small quantity of hazardous liquids, such as fuel, lubricant oils and antifreeze, if they had not previously been completely drained. Any hazardous liquids remaining when the equipment was disposed of would typically not be in sufficient quantities to have any significant effect on the environment. Most would have been released into the water column and from there dispersed within a fairly short period of time. Small amounts of liquid product contained within empty or punctured barrels would disperse in a manner similar to the heavy equipment. Unpunctured barrels would float. Considering the number of years since site closure, it is likely that little or no hazardous liquid residue remains at the site at this time.

However, to address this public concern, a portion of the site investigation carried out at the site last summer (2004) focused on identifying potential impacts related to these potential former waste disposal practices. Water and sediment samples were collected and no elevated concentrations of any contaminants related to equipment or barrel disposal were identified.

Based on the results of the recent investigations, DIAND is satisfied that there is no significant residual contaminant risk related to the potential disposal of wastes in the surrounding water bodies. However, to further reduce the risks, a plan is being developed to recover as many of the visible barrels as is feasible. A protocol is being developed following consultations with community members and Fisheries representatives. As well, DIAND is committed to implementing a monitoring program at Ekalugad Fjord following completion of clean-up activities. If contamination related to this issue is identified during the monitoring program, DIAND will address it as required.