

## Dumping of sewage sludge at sea to be banned worldwide

*By admin On October 19, 2022 In Insurance Marine News, Keep, Marine Liability, Political Risk, Credit & Finance*

An amendment adopted by the 44th Consultative Meeting of Contracting Parties to the London Convention and the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Contracting Parties to the London Protocol (LC 44/LP 17), which met at the international Maritime Organization (IMO) Headquarters from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022 will ensure that the dumping of sewage sludge at sea will be prohibited worldwide.

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IMO is the Secretariat for both treaties. The amendment to the London Protocol will remove sewage sludge from the list of permissible wastes – wastes which may be considered for dumping at sea. The amendment will enter into force for each Contracting Party immediately on notification of its acceptance, or 100 days after the date of the adoption if that is later.

Decades ago, a substantial volumes of sewage sludge was permitted to be dumped at sea. However, the London Convention and Protocol parties previously commissioned a worldwide review of current practices of managing or dumping sewage sludge at sea. The previous meeting concluded that the practice had declined considerably over recent decades, noted that it was already prohibited under many regional conventions and through domestic legislation, and that alternatives existed for the use of the sewage sludge.

The Contracting Parties agreed that there was sufficient evidence and justification for amending Annex 1 of the London Protocol to remove sewage sludge from the list of permissible wastes.

The proposal to amend the treaty was submitted by the Republic of Korea and Mexico.

- Under the London Protocol all dumping is prohibited, except for possibly acceptable wastes on the so-called “reverse list” (Annex 1). The list of materials which may be considered for dumping at sea will now include: dredged material (the bulk of material given permits);
- fish wastes;

- inert, inorganic geological material;
- specific bulky items; vessels and platforms or other manmade structures at sea;
- organic material of natural origin;
- and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) streams from carbon dioxide capture processes.

In 2022, IMO is marking 50 years since the adoption of the London Convention, the purpose of which is to control all sources of marine pollution and prevent pollution of the sea through regulation of dumping into the sea of waste materials.

A “black- and grey-list” approach is applied for wastes.

For the blacklist items dumping is prohibited. Dumping of the grey-listed materials requires a special permit from a designated national authority under strict control and the meeting of certain conditions.

All other materials or substances can be dumped after a general permit has been issued.

The Protocol is more restrictive: application of a “precautionary approach” is included as a general obligation and a “reverse list” approach is adopted, which implies that all dumping is prohibited unless explicitly permitted.

The London Protocol entered into force on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, and 53 parties are currently signed up.