



# Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

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## Issues Backgrounder

### **Pan Pacific Aggregates Proposed Sechelt mining projects**

#### ***U.K. company set to ruin Sunshine Coast, export B.C. minerals to California and globally***

A vibrant lifestyle community in British Columbia, Sechelt and the Sunshine Coast are premier tourist destinations and home to more than 27,000 residents. The area boasts a unique and diverse geological landscape, natural biodiversity, old-growth forests, vast wildlife and pristine waterways. Rated the second best place to dive on the planet by Jacques Cousteau, the extraordinary underwater attractions of the Sunshine Coast lure scuba divers from around the globe.

In January 2005, a U.K.-based mining company, Pan Pacific Aggregates PLC (PPA) (AIM: PPA) used the province's new online registration system to stake mineral claims over the entire Sechelt Peninsula. This claim includes the mineral rights under most homes and businesses between Sechelt and the BC Ferry Terminal at Earls Cove. The project involves at least two open pit operations, the largest of which is approximately three square kilometers in size. The company plans to excavate more than 750 million tonnes of road mulch, limestone, dolomite and industrial minerals for continued exportation to California and around the globe for a minimum of 25 years – in fact, PPA will export six million tonnes of aggregate in its first year of production. The pits will be connected to the foreshore by conveyors with product transported via barge through the world-renowned Skookumchuck Narrows.

PPA is presently in the pre-application phase of the B.C. Environmental Assessment (EA) process and plans to submit its application in January 2007 for a mine permit. The current phase of assessment calls for public consultation to provide input and identify issues.

Exploration activity and quarry work in the southern portion of the claim area have already scarred the landscape which is clearly visible to thousands of residents. Blasting and rock-crushing operations have resulted in numerous complaints to provincial authorities. Currently, PPA is the subject of a civil suit by the Sunshine Coast Regional District and is under formal investigation by provincial authorities for alleged breaches of the Federal Fisheries Act.

There is significant uncertainty and concern on behalf of members of the communities of Sechelt, Gibsons, Roberts Creek, Halfmoon Bay and Pender Harbour.

#### ***Negative impact to tourism and real estate values***

As a premier B.C. tourist destination, the impact of the proposed carbonate projects are debilitating in the long-term. It is estimated that the value of the Sunshine Coast's tourism economy over a 25-year period is \$140 billion. PPA is estimating only a \$3.75 billion gross value

for the economy over the same period. However, a negative economic impact on tourism and lifestyle values is certain if the mine permit is granted.

Skookumchuck Narrows is a national treasure, a world-class phenomenon and an immensely popular tourist attraction known for its spectacular tidal bores, naturally beautiful setting and adjacent Provincial Park. As an area with powerful currents, rapids, whirlpools and standing waves, the project represents an inherent danger and risk.

In a three-meter tide, 200 billion gallons of water flow through the narrows connecting Sechelt and Jervis Inlet. The tides on the Skookumchuck Narrows change four times per day, providing only four 20-minute windows for safe passage during slack tide, which is precarious and difficult to navigate under the best of conditions. Recreational traffic through Skookumchuck Narrows occurs during these same brief periods, which makes passage intensely more dangerous for kayaks, pleasure crafts and fishing boats.

The area's legendary recreational activities, particularly water adventures such as diving, kayaking, fishing and sailing will also be threatened.

The undertaking will also have a negative impact on the willingness of prospective buyers to purchase homes in the community, whether permanent or recreational, which in turn will affect the local economy.

#### ***Negative daily impact on local communities***

PPA operations will be carried out close to residential areas on a two-shift basis totaling 16 hours per day and up to seven days per week and barge loading would take place at irregular hours around the clock. The acoustic and visual impact expected from this proposed undertaking would be enormous, along with the emission of considerable dust and debris. Noise is amplified as it is carried over water, yet PPA has yet to conduct a study on the anticipated decibel levels impact to the community.

#### ***Environmental degradation and destruction***

The proposed mine will have a major impact on several square kilometers of the headwaters of Carlson Creek and Carlson Lake – replacing the area's natural system that features hundreds of fish bearing streams and ponds with an open pit. The lower reaches of Carlson Creek support spawning salmon and large numbers of Cutthroat Trout. The Inspector of Mines has issued a stop-work order on further exploration activity in areas adjacent to streams, water bodies and wetlands. A formal investigation has been conducted and the conclusion has yet to be determined.

The Sunshine Coast is home to old-growth forest; some trees living up to 2,000 years old. In preparation for possible mining activity, PPA already built a road through one of the irreplaceable old-growth management areas without obtaining a proper permit. Further negative impacts are expected if the EA is approved and an aggregate transport system is built.

The Marbled Murrelet, a small old-growth nesting seabird, is present in the proposal area. It is an offence under *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) to disturb the residence of this bird which is internationally recognized as a Threatened species.

In addition, PPA is proposing to tap into the ground water flows – the only water supply source for a large number of people on the Sunshine Coast. As the mine sites would be situated at a

higher elevation, PPA would have the first access to the water. There have been no studies on this potential impact. Until mining begins, PPA won't be able to quantify the likely enormous amount of water it will take from the local community.

***Foreign influence = negative impact to Canada***

PPA is a publicly traded company based in the U.K. The gravel is not being excavated for local use in terms of building roads or housing use, so there is no material benefit to Canadians. There is no legacy value for British Columbia or Canada – the entire production output will be shipped to California and around the globe, while the profits will be siphoned back to the U.K.

PPA claims that 80 to 100 jobs will be created through this venture. If this claim does materialize, the jobs would be non-skilled at best, bringing little value to our community.

Public concern over this proposed project has been voiced since last Spring, however, to date, PPA has not undertaken any serious consultations with the public or agreed to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the full scope of all the substantial negative impacts of this initiative.

A critical issue for the community is that the EA processes may choose to only address minor issues while ignoring major impacts such as location of the mine pit and the proposed transportation route through the Skookumchuck.

Residents of communities on the Sunshine Coast are concerned about the lack of project assessment and the aggressive timeline for the proposal, with construction intending to begin in August 2007. The communities are asking federal agencies for a comprehensive study of all the social, economic and environmental impacts of the Sechelt Carbonate Project prior to the granting of any permit relating to this project.

**For more information, please contact:**

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