

Fifty years of ocean protection

Major milestones since adoption of the London Convention in 1972 regulating dumping at sea

Adoption of **London Convention**: Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972. One of the first global treaties aimed at protecting the marine environment from human activities. The London Convention enters into force in 1975.

London Protocol is adopted to update the Convention, bringing in **precautionary approach**. All dumping of waste at sea is **prohibited**, except for those on a “reverse list”. The Protocol enters into force in 2006.

Regulating climate change mitigation technologies: marine geoengineering, which can involve interventions in the marine environment in order to counteract climate change. A resolution adopted in 2010 is followed by an amendment to the London Protocol in 2013, to include marine geoengineering activities. The amendment allows ocean fertilization activities to be permitted for research purposes only, and enables other marine geoengineering activities to be regulated in future.

Proposal to **remove sewage sludge** from list of permitted materials for dumping is presented for adoption at October 2022 meeting of Contracting Parties to London Protocol.

Pre 1970 ——— 1980s ——— 1990s ——— 2000s ——— 2010s ——— 2020s

Increased environmental awareness. Dumping of wastes at sea recognized as contributing to degradation of the oceans.

Dredging – most of the permits for dumping at sea relate to dredged material. The potential impact on the receiving environment has to be evaluated, in line with the Waste Assessment Guidelines, before a permit for dumping is issued.

Comprehensive ban on dumping of **radioactive waste** at sea adopted via amendment to the London Convention. The amendment enters into force in 1994.

Disposal of **industrial waste** at sea prohibited and fully phased out by 1996, via amendment to the London Convention.

Incineration of wastes at sea is banned via amendment to the London Convention, from 1994.

Regulating climate change mitigation technologies: carbon capture and storage. An amendment in 2006 to the London Protocol provides the basis in international environmental law to allow for CO₂ storage beneath the seabed, when it is safe to do so. This is seen by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as a short-term technological option for reducing net CO₂ emissions to the atmosphere.

A related amendment adopted in 2009 enables CO₂ streams to be exported for CCS purposes, which can be provisionally applied following a decision in 2019.

