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## **Coal port expansion threatens Fraser estuary - Patrick Brown**

A massive new island is to be dredged out of the Fraser River tidelands in order to accommodate a container-port extension of the existing Westshore Terminal at Roberts Bank in Delta. That's the plan put forward by Port Metro Vancouver (PVM).

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency has just closed a three-week public comment period; part of deciding whether an environmental assessment of Roberts Bank Terminal 2 Project will be required.

The artificial island would be connected to the existing coal and container port ( just north of the Tsawwassen ferry terminal) by an extension of the existing road and rail causeway. It would occupy 115 hectares of the tidelands, and would accommodate three of the largest conceivable container ships, berthed on a northwest-southeast wharf roughly in line with the existing coal loading berth. (This is the berth that sticks out furthest into the Strait of Georgia. It is served by the conveyor that was recently damaged by an out-of-control coal bulk carrier).

In total, the project would impact some 210 hectares of Roberts Bank fish and wildlife habitat.

### **Container Port Expansion**

Port Metro Vancouver CEO Robin Silvester says that container

traffic demand will justify this new facility by the mid-2020s.

However, Susan Jones of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, says that earlier plans for expansions at Centerm, and possibly Vanterm, in Vancouver Harbour would be cheaper and more environmentally sensible, if this demand materializes. She says that the demand quoted by PMV to justify the construction of this new industrial island was the highest of any estimate available. She says that a 2008 market study carried out for the port did not consider possible alternatives.

She also quotes the Department of Fisheries and Oceans: 'there was no possible amount of mitigation projects they could envisage that would compensate for the environmental damage that T2 would cause'.

Questions have also been raised as to whether this new port expansion would be used for containers, particularly if anticipated demand did not occur. It has been suggested that the new facility might serve as a further extension of the Westshore coal-loading facility, or possibly even as a terminal for the proposed Kinder Morgan Trans-Mountain twinned bitumen pipeline from Edmonton. ✍