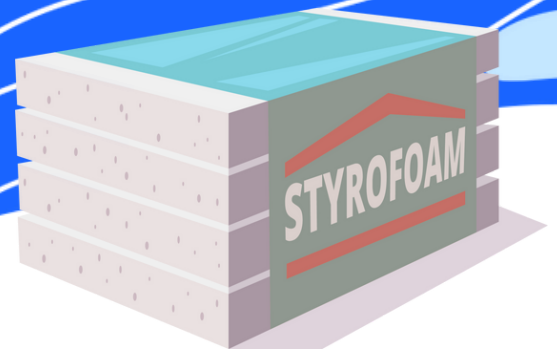




A Deeper Dive into Issues Addressed by the Coastal Marine Strategy

Styrofoam Pollution

What's the issue?

Shoreline habitats, such as spawning beaches and salt marshes, play an important role in coastal ecosystems. Expanded polystyrene (EPS), known as Styrofoam, is the most common flotation material on the B.C. coast, used in marine infrastructure such as docks, marinas, and aquaculture operations.

However, it is also one of the most commonly found materials collected by clean-up groups on remote British Columbia beaches.¹ That is because EPS degrades over time and breaks off and enters the marine environment. EPS is toxic and can harm marine life and seafood resources, as well as helping to spread invasive species and causing navigation hazards for boats. The clean-up of this pollution also imposes costs which are borne by taxpayers or non-profit organizations.

Thankfully, there exist alternatives to EPS floats, including many manufactured right here in British Columbia.² These all have a longer lifespan than EPS flotation, which only lasts 15 years – the alternatives last up to 60 years.³

Why has it been hard to fix?

EPS floats are relatively inexpensive – if you ignore their costs to society – so the alternatives will cost more upfront to install. However, they last longer, and they will cause significantly less environmental damage over the long term.

How can the Coastal Marine Strategy help solve it?

In the B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy, the provincial government has committed to:

- Prohibit the use of polystyrene in future marine infrastructure construction and collaborate with the federal government to promote replacing existing polystyrene marine floats with environmentally friendly alternatives.

1. Government of British Columbia, "Marine debris in B.C." (updated 21 May 2025), online: <<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/zero-waste/plastics/actions/clean-coast-clean-waters/marine-debris-protection/marine-debris>>.

2. Lasqueti Shoreline Debris Initiative, Marine Styrofoam Pollution on British Columbia's Coasts (accessed 12 May 2025), online: <<https://www.bcstyropollution.org/>>.

3. West Carling Association, Dock Foam (accessed 28 May 2025), online: <<https://westcarling.com/dock-foam/>>.

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