

ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS OF POLICY

- TRANSIT OF DIXON ENTRANCE BY U.S. SUBMARINES

POLICY

1. For the Governor-General in Council to provide Canadian consent for the transit of Canadian internal waters of Dixon Entrance by U.S. submarines to and from the new U.S. Navy Southeast Alaska Sound Measurement Facility (SEAFAC) at Behm Canal, Alaska.

BACKGROUND

2. The location of the U.S. facility, while established entirely on U.S. territory, requires that transits to it be made through Dixon Entrance. Canada's long-standing position is that the waters of Dixon Entrance are internal waters of Canada, an assertion disputed by the USA which claims part of Dixon Entrance as U.S. territorial waters. The establishment of the facility itself has passed the environmental impact process under both U.S. federal, as well as Alaska state law.

ASSESSMENT BASIS

3. This document is intended to be read in conjunction with the Environmental Assessment of Policy on visits to ports by nuclear powered vessels and vessels capable of carrying nuclear weapons, prepared primarily by the Department of National Defence, in consultation with other interested departments such as Environment Canada, Health and Welfare and Fisheries and Oceans (see Annex 1). For each section of that assessment that applies to elements in the Dixon Entrance transits case, a cross reference is provided, and additional comment is added where appropriate.

4. The subject reviewed here is the environmental effects of the policy measure proposed. It is not intended to assess other policy considerations involved in this decision, such as sovereignty or bilateral and alliance military relationships.

5. The approach used will involve:

- a. identifying the activities implicated by the policy;
- b. identifying the environmental effects and linkages;
- c. identifying the main issues of concern;
- d. describing the potential impacts;
- e. drawing assessment conclusions and recommendations.