


ForeSTalk



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THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF LANDS
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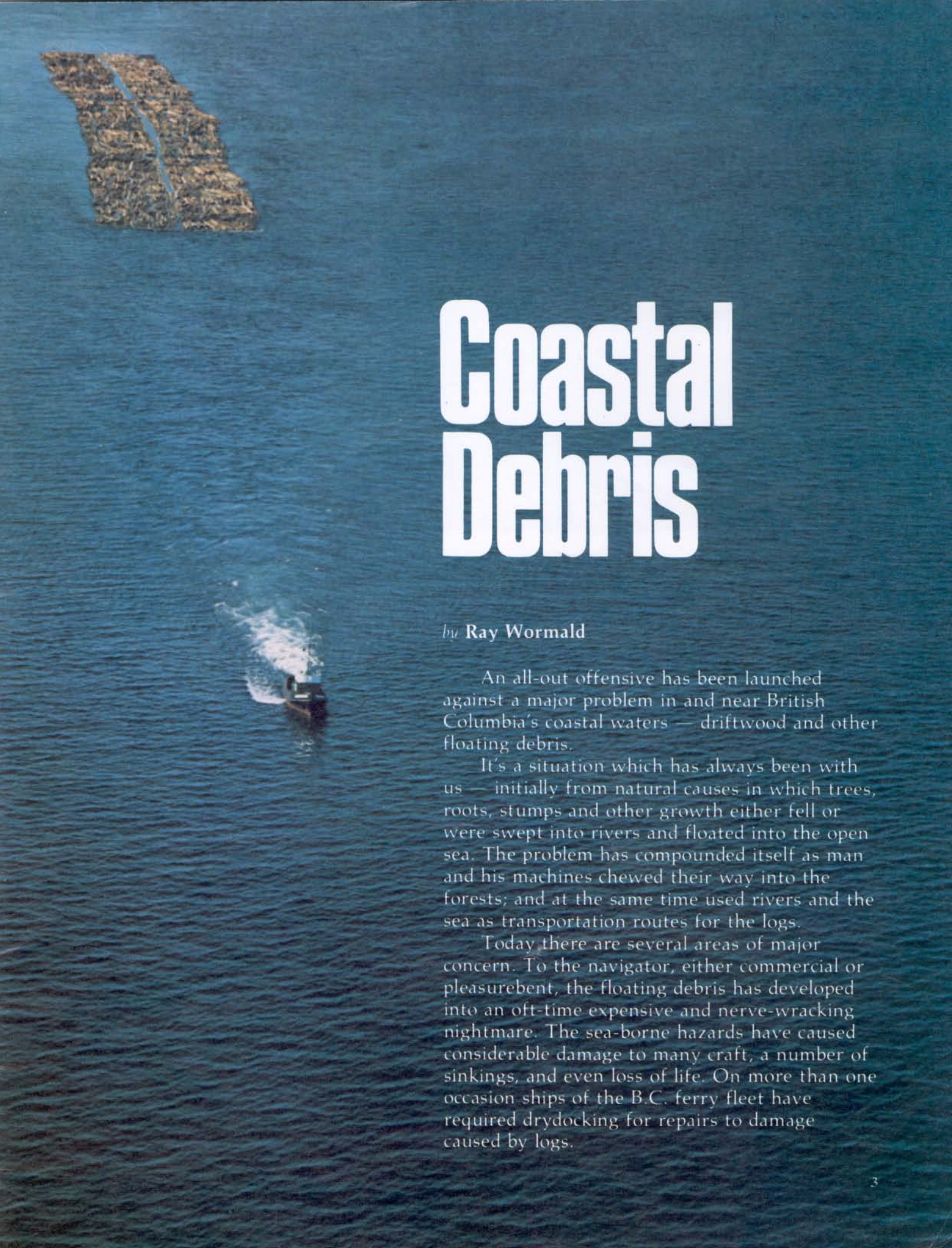
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Policy Statement
The objective of the British Columbia Forest Service, as the forest administrative agency for the government of British Columbia, is to develop and enforce policies which will ensure for all time the proper balance of timber supply, forage production, forest recreation, wildlife protection and environmental preservation on the Crown forest lands of the province.



Coastal Debris

by Ray Wormald

An all-out offensive has been launched against a major problem in and near British Columbia's coastal waters — driftwood and other floating debris.

It's a situation which has always been with us — initially from natural causes in which trees, roots, stumps and other growth either fell or were swept into rivers and floated into the open sea. The problem has compounded itself as man and his machines chewed their way into the forests; and at the same time used rivers and the sea as transportation routes for the logs.

Today there are several areas of major concern. To the navigator, either commercial or pleasureboat, the floating debris has developed into an oft-time expensive and nerve-wracking nightmare. The sea-borne hazards have caused considerable damage to many craft, a number of sinkings, and even loss of life. On more than one occasion ships of the B.C. ferry fleet have required drydocking for repairs to damage caused by logs.



Most residents who live on or near the coast have become part-time beachcombers. Uses for the accumulated debris range from fuel for fireplaces to furniture and cabins.

The problem of driftwood in coastal waters and on the beaches is also an aesthetic one. To some, a beach without logs is likened to an egg without a yoke. But even they normally frown on a beach completely smothered under logs; and this is common on many of our coastal stretches.

And then, of course, there's the question many people ask: Why isn't all this wood put to some use? And: How did it get there in the first place?

Let's look at the question of its utilization. To begin with, a great deal of driftwood is salvaged and utilized by coastal mills. These are the large, sound and usable logs. Last year alone, British Columbia's 600 licensed beachcombers salvaged an estimated 11.4 million cubic feet of logs valued at around \$5 million. These logs, however, are normally "harvested" immediately after a log boom break-up; or are those which have spent little or no time on the shore.

The thousands of logs we see on beaches are not salvaged for commercial use for a number of reasons, according to Frank Brien, an official of the Council of Forest Industries of British Columbia — an organization representing more than 100 lumber and logging firms in the province.

"First and foremost", Mr. Brien explains, "is the fact that sand and gravel get imbedded in the logs . . . and those ingredients and sawmill equipment just don't get along together." For the same reason, he added, such logs are not suitable for chipping.

Not everyone agrees with this. Vancouver boatsman L.J. LeFohn reports the existence of a machine used in various U.S. harbours which gathers such debris, and converts the material into chips which in turn are sold. Proceeds reportedly go toward the initial cost of gathering the driftwood.

The B.C. Forest Service is showing increased concern over the driftwood and debris program, and as a result the greatest clean-up program in the province's history is now either in planning stages or actually under way. Because they present the largest problems, the Lower Fraser River, Howe Sound and the Strait of Georgia are priority targets. Also involved in the campaign are the Federal Dept. of Environment, the North Arm and Fraser River Boards, the National Harbours Board, and the Council of Forest Industries of B.C.

In keeping with government requirements and the realization that a large segment of the public was seeking answers and solutions, the forest council formed a "task force" to look into the problem.

Its main objective was summed up in a single sentence: Recommend specific actions to be taken by the forest industry to solve the problem of loose logs and debris in coast waterways.

The special study group conceded that improvements in water transport (of logs) and storage practices were both "necessary and possible". It was also pointed out that gains in log handling methods over recent years had been largely offset by the impact of greater volumes and more small logs



Newer, more efficient ways of transportation help reduce the problem of debris.

resulting from the Forest Service's "close utilization" logging requirements.

While the volume of coast production had increased by 10 percent over the past five years, the report notes, the actual number of logs being handled had increased by 25 percent.

As a result of its studies the task force came up with no less than 29 separate recommendations, and observed that "industry must get tough with itself to solve the problems."

Its recommendations, in summary, urged the need to keep logs out of the water through dryland sorting, scaling, bundling — and where practical, in transportation. The need for greater improvements in log booming techniques and equipment was also stressed. It suggested towing companies accept a greater responsibility in the prevention of log escapes from both booms and log storage areas.

Other recommendations:

- Special attention to hemlock which accounts for a large percentage of "sinkers" (logs which become water-logged and slowly submerge).
- "Lift and lower" log dumps with sufficient power to ease loads into the water without causing log breakup.
- All mills to be equipped to save all logs delivered to them in bundles. No new mills to be built without effective bundle-handling facilities.
- Special attention to barge loading and dumping operations.

- A patrol tug to concentrate on log storage and handling procedures in Howe Sound. More extensive patrols in the Fraser River.
- A stop to cutting logs in the water unless there are adequate means of recovering sawdust and other debris.
- An expanded program for the collection and utilization of deadheads; and establishment of a debris burning facility in Howe Sound. (There is already a burning site on Iona Island in the north arm of the Fraser River. One recent operation there involved 305 sections of debris being "treated" — with about 1,600 logs recovered and sent to nearby mills and the remainder burned. A section of floating wood debris covers about 5,000 square feet.)
- A "re-look" at the economics of wood waste and debris for power generation "in light of world fuel shortages and rising costs."

To finance and operate the log patrols, a dead-head utilization facility, debris sweeps and other related activities, the task force suggested formation of a co-operative representing industry and the provincial and federal governments.

In some quarters there is objection to the very make-up of the industry-oriented task force; and also to the suggestion that provincial and federal governments participate in the cost-sharing plan.

"It is difficult to imagine the forest industry being very anxious to find uses for the debris which might compete with the products of their normal

