



IMO'S RESPONSE
TO CURRENT
ENVIRONMENTAL
CHALLENGES
2007

BWM CONVENTION

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE CONTROL AND
MANAGEMENT OF SHIPS' BALLAST WATER AND SEDIMENTS, 2004



IMO



INTERNATIONAL
MARITIME
ORGANIZATION

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The Problem

Thousands of potentially harmful marine species are being carried around the world in ships' ballast water. The problem arises when ballast water, taken on by a ship for balance, stability and structural integrity reasons, contains unwanted marine organisms. When discharged into new environments, they may become invasive and severely disrupt the native ecology, affect the economic activities and cause major human health problems.

There are hundreds of examples of severe ecological, economical and human health impacts from invasive aquatic species around the world and the costs associated with invasions are in the range of hundreds of billion US\$. Once established, it is virtually impossible to control an invasive species and the impacts are usually irreversible. The ballast water problem requires solutions that integrate biological and engineering aspects and is as complex as the biology of marine organisms can be.



Mitten Crab: Stephan Gollasch

IMO's Response to Ballast Water 'Challenge'

IMO has responded to the ballast water 'challenge' by:

- adopting a series of voluntary Guidelines;
- developing a new international legal instrument, the Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention;
- developing a comprehensive set of technical guidelines for the uniform implementation of the Convention; and
- joining forces with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to assist developing countries in addressing the issue, through the Global Ballast Water Management Programme (GloBallast <http://globallast.imo.org>).

BWM Convention – what are the salient features ?

- The Ballast Water Management Convention was adopted by an IMO Diplomatic Conference in early 2004 and builds on the complementary roles of coastal, port and flag States as well as the shipping industry in protecting the marine environment. The Convention will enter into force 12 months after 30 States representing 35% of the world's merchant shipping tonnage have ratified it.
- Parties to the Convention undertake to give full and complete effect to its provisions in order to prevent, minimize and ultimately eliminate the transfer of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens through ships' ballast water and sediments.
- The Convention calls for the promotion of scientific and technical research on ballast water management and encourages IMO Members to co-operate and share new technologies and their scientific programmes.
- Ships are required to be surveyed and certified and may be inspected by port State control officers who can verify that the ship has a valid certificate, inspect the Ballast Water Record Book and in some situations, sample the ballast water. All possible efforts shall be made, however, to avoid ships being delayed.
- Ships are also required to have on board and implement a Ballast Water Management Plan approved by the Administration. The Plan is specific to each ship and includes a detailed description of the actions to be taken to implement the ballast water management requirements and practices.
- The Convention requires the implementation of a ballast water performance standard on a schedule of fixed dates, beginning in 2009, and provides for phasing out the practice of ballast water exchange. Existing ships will also be required to apply the performance standard after a phase-in period.

Who are the beneficiaries?

Parties to the BWM Convention will benefit from:

- Enhanced protection of their marine environment



and biodiversity through minimization and ultimately elimination of the devastating effects of invasive species.

- Standardized enforcement of a full range of ballast water management requirements on foreign ships that enter the ports, or offshore terminals under their jurisdiction.
- Participating in the process of proposing amendments to the Ballast Water Management Convention and its requirements through an established mechanism.
- The exchange of new research and development information, best practices and practical experiences in the management of ballast water and invasive aquatic species.

Shipping industry will benefit from:

- Uniform international regime regarding the ballast water management requirements as opposed to a plethora of unilateral actions by individual countries.
- The incentive offered by a standardized regime to research and development sector towards finding new and cost-effective solutions to this issue.
- Development of innovative ballast water management solutions that are safe to the crew, effective, and are environmentally safe.



CRIMP, CSIRO Marine Research, Australia

Availability of Technology

Because of its enormous environmental, economic and social implications, the ballast water issue is far more complex than most of the other ship-based pollution threats and requires advanced and fully integrated technological solutions. A recent review by the IMO's Marine Environmental Protection Committee aimed at assessing the status of ballast water treatment

technology developments concluded that the variety of treatment systems being tested on board ships have the potential to meet the criteria of safety, environmental accessibility and practicality and that it is reasonable to expect that ballast water management technologies and type-approved systems will be available by end of 2008.

The need for urgent action

The United Nations Millennium Declaration articulates in a single framework the major development challenges facing humanity and the measures necessary to realize them. The work of IMO has a major and direct impact on at least five of the Millennium Development Goals and ballast water management is part of this global effort. In order to become effective, the BWM Convention needs vision, foresight, purpose and, most importantly, urgent action by all involved. Unless IMO Members act together, proactively and with due sense of responsibility, the devastating impacts of aquatic bio-invasions will continue to remain one of the greatest threats to the ecological and economic wellbeing of the planet.

Since the adoption of the BWM Convention, the Secretary-General of IMO has emphasized on many occasions the importance of its early entry into force and effective implementation. The concern remains that the pace of ratification is still very slow although studies show that the marine bio-invasions occur on a weekly to daily basis, resulting in lasting and sometimes disastrous impacts.

The Organization has already, through the Integrated Technical Co-operation Programme, co-ordinated and managed a number of activities, aiming at assisting in the implementation of the BWM Convention. During the GloBallast programme a number of 'centres of excellence' have been created, however the problem of invasive species is of global nature and further support is needed. Governments experiencing difficulties in the process of ratifying the Convention are urged to inform the Organization of the circumstances thereof, so that consideration can be given to taking appropriate action to provide the necessary technical assistance.



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