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# No turning back on Randle Reef

**Work will begin this year on the \$138.9-million remediation project**



## Randle Reef Hamilton Harbour 010

Hamilton spectator file photo

*Randle Reef*

By [Mark McNeil](#)

It's an oozing mess of environmental embarrassment that many feared would contaminate Hamilton Harbour and taint the city's image forever.

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But a call for tenders this month to take on construction of the \$138.9-million Randle Reef remediation project is being viewed as a no-turning-back development in containing the worst coal tar-contaminated site in Canada.

A request for proposals from Public Works Canada means the project will start this spring or summer after years of delays, arguments over the best approach, disputes about who should pay for it and legal fears about liability.

"They're hoping to have shovels in the water by April," said Chris McLaughlin, executive director of the Bay Area Restoration Council.

The restoration council is a nonprofit organization that represents the public interest in the revitalization of Hamilton Harbour.

The toxic hot spot was discovered 25 years ago by an Environment Canada scientist who pulled a sediment sample of oozing sludge into his boat from a section of Hamilton Harbour known as Randle Reef, just west of Stelco (U.S. Steel) property on the harbour.

Coal tar is a byproduct of steel making. But no steelmaker, other company or individual has ever been charged with causing the environmental mess.

"It's a very difficult project. The fact that they are getting down to the business of it now is fantastic. People almost don't believe it that it is really going to happen. But it is," McLaughlin said.

The first stage of the project has been posted on the Public Works and Government Services Canada Government Electronic Tendering System (GETS) with a closing date of early March.

The successful bidder will have two years to build an Engineered Containment Facility and "to reconstruct sections of Pier 15 West to facilitate future dredging."

The 7.5-hectare containment facility will be built over the largest part of the contamination off former Stelco property in the harbour.

It will have a double steel sheet pile wall with rock fill between the walls. After this, sediments over a wider area will be dredged and placed inside the containment facility.

"Hallelujah," said Lynda Lukasik, executive director of Environment Hamilton. "Something is finally going to happen with this cleanup in slow motion."

She says she would have preferred to see the contaminated sediments removed and destroyed, but "it is good to see the plan for remediation moving forward."

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## **Randle Reef**

### **at a glance**

#### **Stage I — 2014-2016**

- Construction of the Engineered Containment Facility (ECF) with some reconstruction of parts of

Pier 15 West.

## **Stage II — 2016-2018**

- Dredging contaminated sediment in the area and placing it into the ECF. Stage 2 is expected to begin in 2016 and be completed in 2018.

## **Stage III — 2018-2021 (or 2022)**

- Sediment dewatering inside the ECG and capping the facility.

**See Wednesday's Spectator for a detailed look at the project: Capturing the blob at Randle Reef**