



CURRENTS

COMPILED BY SAM BURKHART



WE ENCOURAGE CURRENTS SUBMISSIONS

This is a local news-driven section. If something catches your attention that would be of interest to local boaters, send it along to samb@pacificyachting.com.



A NEW CHAPTER FOR FOUR POWELL RIVER HULKS

For decades, cruisers who've visited Powell River, northeast of Texada Island, have been struck by the unusual breakwater sheltering the harbour's log-loading areas. The Hulks, as they're called, make up the

breakwater consisting of 10 ferrocement ships chained together and anchored to 160-ton concrete blocks 150 feet below sea level. One ship dates back to 1921; the rest were built during the Second World War when steel was in such great demand that ferrocement was used as substi-

tute. Ranging in length from 336 to 420 feet, they're ballasted with water and gravel for greater stability. They're the last Second World War era ferrocement ships afloat anywhere.

Catalyst Paper, the company that owns the ships, working with the Artificial Reef Soci-

ety of British Columbia, will consign four of these US-built ships to the deep creating a series of artificial reefs. The first to be sunk will be the YOGN-82 ("YO" stands for "yard oiler," the "G" for "Gasoline" and the "N" shows the vessel was engineless). The three other ships are the

Continued over page ▶



Emile N. Vidal, Quartz, and the SS *Peralta*. These four vessels, despite their six-inch thick hulls and careful maintenance (parts of the hulls have been repaired), are the most fragile.

"We believe in giving the ships a second life," Graham Kissack, Catalyst's vice-president, environmental, health and safety & corporate social responsibility, said. "These vessels are 75 or more years old and are suffering the ravages of time. The company's present space requirements will fit within the breakwater provided by the six remaining ships.

"It has cost about \$500,000 to prepare the YOGN-82 for its underwater grave. We can't just sink a ship. So with the input from ARSBC, we've removed such contaminants as hydrocarbons, leaded paints and electrical components. The YOGN-82 was a learning experience. We hope to sink one additional ship each year."

The ships will be sunk near Powell River in an area with a relatively desolate bottom so the artificial reefs will pro-



vide new homes for marine life. As sailors know, marine life readily attaches itself to boat bottoms and docks, so we can imagine the colonization by plants and animals on the ships' hulls that have provided such a long-term safe haven. Once sunk, the hulks already offer a head start in creating extensive additional marine habitats.

As Reef Society president

Howie Robins explained in a news release, "These wartime relics are already floating artificial reefs based on the generations of biodiversity on their hulls. When fully submerged, these ships will form a pinnacle oasis for marine flora and fauna settlement with scale and habitat complexity."

The YOGN-82 was sunk in June. Eventually, the

four ships will join eight others—and one Boeing 737—that ARSBC has sunk in BC waters. But the Powell River Hulks artificial reefs' multiplicity will be more exciting. As they will be placed about 50 to 60 feet apart at depths ranging from 80 to 115 feet, they will allow recreational divers to experience a historic underwater tour.

—Marianne Scott

A HISTORIC DONATION



HARMONY ISLAND GROUP

The BC Marine Parks Forever Society has donated \$749,310—the largest in its 28-year history—to the BC Government to purchase a 6.2-acre island of the Harmony Island Group in Hotham Sound.

Title to the island has now been registered by the province and will be transferred as a Class A Park within the Harmony Islands Marine Park.

This donation was made possible by donations from thousands of boaters, a large bequest and the Eden Conservation Trust.

The BC Marine Parks Forever Society continues to work with BC Parks through the Stern Tie Program and other projects.