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Councils work together on historic landfill

Two West Coast Councils have moved quickly to address contamination from a historic landfill in the Hector area.

Ex-tropical cyclone events in February caused erosion at a historic dumping site on the coastline at Hector exposing timber, iron and other materials on the foreshore. The site of the dumped materials is thought to be from the State Coal Mining days around the 1970s/80s from the old Ngakawau coal bins. Some of the post storm exposed materials have been tested and confirmed as containing asbestos.

Buller District Council has moved quickly to tidy up the area following the erosion, which has included temporarily protecting the area while a permanent solution is developed. Signage has also been erected alerting the public to where the potentially contaminated area is.

A combined Buller District Council and West Coast Regional Council working group is actively planning for the long term management of the site. This work includes the ongoing management of the area which will include regular monitoring and maintenance by Buller District Council in the short to medium term.

The longer term solution will require permanent capping along the front of the site to ensure the old dump is protected from further erosion. Technical input is being sought from appropriate experts on this.

The two Councils are also working together to identify possible funding options to help pay for the long term solutions. This will likely include an application to the Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund, a central government fund for cleaning up historic contaminated sites.

Mike Duff, Buller District Council Assets and Infrastructure Group Manager, said that this is a historic issue which Council as the land owner has become responsible for.

“No one wants to see these historic materials on our beaches, and the Councils are working proactively to ensure a practical long term solution for our community”.

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