

Sustainable slop disposal in shipping is feasible

By **Vincent Favier**, CEO, Ecoslops

The issue of slops disposal has recently gained increased international attention. In March 2016, the ESPO placed port waste and ship waste as its fifth and sixth biggest priorities for the year ahead.

However, what many remain unaware of is that numerous smaller spills occur on a daily basis. Though the environmental impact is less, collectively they all add up. While some of these spills are accidental, caused by a problem with equipment or vessel grounding, many are deliberate. When solutions for sustainable slop disposal are available, this deliberate discharge of oily waste is clearly unacceptable and unnecessary.

Slops and sludges are a hydrocarbon-rich industrial waste, produced in various parts of a ship's operations, including tank cleaning, purifying fuels and use of ballast water. How much oily waste each vessel produces depends on its operations, the size of the vessel, its maintenance and age, as well as various other factors.

It would appear that the hard economic and commercial times the shipping industry is experiencing are forcing ship owners and operator's hands when it comes to slops disposal. In more prosperous times, the construction sector provided a consistent market for slop col-



lectors to sell to. The recent low cost of crude oil has encouraged these markets to invest in purer, virgin fuels.

Slops are therefore building up in ports, many of which do not have adequate reception facilities to deal with the build-up, and their slops tanks are becoming physically full. Vessels still have to dispose of the slops, but they do not have the tank capacity or indeed the desire to keep the waste product on board.

To combat this, Ecoslops has developed a unique technology to sustainably regenerate slops into valuable new fuels and light bitumen, which can be sold back into the market, creating a sustainable cycle. The technology is based on a micro-refining process.

For ports, which are struggling with the influx of slops, it takes away the hassle of disposal, and regenerating slops rather than burning them reduces pollution in port communities. It also helps ports to improve their environmental profile, and enhances their competitiveness and reputation at a time where sustainability within shipping is viewed as a real premium.

Ship owners are reassured that their waste is treated appropriately and at the right cost, and they can also improve their reputation by creating a sustainability cycle for their slops, reusing the fuel produced by the industrial unit. Traditional slops collectors also benefit as Ecoslops purchases the product at a fair price, and it alleviates the pressures on storage

capacity.

In 2015, Ecoslops' first micro-refinery in the Port of Sinès commenced industrial production, and to date over 17,000 tonnes of slops have been successfully regenerated into fuel oil, and sold back into the fuel supply chain. Ecoslops has also announced that it is on track to meet its annual target of producing at least 30,000 tons of regenerated slops in 2017 from the Port of Sinès.

In September 2016, Ecoslops signed a memorandum of understanding with Total to establish a slops processing plant within the refinery in Le Mede, Marseille. The aim of this unit will be to process slops unloaded in the Port of Marseille and neighboring ports. In addition to this significant collaboration, Ecoslops has continued to develop other projects, particularly in Northern Europe, and is reiterating its objective of signing deals for three new sites by the end of 2017.

Although the issue of slops disposal may only reach the headlines when there is a high profile spill, it should not mask the significant challenge the industry faces. However, through new innovations that are now available, ship owners and operators now have a real choice in choosing compliance, and ensuring the legal and sustainable disposal of slops.