



Meeting Notes

Oil Spill Prevention, Preparedness and Response Summit Public Meeting

Seattle Sheraton

June 12, 2007

Background

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) convened a public meeting, including an expert panelist discussion, on the USCG/Ecology Shared Strategic Work Plan, Inventory of Shared Activities and Authorities and associated oil spill issues. The public meeting was part of the Oil Spill Prevention, Preparedness and Response Summit which will result in the signing of the revised Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) by Governor Christine Gregoire and Rear Admiral Richard Houck on June 26, 2007.

The USCG and Ecology solicited public comment on the Strategic Work Plan and the Inventory of Shared Activities and Authorities (both posted to Ecology’s website on May 21, 2007), and constructed an on-going mechanism for public feedback at the USCG/Ecology Partnership website. The opportunity for public comment was also advertised in several newspapers across western Washington. The public comment period is on-going, and comment can be made at any time through the USCG/Ecology website.

Written comments were received via the USCG/Ecology website and additional oral comments were presented at the Oil Spill Prevention, Preparedness and Response Public Meeting. These comments will be compiled and an explanation or clarification will be included in the Responsiveness Summary available on June 26. All comments will be considered and updates to the Strategic Work Plan will be available on June 26.

Public Meeting

Panel Participants	
Dale Jensen, Program Manager, Ecology Spills Program	Kathy Fletcher, Executive Director, People for Puget Sound
CAPT Bill Devereaux, Prevention Division Chief, U.S. Coast Guard, District 13	Mike Cooper, Chair of the Oil Spill Advisory Council
CAPT Stephen Metruck, U.S. Coast Guard, Sector Puget Sound	Mike Moore, Pacific Merchant Shipping Association

CDR Chris Keane, U.S. Coast Guard, Sector Portland	Mike Doherty, Clallam County Commissioner
Jon Neel, Ecology	Stuart Downer, Inland Boatmen's Union
Linda Pilkey-Jarvis, Ecology	Chad Bowechop, Makah Tribe
Frank Holmes, Executive Director, Western States Petroleum Association	Jim Riedel, Regional Manager, National Response Corporation
Bruce Reed, American Waterways Operators & Chair of the Puget Sound Harbor Safety Committee	Liz Wainwright, Executive Director, Marine Fire and Safety Association & Columbia River Merchant Exchange

Introduction/Presentation

The USCG and Ecology presented information introducing the summit process, shared themes and missions, current work, recent trends in oil spills, highlights from the Strategic Work Plan and common concerns they had received prior to the public meeting. This presentation is accessible at the following:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/ecyuscg/SummitPublicMTGPresent.pdf>.

Common Themes

Note: The following are common concerns, not necessarily the opinion of all panelists, heard throughout the public meeting and written comments. For further explanation and clarification, refer to the responsiveness summary.

1. A year-round response tug at Neah Bay should be a priority.
2. The Oil Spill Advisory Council (OSAC) should be involved in all discussions.
3. Elements of the Strategic Work Plan should be prioritized.
4. The Strategic Work Plan should include performance measures (metrics) and more specifics.
5. Harmonization of USCG and Ecology data should be a priority.
6. USCG and Ecology should eliminate duplicative efforts.
7. USCG and Ecology should identify which work plan elements apply to different water bodies including the Columbia and Snake Rivers, the Puget Sound and the outer coast.

Panelist's Comments

Note: All speakers expressed appreciation for the work put into the Strategic Work Plan and for the opportunity for review and make comments on the plan.

Chad Bowechop, Makah Tribe

- Tribal governments should be better recognized as part of the implementation of the work plan.
- Tribal culture is dependent on marine resources.
- The Neah Bay Treaty of 1855 gives the tribe jurisdiction over bordering waters.
- Until tribal governments get formal recognition in these plans, the highest standard of protection is not achieved.
- An MOA between the tribes/state/USCG should be developed.

Mike Moore, Pacific Merchant Shipping Association

- Do not forget about the high value of existing programs.
- Proud of enviable record and continuous commitment to oil spill prevention.
- Harmonization of data is a very high priority.
 - Oil spill sources, activities of greater risk, etc.
 - Tie data to existing programs.
- Set priorities and timelines for Strategic Work Plan items.
 - Risk based analysis.
 - Desired outcome.
 - Need Metrics.
- Would appreciate public review of updated MOA and protocols.
- Fully consider leveraging other groups including the harbor safety committees and merchant's exchange.
 - Balance between both regulatory and important voluntary measures.

Mike Cooper, Oil Spill Advisory Council

- Work plan should have opportunities for OSAC to advise and be involved on every work plan issue.
- Support the work of the harbor safety committees and wish to be included in their work.
- Support the work of the Northwest Area Committee (NWAC) on Geographic Response Plans (GRPs) and want to be included on the review process of these plans.
- Request that an item be added to the Strategic Work Plan to assess whether we are prepared to respond to a catastrophic spill.
- Request stronger language on working with OSAC.
 - Instead of “work with council,” use “seek advice/consultation from council.”
- Commit to include OSAC on any discussion on the area to be avoided.
- Include OSAC on discussions on laden tankers.
- Station a year-round, 24-hour response tug at Neah Bay.

Frank Holmes, Western States Petroleum Association

- Eliminate duplication of efforts.
- Prioritize what we are doing.
- Believe that the current programs in Washington are the best in the country.
 - Evidence is in the declining number of spills.
- Do not forget other industries that have potential for spilling oil into water: marinas, cruise ships, etc.
 - Funding for oil spill prevention programs should be shared.

Mike Doherty, Clallam County Commissioner

- Not enough specifics in the work plan.
- Need performance measures in document.
- A rescue tug at Neah Bay is needed.
 - Legitimate costs can come from industry.

- Alaska has 4 tugs, Washington has 0.
- Oil industry needs to pursue alternative energies.
- Natural resource trustee agencies need to step up to their responsibilities.
 - Department of Fish & Wildlife and Department of Natural Resources need to get involved in discussions as co-trustees with tribes.
- Duty of government to stand up for the “little guy.”

Liz Wainwright, Columbia River Merchants Exchange and Marine Fire and Safety Association

- Caches of wildlife care equipment are available to USCG and Ecology through mutual aid agreements.
- Not enough time to review work plan and presentation.
- The Strategic Work Plan is Puget Sound-centric.
 - Does not address unique operating environment of the Columbia River.
 - Need to be mindful of differences in rivers/sounds.
- Need to coordinate more with Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.
- Identify mechanism for prioritizing work plan elements.
 - With separate mechanism for the river.
- Need clearer distinction between USCG and Ecology work items.
- Need clarification on how independent organizations will be involved.
- Emphasize recreational boating, storm water runoff, etc., not just marine sources.
- What is existing and what is new in the Strategic Work Plan?
 - Clarify how other stakeholders are involved.

Kathy Fletcher, People for Puget Sound

- Environmental community is concerned with the health of Puget Sound and very concerned about oil spill issues.
- Need a permanent response tug at Neah Bay.
 - The absence of the response tug in the Strategic Work Plan is doubly concerning.
- Struggling to see much that is new. What are the big items?
- Need more specifics.
- Need to add metrics.
 - How have prior regulations improved spill prevention?
- Funding limitations of both USCG and Ecology should be noted.
 - A fix should be included in work plan.
- There has been a limited availability of outreach and opportunity to review contingency plans.
- OSAC needs to be involved in these issues.

Bruce Reed, American Waterways Operators

- Need to keep stakeholder groups involved in these work plan items.
 - Including Puget Sound harbor safety committee.
 - Harbor safety committees combine diverse stakeholders with a common goal.
- Reduce duplicative programs.

- With tight budgets, it will be a better use of tax money.
- Number the items in the Strategic Work Plan, this will help the reader easily locate specific elements.
- Combine BIP and tanker escort items into the harbor safety committee section.
- Note the National Harbor Safety Committee Conference coming up in Seattle.
- No need for additional vessel inspection standards.

Stuart Downer, Inland Boatmen's Union

- Need a response tug at Neah Bay, and describe how it is involved with the ITOS system.
- Need to look at Columbia/Snake River system and its prevention measures.
- Want to work with Ecology on new studies with the prevention subcommittee of OSAC, especially the tug escort study.

Jim Riedel, National Response Corporation

- Too much in the work plan.
 - How are you going to get all the specialized resources to accomplish all of these items?
- Describe prioritization and how it is communicated to stakeholders.
- What is the expectation of the response community in these items?
 - What workload can we bear?
- Completion dates, names of the individuals working on these items should be added to the Strategic Work Plan.
- How will Ecology and USCG measure the performance of these items?
- Wants to know how they can help.

Public Comment

Bruce Wishart, People for Puget Sound

- Specific outcomes are not defined.
- Too much reliance on voluntary measures.
- Heavy reliance on harbor safety committees, but these organizations are not well balanced with environmental interests.
- OSAC not listed enough.
- Lack of deadlines is a concern.
- Lack of funding and rescue tug references.

Jerry Joyce, Seattle Audubon Society

- Work plan lists on-going programs, some that are ineffectual because of funding shortfalls and other problems.
- Perpetuates business as usual, lacks public input and transparency.
- OSAC needs early consultation, should receive data and be asked for their comment.
- Include issues statewide, not just Puget Sound.

Mike Racine, Washington Scuba Alliance

- OSAC should be included as part of work plan.
- Understand that a catastrophic spill will completely skew the data that was presented during the session.
- Need more exercises and unannounced drills.
- If response tug is part of the solution, it should be included and not ignored.
 - Its inclusion will help others lobby for it.

Jim Davis, Olympic Coast Alliance

- Prevention is the key, the work plan lacks funding mechanisms and rescue tugs.
 - Not a matter of lobbying, a matter of budgeting.
 - Not a complete document without mention of these items.
- Summit is not a replacement for OSAC.
- Oil barge towing is a disaster waiting to happen, must mitigate the risks associated with this activity.
- Possibly look for response tugs as potential prevention measures in San Juan Islands, Puget Sound and Columbia River.

Rich Berkowitz, Transportation Institute

- The notion of metrics is important and needs to be reviewed.
- Need to know what is working now and what isn't.
- We have reduced spills by every measure.
 - Why are we doing so well?
- Given success rate of marine spills, we need to emphasize other, non-marine sources.
- Need to look at metrics for response tugs.
 - Need to see utility of alternative responses.
 - Triage of incidents.
- Need to get Oregon and Canada involved in these oil spill issues.

Kate Beegen, Surf Rider Association

- The zero large spill policy is the only policy acceptable.
- Work plan strong in research and education, weak in new actions.
- Permanent year-round rescue tug is necessary.
- Further study is necessary to see if tugs are necessary in other locations.
- OSAC provides a critical foundation, need to keep them involved and listen to their suggestions.

Rein Attemann, People for Puget Sound

- Inadequate time and education given to public for proper engagement and involvement.
- Submitted written comment as well.