



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

PO Box 47600 • Olympia, WA 98504-7600 • 360-407-6000

711 for Washington Relay Service • Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341

October 16, 2009

Dear Partners in Oil Spill Readiness:

As 2009 draws to a close, I want to begin a dialogue with you on some of the preparedness issues we face over the next several years. In 2004, a “zero spills” legislative goal was set for Washington. Shortly afterwards, we finalized rules and began working to gain a new, raised baseline for oil spill contingency plan standards. At the recent Clean Pacific Conference in Portland, there were many presentations from industry about technologies under development to achieve effective twenty-four hour response capability. We believe this is a common goal shared by industry and government alike.

The purpose of this letter is to:

- Communicate about the Neah Bay response tug requirements, including fast approaching deadlines for vessel owners and operators that transit in and out of Puget Sound.
- Encourage joint continuous work on Preparedness goals for developing a 21st century response regime in Washington that delivers twenty-four hour coordinated and aggressive response.

On December 1, 2009, Puget Sound vessel owners and operators are required to update their contingency plans to show how they will comply with the Neah Bay tug requirements. Senate Bill 5344, passed in the 2009 legislative session, requires the *“vessel industry to permanently station an emergency response towing vessel year round at Neah Bay to prevent potential maritime casualties and resulting oil spills.”* The Department of Ecology has ten years of experience managing the tug and it remains a proven and essential asset. I am sure that your vessel crews appreciate having this “safety net” in place should they have significant propulsion, steering or other system failures off of our coast.

As you likely know, there are important discussions underway with maritime industry representatives concerning how this tug service will be delivered beginning on July 1, 2010. We are not directly involved in the discussions but we monitor them as the legislation has mandated. The deadline to update contingency plans will not be negotiated or moved. Dates have been set by the Legislature and state funding for the tug ends on June 30, 2010. In the meantime, the legislation requires that:

“...participants to the negotiations shall provide interim progress reports to the appropriate committees of the legislature by October 31, 2009, and again by December 1, 2009, the latter date coinciding with the deadline for contingency plans for covered vessels operating in the Strait of Juan de Fuca to provide for the emergency response system required by RCW 88.46.130.



Partners in Preparedness
October 16, 2009
Page 2

Attached to this letter are a compliance process and timeline documents, along with some general guidance on how to update your vessel plan. We trust you are paying close attention to this requirement and the negotiations since vessel companies and plan holders are responsible to meet the deadlines. We are using this webpage to post information for you about the Neah Bay tug: http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/response_tug/tugresponsemainpage.htm.

In the next few months I will be communicating with you about:

- Coastal Response Capability - Neah Bay is becoming an important staging area for spill prevention and response systems. We believe it is in the best interest of our spill response contractor partners to work together, pooling resources to expand the work with the Makah Tribe with training, making their fishing fleet available as spill response vessels of opportunity. This approach has the potential to improve plan compliance with reduced capital investment and operating expenditures.
- New Skimmer Technology - New advances in oil recovery technology have been developed through industry funding. Some industry cooperatives may begin bringing this equipment on-line in the near future.
- Round the Clock Response Operations - Our efforts to develop a 21st century response regime will include utilizing technologies in ways that further reduce the damage caused by spills. For example, instituting twenty-four hour oil recovery operations in conjunction with effective remote sensing technology could triple the amount of oil recovered by the existing daytime limited operational regime.

In closing, I look forward to receiving your approvable plan update by December 1, 2009, bringing a capable tug and operating system on line next summer. Thank you for helping us protect Washington's environment and economy from the risk of oil spills.

Please help us reach out to other vessel owners and operators by sharing this letter with others in the maritime industry.

Sincerely,



Linda Pilkey-Jarvis
Spills Preparedness Section Manager

Enclosures: Neah Bay Tug Availability Process and Timeline
Washington State Vessel Oil Spill Contingency Plan Holder Guidance