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Washington State Department of Ecology

## NPS Panel Completes Safety Review

What is the best way to reduce the risk of oil spills in Washington waters? According to the North Puget Sound Oil Spill Risk Management Panel, which released its final report in August, there is not one best way. Spill prevention should be addressed at each point in the potential chain of errors that can lead to major spills, from an organization's commitment through training to rapid salvage.

The Panel convened last summer under the co-chairship of the Department of Ecology and the U.S. Coast Guard. It included representatives of federal, state, local and tribal governments, the Canadian Coast Guard, the oil refining and shipping industry, the dry cargo shipping industry, environmental groups, and others. The group's final report conveys 24 recommendations and six issues that could not be resolved. Six Panel members did not endorse the final report, in large part because the group was not able to achieve full agreement on the issue of placing a permanent rescue tug at the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

"In the end, this initiative was one more big step in our efforts to improve marine safety and to provide the environmental protection demanded by the public," said Joe Stohr, Spills Program manager.

"We knew going into this that the issues were complicated and potentially contentious. The Panel's work in just getting everyone at the table and talking on a regular basis, has improved relationships, improved the communities' information base, and set the stage for future work. We couldn't get full consensus, but what we did achieve is important and we will be working very hard in the coming months to help make sure the Panel's recommendations are carried out."

Among the 24 recommenda-

tions on which the Panel did agree:

- ◆ Establish a near-miss reporting system, similar to the airline industry's.
- ◆ Improve traffic management in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Haro Strait.
- ◆ Improve cooperation with Canadian authorities and partnership with Tribal Nations.
- ◆ Develop an education program for small-boat operators, to avoid movements that can lead to accidents.
- ◆ Establish industry "stan-

See NPS page 3



*This fuel truck spilled approximately 1,700 gallons of gasoline July 2 on Highway 101, near the middle fork of the Nemah River. The area is prime salmon rearing habitat, but no dead fish or other wildlife were seen. The spilled fuel was cleaned up within a few days and the contaminated soil was removed. Ecology fined the oil company \$6,000 for the spill, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency levied a \$20,000 fine for violating the federal Clean Water Act. Natural resource damages have not yet been assessed.*

# Rescue Tug Returns to Neah Bay

The tug Barbara Foss arrived in Neah Bay September 18, for an eight-month tour of duty designed to give the outer coast of Washington and the Strait of Juan de Fuca some extra protection.

Earlier this year, the state Legislature approved funding for a rescue tug to be stationed temporarily at Neah Bay to help tankers and ships that run into trouble in the Strait. This will be the third year in a row that a rescue tug will be stationed at Neah Bay during the winter storm season.

For the past two winters, Gov. Gary Locke and Congressman Norm Dicks pulled together a mix of federal and state resources to station a rescue tug at Neah Bay to cover the western portion of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the outer Washington coast. Locke even dipped into his emergency fund to help cover last season's costs.

"Our state has one of the best spill-prevention programs in the country, but we still have gaps in our coverage," said Locke. "We cannot risk having a disastrous spill into the Strait and Puget Sound."

Joe Stohr, Ecology's Spills Program manager, said a recent study showed that the western part of the Strait is virtually unprotected

by the existing network of tugs in Puget Sound.

"If a ship goes adrift near the coast, there's little chance of a commercial tug getting to it before it hits the rocks," Stohr said. "We've been incredibly lucky so far. A rescue tug is not just smart - it's imperative."

The Barbara Foss is the same tug that was stationed in Neah Bay last winter. During its seven-month tour of duty, the tug responded to three incidents involving vessels that were drifting without power. It towed two of the three vessels to safety and demonstrated its ability to run at high speed through very large waves.

The legislature provided \$1.65 million to cover the coming storm season. Due to strong competitive bidding for the contract, there's enough money to support the tug for eight months, rather than the seven months anticipated by the legislature.

The winning bid of \$188,856 a month plus fuel costs will keep the Barbara Foss on duty through at least May 18, 2001.

As an added bonus, Makah tribal members will be trained as deckhands on the tug through an apprenticeship program.

The outer coast and the Strait have a high volume of vessel traffic. They also support some of the state's

richest marine ecosystems and are prone to heavy winter storms.

Ecology used a 1995 Canadian study to determine the bid specifications for the rescue tug. According to that study, a tug of the Barbara Foss' size and horsepower should be able to stabilize a large vessel drifting off the Strait more than 90 percent of the time.

In the event the Barbara Foss must leave the Neah Bay station at any time, the tugs Garth Foss, Lindsey Foss and Jeffrey Foss are available as back-ups. Foss Maritime also has enhanced its salvage and spill-response capabilities through a teaming arrangement with Fred Devine Diving and Salvage.

## Staff Changes

**Peggy Noble**, program secretary, has left Ecology for a position with the Washington Department of Labor and Industries.

**Kathy Armstrong**, spill responder in the Southwest Regional Office, Lacey, has changed jobs to become a spill prevention planner in the same office. Her responder position is now filled by

**Andrea Unger**, who comes to us from the Mason County Public Works Department.

**Lora Sterling**, spill response team secretary in the Eastern Regional Office, Spokane, transferred from the Water Quality office there. She replaces **Stephanie Perko**, who is now with the Shorelands and Environmental Assessment office there.

## Spill SCENE

**Spill Scene** is published by the *Washington State Department of Ecology* to provide information on oil and hazardous substance spill prevention, preparedness and response. We welcome your comments and questions. Call (360) 407-7211 or write: Editor, **Spill Scene**, Department of Ecology, Spills Program, P.O. Box 47701, Olympia, WA 98504-7701. Visit our website at [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html)

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# Guardsmen Help with Drug Lab Work

Two National Guard members are helping Ecology spill responders take care of drug labs, through the Counter Drug Task Force, a national program of the Air and Army National Guards. They were assigned by Governor Gary Locke to the federally funded anti-methamphetamine campaign.

SSgt Eric Apple, a weather forecaster with the Air National Guard, and Spc Jon Kuykendall, a counterintelligence agent with the Army National Guard, started in July. They will serve from nine months to a year on the Southwest Regional Office's spill response team, assisting Ecology responders with drug lab cleanups and support work. As Apple puts it, they "do everything except work that requires a respirator," from data crunching to resupplying the trucks.

Eric Heinitz, supervisor of the Southwest team, says the extra help from Apple and Kuykendall is



*National Guard members Jon Kuykendall, left, and Eric Apple are helping with the drug lab workload in the Southwest Region.*

making a big difference for the rest of the team. The Southwest office team alone has responded to 626 drug labs since January, 100 more than in all of 1999. With the added help, responders can get their office work and non-drug lab work done, responding to truck rollovers,

fish kills and other incidents.

"They've been a big morale boost and a big asset to our team, Heinitz said. "All the responders really enjoy having them around, just the attitude they have. They're very relaxed and easy to work with."

## **NPS continued**

dards of care" for bridge team communication, testing steering gear, offshore routing, planned maintenance, firefighting, anchor use, and vessel towing arrangements. (Standards of care is a non-regulatory method recognized by the marine industry to capture and implement good marine practices that have developed over time.)

◆ Expand the "area to be avoided" near the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary.

Besides the rescue tug issue, the Panel could not come to full agreement on: establishing a Regional Citizen's Advisory Committee and a Harbor Safety Committee; requiring a local pilot for ships between the entrance to the

Strait of Juan de Fuca and Port Angeles; requiring that ships stay within established U.S. shipping lanes; and requiring tug escorts for high-risk vessel transits of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Haro Strait.

Ecology and the U.S. Coast Guard are revising their Memorandum of Agreement and plan to sign it by the end of this year. The agreement sets the framework for how the state of Washington and the Coast Guard will work together on vessel inspection and other

marine safety issues. The agreement is particularly significant in the wake of last spring's U.S. Supreme Court decision limiting the state's right to impose oil spill prevention requirements on the oil shipping industry.

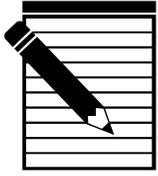
For more information, contact Jon Neel, (360) 407-6905, e-mail: [jnee461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:jnee461@ecy.wa.gov).

The report is available on Ecology's Web site at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html>

## **Website Address Changes**

The Department of Ecology's has changed its Web addresses. The Spills Program Web page can now be found at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html>

# Upcoming Events



*Ecology welcomes submittals of notices of public events related to oil and hazardous substance spill prevention, preparedness and response. Ecology reserves the right to select events for publication. Please contact the Spills Program at (360) 407-7211 for more information regarding submittal deadlines.*

## **November 2 – 9 a.m.**

Washington Pilotage Commission  
2911 Second Ave., Level B. Conf. Rm.  
Seattle, WA  
Contact: Peggy Larson, (206) 515-3904

## **November 8 – 9 a.m.**

Resource Damage Assessment Comm.  
Ecology HQ Bldg., R0A-36  
Lacey, WA  
Contact: Dale Davis, (360) 407-6972

## **November 8 – 10 a.m.**

Puget Sound Harbor Safety Comm.  
Port of Seattle Bldg.  
Seattle, WA  
Contact: Dave Schneider, (206) 728-3523

## **November 17 – 9:30 a.m.**

Olympic Coast National Marine  
Sanctuary Advisory Council  
La Push, WA (tentative)  
Contact: Liam Antrim, (360) 457-6622

## **December 12-13**

US Coast Guard Pacific Area & States/  
BC Oil Spill Task Force  
West Coast Offshore Vessel Traffic Risk  
Management Workgroup  
Los Angeles, CA  
Contact: Jean Cameron, (503) 229-5720

## **December 13 – 9 a.m.**

Resource Damage Assessment Comm.  
Ecology HQ Bldg., R0A-36  
Lacey, WA  
Contact: Dale Davis, (360) 407-6972

## **December 13 – 10 a.m.**

Puget Sound Harbor Safety Comm.  
Port of Seattle Bldg.  
Seattle, WA  
Contact: Dave Schneider, (206) 728-3523

## **December 14 – 9 a.m.**

Washington Pilotage Commission  
2911 Second Ave., Level B. Conf. Rm.  
Seattle, WA  
Contact: Peggy Larson, (206) 515-3904