

The Council is working on the following studies and monitoring projects.

1. Ecology's Contingency Planning Rule Implementation

A primary function of Alaska's two Regional Citizen Advisory Councils has been to review the oil spill contingency plans submitted to and approved by the State of Alaska. Following in this tradition, the Council will review contingency plans submitted for approval to Ecology.

The quality and adequacy of these plans submitted to Ecology under Chapter 173-182 WAC is crucial to whether oil spilled into Washington's waters will be immediately and thoroughly cleaned up. It is within the purview of Ecology to assure that the contingency plans being submitted are adequate. It is up to the Council to study the plans and the agency review process.

2. Ecology's Oil Transfer Rule Implementation

Operations manuals for transferring oil are to be submitted to Ecology under Chapter 173-180 WAC. These plans include determinations by industry regarding when it will be safe and effective to take the precautionary step of pre-booming around the immediate vicinity of an oil transfer.

Just as the quality of the contingency plans is critical to how well an oil spill will be remediated, the quality and character of the operations manuals—and how well they will be followed—is absolutely crucial in determining how well the State and industry will be able to prevent oil spills during transfers. Therefore, it is up to the Council to study the plans and the agency review process.

3. Working on Issues Through Council Committees

The Council has begun work on the following items:

- Study whether Washington is ready to respond to a large-scale spill.
- Review the use of escort tugs and review manning issues relating to articulated tug and barge systems and integrated tug and barge systems.
- Work with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to recommend ways of improving the oiled wildlife program.
- Work with the Washington Puget Sound Partnership.
- Evaluate methods of calculating natural resources damages assessments.
- Conduct public education on the Council's work and oil spill issues, as well as on issues generally related to oil spill prevention, response, and volunteer opportunities.
- Seek an advisory membership in the Puget Sound Harbor Safety Committee.
- Attend the meetings of the Regional Response Team Northwest Area Committee.
- Attend workshops and other events put on by organizations such as the Pacific States/ British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force.

4. Continuing Work Outlined in the Council's 2006 Report

The Council wrote a report in the fall of 2006 to the Legislature, the Governor, and the Department of Ecology. This report was just the Council's first step in what will be a long endeavor to ensure that Washington has the best oil spill prevention, preparedness, and response program in the country, and in the world.

Future areas for Council study include:

a. Study to determine areas for programmatic improvement to address underlying root causes of mishaps.

In its 2006 report, the Council stated its intention to continue studying lessons-learned reports to identify root causes underlying the incidents evaluated in the reports and to recommend ways to address these causes. The Council commissioned the first phase of this study from a company named Environment International, Inc (EI). In essence, the primary findings from the first phase of the study were that most mishaps stem from organizational and management failures regarding policies and procedures, maintenance, equipment, personnel, and training on cargo ships, fishing vessels, tank ships, and barges. Most of the time these failures were associated with the movement of oil-- which includes bunkering/ fueling, loading/ discharging cargo, and conducting transfers—or with a loss of propulsion or an equipment failure.

The Council is conducting the second phase of the study, and examining the following:

- All organizational and management failures identified in the EI report which were identified as primary root causes and secondary contributing factors for one or more of the following:
 - Mishaps that occur during the transfer of oil, loss of propulsion, and equipment failure, fire/explosion, loss of power, loss of steering, navigation/ship handling, structural failure, and seaworthiness/ fitness for service associated with:
 - Cargo ships, fishing vessels, tank ships, barges, tugs, dredges, bulk carriers, ferries, and passenger ships.
- Through phase two of this study, the Council hopes to identify areas where programmatic improvements would be useful in further reducing the risks of oil spills associated with the above-described vessels that are having the above-described mishaps.

b. Study additional rescue/ response tugs as risk interventions in key locations.

In its 2006 report, the Council stated its intention to perform additional information-gathering and conduct studies to assist the Council in making final recommendations on whether it would be beneficial to station additional response/rescue tugs throughout Washington's waters. Even with the International Tug of Opportunity System (ITOS), current oil tanker escorts, and a year-round, response/rescue tug stationed at Neah Bay, there are still several high-risk locations that may require additional safeguards in order to achieve state-of-the-art prevention.

c. Study issues relating to use of escort tugs.

The Council also expressed a desire to study escort tug issues, in particular those related to human factors and those related to escort requirements for tank ships traveling east of Port Angeles and for other high-risk vessels and areas. This escort system is one of the most important systems in place to protect Puget Sound from the risk of major oil spills. The goal of the study is to determine if the current system provides adequate protection or should be enhanced.