

## **Oil Spill Response Plan Covering 1,600 Vessels Approved for Puget Sound and Grays Harbor**

### **Local News**

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OLYMPIA &dash; The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) has given its final approval of the Washington State Maritime Cooperative's (WSMC) umbrella oil spill readiness plan that covers more than 1,600 commercial vessels that transit Puget Sound and Grays Harbor.

WSMC's oil spill readiness &dash; or contingency &dash; plan helps ensure that large commercial vessels can mount a rapid, aggressive and well coordinated response if they spill oil in state waters. The plan identifies the location of different response equipment such as oil containment boom, skimming and towing vessels and vacuum trucks in Puget Sound and Grays Harbor. It also identifies how the equipment will be mobilized by private response entities during a spill to minimize harm to important environmental, cultural and economic resources. WSMC's plan enrolls nearly all large cargo and passenger ships, commercial fish-processing vessels as well as some oil tankers and fuel barges that make transits in the shared waters of Puget Sound &dash; including the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Haro and Rosario Straits &dash; and Grays Harbor.

State law requires all large commercial ships and vessels, oil tankers and tank barges have contingency plans to operate in Washington waters. Ecology reviews, approves and works with regulated vessels and shipping companies to continuously test and improve these plans. As part of its plan, the private spill response contractor NRC-Environmental Services recently stationed a state-of-the-art oil skimming system and oil storage barge at Neah Bay on WSMC's behalf to quickly remove oil from the water's surface if a spill were to occur in the vicinity. It is an important new addition to be permanently stationed at the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, one of the world's business maritime shipping lanes. In 2011, Elastec/American Marine, the company that developed the grooved disc skimmer, won a worldwide award for the new technology. Ecology Spill Preparedness Manager Linda Pilkey-Jarvis said: "Every year, billions of gallons of oil are transported into and across Puget Sound and Grays Harbor waters. The WSMC plan helps safeguard our economy, cultural resources and environment by assuring us spillers can quickly mount an effective response. This is a substantial achievement because we have vessels from around the world that transit our waters every day." Pilkey-Jarvis said WSMC's umbrella spill contingency plan is "good for business and our environment. Individual operators can share costs with other operators to be covered under a single, large plan instead of maintaining their own plans. It's an approach that helps keep our ports competitive." WSMC's oil spill contingency plan is one of two large umbrella plans in use for Washington's waters. The Maritime Fire and Safety Association provides spill coverage for 1,000 commercial vessels operating in the Columbia River. Every year, about 20 billion gallons of oil are transported across Washington waters. Besides the umbrella organizations, Washington requires 28 oil refineries, large oil-handling facilities, liquid fuel pipeline and oil tanker companies to have oil spill contingency plans.