

For Immediate Release

Contact: Stan Jones

Sept. 30, 2010

907-350-7711 / jones@pwsrca.org

Citizens' council applauds passage of measure to preserve tug escorts for Prince William Sound oil tankers

The Prince William Sound Citizens' Advisory Council today hailed passage of the Coast Guard Authorization Act, which includes provisions that will preserve the dual-tug escort system for loaded tankers in the Sound.

The Coast Guard act passed the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives early this morning and will now go to the White House to be signed by President Obama.

"This is a great day for Prince William Sound and everyone who cares about it," said Mark Swanson, executive director of the citizens' council. "We could not be happier."

At present, the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 requires double escorts for single-hulled tankers in the Sound, but is silent on the need for escorts for today's fleet of double-hulled tankers. Though present practice is to escort all tankers, regardless of hull configuration, the council was concerned that double escorts could be discontinued as the Prince William Sound fleet completes its transition to double-hulled vessels. With today's passage of the Coast Guard act and its anticipated signature by the president, the continuation of double escorts will be assured as long as oil moves through the Sound.

The council began its efforts to secure federal legislation early last year, near the 20th anniversary of the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill.

"We worked hard on this for a long time and so did a lot of other people and we want to thank them all," said Walt Parker, president of the citizens' council board.

He cited U.S. Senators Lisa Murkowski, Mark Begich, Maria Cantwell, and Olympia Snowe; U.S. Representatives Don Young and James Oberstar; the Alaska Legislature, former Governor Sarah Palin and Governor Sean Parnell; and the many individuals affiliated with the citizens' council whose support made this important legislation a reality.

The citizen's council has long recognized the importance of the dual tug escort system for oil tankers transiting Prince William Sound.

The Prince William Sound tug escort system was developed by the oil industry working in concert with the U.S. Coast Guard, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the citizens' council. The tugs can rescue tankers in danger of grounding or suffering other types of accidents, and the escorts can also begin oil-spill

response should the worst happen. Thanks in considerable part to the escort tugs, Prince William Sound has one of the safest marine oil transportation systems in the world.

Though the escorts have sometimes been characterized as unnecessary, they have proved their worth as recently as this year by providing assistance to tankers in distress, as they have done many other times since the Exxon Valdez spill.

The text of the act is available on the government website, thomas.loc.gov/. Search for H.R. 3619 - Coast Guard Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011.

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, with offices in Anchorage and Valdez, is an independent non-profit corporation whose mission is to promote environmentally safe operation of the Valdez Marine Terminal and the oil tankers that use it. The council's work is guided by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, and its contract with Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. The council's 19 member organizations are communities in the region affected by the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, as well as aquaculture, commercial fishing, environmental, Native, recreation, and tourism groups.