

Consent Agenda Briefing for PWSRCAC Board of Directors – May 2026

ACTION ITEM

Sponsor: John Guthrie and the Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems Committee

Project number and name or topic: 8060 - A tanker-mounted thermal imaging camera to reduce vessel whale strikes

1. **Description of agenda item:** The Board is being asked to approve the purchase of a vessel-mounted thermal imaging camera from WhaleSpotter, Inc. that will be mounted on a Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) tanker at an amount not to exceed \$50,000. At this time, staff are still searching for a willing partner from one of the TAPS shipping companies that will allow the installation of a camera on one of their vessels. The camera purchase is contingent upon approval from a TAPS shipping company, or upon a recommendation by the POVTS Committee to install the camera on a suitable alternative vessel.

2. **Why is this item important to PWSRCAC:** This project would promote the environmentally safe operation of TAPS tankers by installing a thermal imaging camera on a tanker in an effort to learn more about the frequency of whales in the tanker traffic lanes and to help reduce vessel whale strike risks. The Council recently sent letters to the Response Planning Group (RPG) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) requesting a voluntary slowdown of tanker traffic in the Prince William Sound region towards this effort. In their replies, the RPG and NOAA indicated that there was not enough information to support a voluntary slowdown. The proposed camera system would notify the officers on the bridge of whales in the tanker’s path at a distance of up to 3.5 nautical miles. This would allow time for the tanker to slow down or make a slight course adjustment to avoid a potential whale strike. In lieu of the establishment of a voluntary slowdown area by regulators, this proposed technological intervention provides a possible way to reduce vessel whale strikes while allowing the TAPS tanker fleet to maintain current operational efficiency. The camera would also allow for better documentation about the frequency of whales in the tanker lanes.

3. **Previous actions taken by the Board on this item:**

Meeting	Date	Action
Board	5/1/2026	Project was included in Board approved FY2026 Budget

4. **Summary of policy, issues, support, or opposition:** None known.

5. **Committee Recommendation:** None needed.

6. **Relationship to LRP and Budget:** Project 8060 – Tanker-Mounted Thermal Imaging Camera to Reduce Vessel-Whale Strikes is in the approved FY2026 budget and annual work

Approval of Purchase of Vessel Mounted Thermal Imaging Camera 3-6

plan with a total budget amount of \$85,000. This includes the funds to purchase the camera system from WhaleSpotter, Inc.

7. **Action Requested of the Board of Directors:** Authorize the Executive Director to enter into a purchase agreement with WhaleSpotter, Inc., for a single vessel-mounted thermal imaging camera in an amount not to exceed \$50,000.

Note: As stated earlier in the briefing sheet, should the Board approve this action, the camera purchase will still be contingent upon approval from a TAPS shipping company to place the camera on their vessel, or upon a recommendation by the POVTS Committee to install the camera on a suitable alternative vessel.

8. **Alternatives:** None recommended.

9. **Attachments:** None.