

January 20, 2005

11 pages total

Honorable Frank Murkowski, Governor
State of Alaska, Juneau

via fax: 907-465-3532

RE: *Shipping Safety Partnership -- follow-up to Selendang Ayu*

Dear Governor Murkowski,

I first wanted to thank you for calling for an Aleutian Island Vessel Traffic Risk Assessment in your state-of-the-state address to the Legislature. As you may recall, I had asked for this back in 1998, and the Coast Guard declined at the time. As background, I have enclosed correspondence on the issue. Also, you may recall our correspondence from 1995 on the issue of stationing a rescue tug at Dutch Harbor (also attached).

In response to the recent grounding of the Selendang Ayu, a number of citizen organizations met yesterday (Jan. 19, 2005) in Anchorage and via teleconference to discuss measures that would effectively prevent such a tragedy in the future. It is time to reduce the risk in this transport system. The citizen's group included commercial fishermen, Alaska Natives, conservation organizations, scientists, agencies, and others in Unalaska, across Alaska and the lower 48. The group discussed many measures that we feel would provide cost-effective prevention in this heavily traveled maritime trade route. To achieve some of these measures for safer shipping through the Aleutians and other Alaskan and US waters, the group founded an ad hoc coalition / task force that we are calling the ***Shipping Safety Partnership*** (or SSP).

The overall goal of the SSP is to improve shipping safety along primary North Pacific cargo shipping routes, in particular along the "Great Circle Route" through the Aleutian Islands / southern Bering Sea. The group's primary focus is to reduce the risk of groundings / collisions / spills from the several thousand merchant vessels each year that trade between ports on the west coast of North America and Asia, transiting waters off Alaska. Although the Aleutian route is the primary and initial concern for the SSP, we are also interested in reducing risk in other maritime traffic to and from Alaska -- Cook Inlet, Southeast Alaska, the possible Northern Sea Route, and so forth. The SSP will seek as broad and inclusive a membership as possible as it is clear that many diverse groups share common interests on this issue.

Some of the initial objectives for the Aleutian route discussed by the founding members of the SSP include the following:

1. Aleutian Islands Vessel Traffic Risk Assessment - commissioned by state / federal government, to be conducted by reputable, independent maritime organizations, and to include at a minimum the following:

- A. characterization of all vessel traffic (vessel names, owners, cargoes, flags and crews, frequency and routes traveled, casualty history, etc.) along the cargo route through the Aleutian Islands;
 - B. Casualty Risk Analysis using a complete history of vessel casualties, expert judgement and Marine Accident Risk Calculation System to estimate frequency and location of potential casualties and areas of critical concern; and
 - C. potential risk mitigation / reduction measures -- quantitative assessment of various risk-reduction measures
2. Establishment of real-time vessel tracking system for all large vessels - using Automatic Identification System (AIS) coupled with Inmarsat-C / or HF capability on vessels (or other technology as appropriate such as Meteor Burst Signal technology) - and continuous tracking of all such vessels by US Coast Guard. Requirement / Request that all vessels transiting the Aleutian route subscribe to / participate in the Vessel tracking / monitoring system. This can be easily achieved with existing technologies on the vessels.
3. Strategic stationing of two rescue / salvage tugs along the Aleutian traffic route - at least 10,000 hp Voith Schneider Propulsion "tractor" tugs (as in PWS), or equivalent, capable of connecting a tow line and rendering a save to any disabled vessel in the majority of sea conditions anywhere along the route. Likely, one at Dutch Harbor / Unimak, and one at Shemya. These should have sufficient gear for the task -- line guns, sufficient strength spectra tow line, fire-fighting monitors, etc...And trials should be conducted to demonstrate effectiveness of these tugs in rendering assistance to disabled vessels.
4. Possibility of requiring emergency tow packages on all large merchant vessels (as required on tankers by IMO) - to aid in the connection of a tow-line in emergencies, as well as more robust anchor systems, and pre-identify anchorages-of-refuge where partially disabled vessels can either proceed under their own power to anchor and/or where disabled vessels can be towed.
5. Communication protocols / agreements between USCG / vessel owners / operators requiring all vessel masters to immediately radio the USCG tracking center (Rescue Coordination Center - Juneau?) when / if any situation arises that could lead to a casualty - including any engine problem, steerage problem, hull integrity issue, any other mechanical problem of potential consequence, etc.

Governor Murkowski 1/20/05

Page 3.

6. Improved spill response capability along the Aleutian route - booms, lightering capability, skimmers, pumps, barges / bladders, training / contracting of local residents in spill response, etc. Investigate legislative options to improve spill prevention / response capability along the Aleutian route.

7. Consideration of routing further from shore - in instances where these large vessels transit near sensitive habitats, requesting future transits to move further offshore to allow more sea room to mitigate potential casualties and provide for effective rescue (Areas To Be Avoided -- ATBAs, etc.) And, possibility of weather restrictions for transiting Unimak Pass, traffic separation schemes, etc.

8. Agreement with all shippers to seek to achieve "Rat-Free Shipping" as soon as possible.

9. Potential improvement of vessel construction standards, e.g. improved hull strength, redundant propulsion / steering, protected fuel tanks, etc.

As the *Shipping Safety Partnership's* overall goal is consistent with that of the State of Alaska, we wanted to offer any and all assistance to the State in its further deliberation of this issue. In that regard, I was asked by the SSP to begin planning a stakeholder's meeting in February or March to discuss what measures could add to the safety of vessel traffic along this heavily traveled shipping route through the Aleutians and southern Bering Sea. As envisioned, this one-day meeting would gather all interests involved in the issue of shipping safety in the Aleutians - shippers, Alaska Native organizations, commercial fisheries, municipalities / villages, state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, etc.

We would sincerely appreciate the State of Alaska's co-sponsorship of the stakeholder's meeting, and your participation if possible. Indeed, we hope the State of Alaska will become a member of our Shipping Safety Partnership.

I look forward to hearing from you and working with you and your administration to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Sincerely,

Rick Steiner

(for identification purposes only, Professor and
Conservation Specialist, University of Alaska Marine Advisory Program)
ph:907-786-4156 fx:907-786-6312 < afrgs@uaa.alaska.edu >

