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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
 WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025

May 2, 1998

Rick Steiner  
 Professor  
 University of Alaska Marine Advisory Program  
 Carlton Trust Building, #110  
 2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.  
 Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4140

Dear Rick:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter I received from the U.S. Coast Guard in response to my inquiry on your behalf regarding your proposal for establishing an Aleutian Islands Vessel Traffic Risk Assessment.

I hope you find this information useful.

With best wishes,

Cordially,



TED STEVENS

U.S. Department  
of Transportation

United States  
Coast Guard



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20593-0001  
Staff Symbol: G-CC/104  
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APR 24 1998

The Honorable Ted Stevens  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-6025

Dear Senator Stevens:

In response to your letter of March 10, 1998, we have reviewed Professor Steiner's suggestion for a risk assessment for the Aleutian Islands. While we agree in principle to the use of risk assessments in order to continually improve safety and environmental protection efforts, we do not support Professor Steiner's proposal to emulate the Prince William Sound (PWS) risk assessment. Instead, we recommend, and have been taking, a different approach which provides similar insights into making improvements to our efforts in waterway management without the significant resource costs incurred in the PWS risk assessment. It should also be noted that the Marine Board, in its review of the PWS risk assessment, recommended against replicating that study elsewhere, concluding that alternate approaches could provide the detailed insights needed.

In recognition of the value of risk assessment and risk management, the Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety and Environmental Protection developed the Risk Based Decision Making Guidelines for use by field commanders in performing their duties. A copy of this document is provided for your information. These Guidelines provide local area decision makers (e.g., District Commanders, Commanding Officers of Marine Safety units) with a background in, and a process and methodologies for the incorporation of risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication in carrying out their management responsibilities. Examples of field applications of these Guidelines have included a review of the marine safety and environmental protection regulatory system in Puget Sound, and the development of a standard of practice for cruise operators in southeast Alaska. The local field office, Marine Safety Office (MSO) Anchorage, has also performed a qualitative risk assessment, which investigated the risks from large fishing vessels, foreign tramp freighters and the container, freighter and tank vessels on the Great Circle Trade Route.

It is the approach outlined in these Guidelines that we recommend taking. The Coast Guard has had significant success with this process, which involves working with the various stakeholders, experts, and casualty statistics to identify areas for improvement. Furthermore, it provides the only feasible means for the Coast Guard to utilize risk assessment and risk management at the field level under existing resource constraints. Other initiatives by either Professor Steiner or other stakeholders in the region would be welcomed as well, and the Coast Guard would be willing to participate locally as part of a project management team, by providing data, and through expert judgment. The information from MSO Anchorage's preliminary assessment could also be provided to a local stakeholder initiated study.

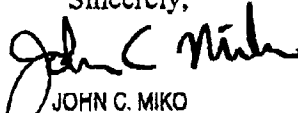
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APR 24 1998

Subj: RESPONSE TO SENATOR STEVENS' LETTER DATED MARCH 10, 1998  
CONCERNING A SUGGESTED ALEUTIAN ISLANDS VESSEL TRAFFIC RISK  
ASSESSMENT

Again, we agree in principle with Professor Steiner's identification of risk assessment and risk management as powerful tools for improving marine safety and environmental protection. The Coast Guard has expended a great deal of resources in support of this area, and have developed approaches that, while similar to what Professor Steiner proposes, do so with far less impact on available resources. Should the stakeholders in the region desire to sponsor a study, as he has suggested, we would gladly participate as outlined previously.

Sincerely,



JOHN C. MIKO  
COMMANDER, U.S. COAST GUARD  
CONGRESSIONAL & GOVERNMENTAL  
AFFAIRS STAFF - SENATE LIAISON  
BY DIRECTION

Encl: (1) Commandant (G-M) Risk Based Decision Making Guidelines