



SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL ONLY

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

A. Introduction

Cook Inletkeeper is a community-based nonprofit formed in 1995 to work with Alaskans to protect Cook Inlet's fish and water resources and the countless families who rely on them. Please accept these comments on behalf of Inletkeeper and its more than 2000 members and supporters on the draft Final Cook Inlet Risk Assessment (CIRA), dated September 17, 2014. We appreciate the work of the Advisory Panel and we have the following comments on the draft report:

B. Comments

1. Opportunity for Public Review & Comment

As a threshold matter, the public has been given only 8 business days to comment on a document containing complex and important issues. This is an inadequate timeframe, especially considering the CIRA process has been ongoing for several years. Due to these time constraints, Inletkeeper lacks the time and resources to delve into the full range of issues presented by the draft report, and Native tribes, fishing groups and other stakeholders are at a similar disadvantage. A time extension on the comment period – coupled with community presentations to explain the document and the process, and to engage individuals and groups in communities around Cook Inlet – would result in more meaningful input.

2. Trans-Inlet Pipeline

Inletkeeper strongly supports the report's recommendations on an oil pipeline from the west side of Cook Inlet to the east side. The draft report notes an oil pipeline will eliminate numerous tanker transits and result in a 98% net reduction in spill risk. It's unclear, however, why the report fails to incorporate risks and costs posed by the Drift River Oil Terminal when footnote 13 recognizes the inclusion of such data would increase the benefit/cost ratio. As we've learned through the past several eruptions at Mount Redoubt, the Drift River Oil Terminal poses significant risks to worker safety and the fisheries and habitats that lie below the facility.

3. Safe Harbors/Ports of Refuge

Inletkeeper supports the draft report's recommendation to create a Harbor Safety Committee (HSC), with the caveat such a body must include local stakeholders – including fisherman, Tribes, small businesses, local governments and other interest and user groups. If an HSC ignores local community engagement, it will quickly become yet another top-down bureaucracy that fails to earn much-needed community trust. To engender such trust, an HSC should be housed in an entity without direct financial ties or conflicts of interest with shippers or the oil and gas industry.

On a related topic, the draft report fails to discuss Ports of Refuge, which play an important role in risk reduction in Cook Inlet. Specifically, the report should recognize Kachemak Bay as a predetermined and preferred Port of Refuge, and identify specific risk reduction measures that can be brought to play when stricken vessels enter the Kachemak Bay Critical Habitat Area. Enhanced tug capacity, additional spill response assets, and permanent mooring buoys are but a few of the tools which could reduce navigational risks in Kachemak Bay.

4. Self Arrest & Tug Escorts

The self-arrest section of the draft report, and accompanying appendix B, reflect the most problematic aspects of the draft report. As Appendix B shows, the CIRA Management Team contracted with Glostén & Associates (Glostén) – a well-respected maritime safety and engineering firm – to provide its professional opinion whether self-arrest was a viable option for risk reduction when large cargo or tanker vessels are adrift and powerless in Cook Inlet. Glostén concluded “[s]elf arrest is not a reliable risk reduction option. While it is regularly attempted, it does not usually succeed.” (Glostén Self Arrest Report, p. 9).

The CIRA Management Team and Advisory Panel, however, “expressed several concerns” with the Glostén Report, and contracted with another consultant – Safeguard Marine LLC (Safeguard) – which provided contrary findings. Yet there are glaring problems with the Safeguard Report, despite the fact the report played a central role in the Management Team's and Advisory Panel's dismissal of the Glostén findings. Some include:

- Safeguard notes it is “common practiceto utilize anchor when maneuvering a vessel in Cook Inlet. This is done with the engines running and the ship making way.” (Safeguard, p. 2 (emphasis added)). This statement ignores the fact that self-arrest occurs in an emergency situation, when a vessel has lost power.
- Safeguard emphasizes a quote in the Glostén report (Safeguard, p. 2): “anchors can be very effective in stopping a ship.” Yet that same quote notes “[c]are should be taken when trying to stop any ship in this way, especially a large ship, as the anchor and its equipment may “carry away” causing damage or injury, if the anchor should snag.” So, it's undisputed anchors “can be” effective in stopping a powerless vessel under

favorable conditions, but the Safeguard report emphasizes the upside benefits, and wholly dismisses the considerable downside risks.

- Safeguard quotes Glosten’s conclusion that “[a]ttempting to self-arrest has risks, potentially great ones, and an overall low probability of success.” It then states this conclusion is “in direct contrast to what professional mariners perform when dredging anchors in Cook Inlet.” But Safeguard’s statement compares apples to oranges; Glosten is referencing emergency situations where a large vessel is powerless; Safeguard is talking about docking and other maneuvers when such vessels are under power.
- Safeguard cites one incident to illustrate a successful emergency self-arrest by highlighting the grounding of the *T/V Seabulk Pride* in February 2006 in Upper Cook Inlet. Safeguard writes “[t]he vessel was capable of self-arresting as a result of deploying anchor. She came to rest safely at anchor without grounding or striking the shoreline due to the anchor self-arresting the vessel without damaging the vessel or injuring personnel. This action is in direct conflict with the Glosten Associates statement.” (Safeguard, p. 3). Yet the USCG Report on the *Seabulk Pride* incident concluded the vessel ran hard aground and suffered hull and prop damage. (USCG, *Report of the Investigation into the Circumstances Surrounding the Incident Involving the M/T Seabulk Pride Grounding, Nikiski, on 2/2/2006* (Attachment 1); see also, Aerial Images, *Seabulk Pride* Grounding, Feb. 2, 2006 (Attachment 2). Furthermore, I obtained a briefing at the Incident Command Center at CISPRI in Nikiski on the morning of the incident, and everyone there – state and federal agencies, oil industry personnel, and CIRCAC representatives – recognized the *Seabulk Pride* had grounded shortly after it broke-free. Thus, Safeguard’s attempts to demonstrate a successful emergency self-arrest in Cook Inlet by highlighting the 2006 *Seabulk Pride* incident are contrary to the USCG Report, conflict with numerous eye-witness accounts, and are without merit.

Unfortunately, the Advisory Panel relies on the shaky assertions in the Safeguard Report to reject the Glosten Report. For example, it states self arrest is a “relatively common practice” in Cook Inlet, but it cites not one example, apparently aligning with the Safeguard Report’s confusion between emergency self-arrest and anchor dredging by a vessel under power. It admits conditions for self arrest in the deeper waters of lower Cook Inlet are “less suitable” for self arrest, but it provides no data to support the notion there is “extensive sea room” around Kennedy Entrance; instead it simply concludes “tidal currents due not trend toward hazards,” without any mention of wind or wave forces. It argues Glosten’s claims that self-arrest puts ground tackle at risk are “over-stated,” yet it provides zero support for this conclusion. Finally, while it recognizes “[a]ctive subsea pipelines and cables may be damaged by a self arrest,” a vessel “could drift with the current until free of underwater obstructions” – if the vessel captain, in the heat of an emergency, chose to check the charted subsea obstructions and decide it was safer to drift toward Kalgin Island and its accompanying shoals before attempting self-arrest on an ebbing tide.

In 1992, CIRCAC contracted Captain J.T. Dickson for a report entitled “*Report on the Safety of Navigation and Oil Spill Contingency.*” Dickson – an experienced seaman hailing from the oil terminal at Sullom Voe, Shetland Islands – wrote:

Vessels transiting Cook Inlet which suffer a loss of propulsion, may be able to anchor safely if the water depth is not excessive at the position where power is lost and the ship is in either slack water or stemming the tidal stream at the time of loss of power and an anchor is let go before the vessel runs with the stream. If the vessel is running with the tidal stream when power loss occurs, or is in deep water, it is unlikely that the vessel will be able to anchor without risking loss of gear. This will obviously be at worst case at times of spring tides. It is therefore recommended that tugs conduct escort duties for all tankers to/ from the entrance to Cook Inlet.

Dickson Report, p. 90 (Attachment 3).

Dickson’s recommendations for tug escorts for laden tankers have been ignored for the past 23 years. His recommendation for docking tugs at Nikiski was also ignored, and it wasn’t the 2006 *Seabulk Pride* incident which prompted industry to secure an assist tug; instead, it took a second incident – again involving the *Seabulk Pride* at the Tesoro dock in 2007, where it parted lines and nearly broke away again – to highlight the extreme risk to industry and drive home Dickson’s longstanding conclusion that the Nikiski docks were some of the most dangerous and challenging Dickson had encountered in the world. The point here is this: Dickson was right about the docking tug, and he was right about tug escorts.

Accomplished and respected marine pilots and mariners in Cook Inlet insist emergency self-arrest is a viable risk reduction option in Cook Inlet. But they also concede self-arrest is often risky and may be limited by wind, ice, tides, location and other factors.

The CIRA draft report’s section on self-arrest and Appendix B lack substance and credibility, and they draw into question the entire risk assessment process for Cook Inlet. Inletkeeper recommends the Management Team and Advisory Committee work with Glosten Associates to interview local mariners to gain their important insights on local conditions, document instances of successful emergency self-arrest involving large tank and cargo vessels in Cook Inlet and elsewhere, and simulate self-arrest under worst case conditions in Upper and Lower Cook Inlet.


C. Conclusion

Captain Dickson’s recommendations from 1992 still hold true, and as oil and gas activities in Cook Inlet pick up pace, it’s important to bring our navigational safety standards into the 21st century. Our pilots and mariners have a wealth of experience in Cook Inlet’s notoriously rough

waters, and they should have the best tools available to avoid marine casualties that would put Cook Inlet's fish and water resources at risk.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Shavelson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bob" being more prominent than the last name "Shavelson".

Bob Shavelson
Cook Inletkeeper

Encs.

USCG Report on 2006 Seabulk Pride Incident (Attachment 1)
Aerial Images, Seabulk Pride Incident 2006 (Attachment 2)
Dickson report 1992 (Attachment 3)

Attachment 2
***Seabulk Pride* Grounding, Feb. 2, 2006**
Photos: Cook Inletkeeper

