



BRIEFING PAPER

Alyeska/SERVS Fishing Vessel Program

March 10, 2010

INTRODUCTION

Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System (SERVS) is designed to escort tankers in Prince William Sound and to respond to Valdez Marine Terminal and tanker oil spills. Under the Prince William Sound Tanker Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (Tanker C-Plan), Alyeska is required to have 275 fishing vessels under contract and available within 24 hours for purposes of responding to an oil spill. In order to meet that commitment in the Tanker C-Plan and assure they have the appropriate number of vessels, Alyeska holds contracts with approximately 350 vessels in Prince William Sound (PWS) and downstream communities.

On February 2, 2010, Alyeska reported a shortfall of approximately 20 vessels available to respond to an oil spill. The shortfall cited by Alyeska appears to be understated and based upon the requirements of an unapproved amendment to the Tanker C-Plan submitted to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) in December 2009. Alyeska reported that only 169 vessels were response ready at that time¹. Initially, PWSRCAC believed this represented as much as a 106 vessel shortfall based on the 275 vessel requirement. Alyeska has since clarified that the 169 vessels were only in-region (PWS) vessels² and did not account for response ready vessels in downstream communities.

PWSRCAC has expressed its concern to Alyeska and ADEC that the shortfall directly affects the ability to mount an effective response. It appears that the shortfall may exist due to the declining numbers of participants in SERVS' fishing vessel program. In response to these concerns, Alyeska and PWSRCAC are proposing to participate in a joint effort to identify the root cause of the decline in participation of the fishing vessel fleet and make recommendations to improve the program.

BACKGROUND

Fishing vessel responders are a vital part of preparedness for oil spills. Fishing vessels that responded during the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill were critical and provided the majority of the response platforms used to protect sensitive areas and recover and clean up the oil. These fishing vessels form the backbone of the response system in Prince William Sound because almost all of the response tactics described in the SERVS Technical Manual requires the fishing vessels and their trained crews.

¹ Of the 169 vessels, 28 were jitneys (open Seine skiff) which may not be appropriate as a safe and reliable vessel for most response tactics in winter conditions. ADEC allows 15% of the total number of vessels response ready to be jitneys or other work skiffs.

² On March 5, 2010, Alyeska claimed that the 169 vessels were only considered in-region (PWS) vessels and did not account for an additional 92 out-of-region vessels that were response ready. However, the Tanker C-Plan does not differentiate between region and it is only implied through the Tanker C-Plan 809 Scenario resource mobilization chart (Figure 1-6). Subsequently, according to the attached PWSRCAC analysis of the requirements set forth in the Tanker C-Plan, approximately 283 vessels are needed to be on-scene within 72 hours. At least 202 of these 283 vessels need to be in-region, indicating that Alyeska's reported 20 vessel in-region shortfall is more in the order of at least a 33 vessel shortfall.

Fishing vessels fall into three categories: Tier I vessels (or the “core” fleet of 50 vessels) are located in ports in Prince William Sound and are required to be ready to respond within six hours. Tier II vessels (numbering at least 300 vessels) are in ports within and outside of Prince William Sound and are expected to be ready to respond within approximately 24 hours. Tier I and Tier II vessel crews are to be trained each year and are skilled in deploying and operating oil spill response equipment such as booms and skimmers. The Tier III vessels (vessels of opportunity) are to be contracted and their crews provided training only if they were to be needed during a response.

The Tanker C-plan states that SERVS has 50 Tier I vessels and 225 Tier II vessels to meet requirements detailed in the response plans. These fishing vessels are contracted to participate in critical open water and nearshore tactics to tow boom and mini-barges, operate skimmers, and other operational needs. The plan also calls for additional vessels (beyond the 275) to provide important logistical support for response operations such as crew shuttling and resupply.

In its February 2, 2010 notice of non-readiness to ADEC, Alyeska stated that its tally of 169 response ready fishing vessels indicated a shortfall of available vessels. Alyeska proposed mitigation measures that include temporarily elevating 22 Tier II fishing vessels to Tier I status (i.e., able to respond within six hours); assigning temporary Tier I vessels to nearshore task forces; and providing ADEC with weekly fishing vessel availability reports until further notice. On February 15, 2010 PWSRCAC sent a letter to ADEC expressing concern regarding this shortfall and our belief that the mitigation measures proposed by Alyeska were inadequate. PWSRCAC requested that ADEC take immediate action to ensure that the C-Plan requirements are being met and that the waters of Prince William Sound are being protected.

GRADUAL DECLINE

PWSRCAC has long been concerned about an apparent decline in the number of fishing vessels participating in SERVS’ fishing vessel program and the overall response readiness status of those vessels remaining in the fleet. At a fishing vessel meeting held in December 2005, PWSRCAC documented general concerns about an apparent decline in the numbers and changes in the types of fishing vessels under contract with SERVS³.

Fishermen were concerned at that time about the future of SERVS’ fishing vessel program and stressed that, if changes to the program were not made, then attrition would gradually but substantially weaken the program perhaps to the point of being ineffective during a spill. Lack of compensation, lack of respect, and not being included in decision-making were identified as key issues for fishermen.

In 2009 PWSRCAC retained Harvey Consulting to conduct a fishing vessel audit on the entire fleet. This audit consisted of telephone surveys and in-person vessel surveys of participants in the fishing vessel program. The audit revealed difficulties in reaching captains via cell phones in Cordova and Whittier, and that several vessels were dry docked and would have to be moved from boat yards in order to be available to respond. While the Tier I fleet appeared to be response ready, it was discovered during this audit that approximately half of the 150 Tier II participants surveyed were not able to respond within 24 hours. The survey also indicated that fishermen had a wealth of experience

³ PWSRCAC Report Titled “SERVS Fishing Vessel Program Meeting Sponsored by Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council”, dated December 8, 2005.

and thought the fishing vessel program was very valuable and a critical component of oil spill response.

Furthermore, in February 2010, PWSRCAC was invited to attend SERVS' annual fishing vessel owners meeting. During that meeting SERVS reported that the numbers of vessels being trained in the program has declined in the last four years: 328 vessels trained in 2006; 305 trained in 2007; 277 trained in 2008; and 267 trained in 2009. Currently, the number of vessels trained in the program is less than the 275 required by the Tanker C-Plan.

Reports and other correspondence can be viewed at:
<http://www.pwsrcac.net/committees/ospr/documents/FVProgram.htm>.

WAY FORWARD

SERVS has been working to close the fishing vessel shortfall by recruiting new vessels into the program and validating the number of vessels that have returned to response ready status since the problem was identified. ADEC has requested that SERVS conduct meetings in Cordova and Valdez to receive input from the fishing vessel community on the fishing vessel program. The goal of these meetings is to use input to craft measures to bring the program back into compliance with response requirements. These meetings are scheduled as follows:

Valdez: 6:00pm on Wednesday, March 10 at the Civic Center
Cordova: 6:00pm on Thursday, March 11 at the Masonic Lodge

SERVS has approached PWSRCAC to assist in coming up with a longer-term solution to maintaining a robust fishing vessel program. This solution involves a cost sharing effort whereby a third-party consultant would be hired to determine the root cause of the decline in the fishing vessel program and to recommend a compensation scheme that is fair to the fishermen, is fair to Alyeska, and will ensure the long-term survival of a robust and effective fishing vessel program for responding to oil spills. PWSRCAC is pleased to join with Alyeska in this effort. A formal announcement is expected shortly that will outline the scope of work as well as an anticipated timing for completion.

Please contact us if you would like more information or would like to provide input on the fishing vessel program shortfall or any of the efforts to correct the shortfall.

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**PWSRCAC's Analysis for the Fishing Vessels Required by the November 2007 Tanker
C-Plan Scenario 809 for the first 72 hours**

Tactic Assignment	Plan Location	Numbers	F/V Totals
OW-1 - TR Barges	F 1-6, TM OW-1	5 TFs x 4 FV	20
OW-2 - Valdez Star	F 1-6	1 TF x 2 FV	2
Hatchery Protection	F 1-6, TM SA-1	1 TF x 7 FV	7
Wildlife Task Forces	F 1-6, TM W-1	3 TF x 7 FV	21
In-Situ Burning	F 1-6, TM NM-3	1 TF x 4 FV ^A	4
Dispersants	F 1-6, TM NM-2	1 TF x 1 FV	1
Nearshore Taskforces 1-8	F 1-6, TM NS - 1 and NS -2	8 TF x 27 FV	216
Waste Collection	F 1-6, TM WM	4 TF x 1 FV ^B	4
SCAT	F 1-6, TM OS-1	1 ST x 1 FV ^C	1
Tracking and Surveillance	Table 1-14, TM TS-1	1 TU x 2 FV	2
Vessel Decontamination	Table 1-14, TM LP-8 and LP-9	Lg. Vessel 1 TU x 2 FV	2
Lg. Vessels Sm. Vessels		Sm.Vessel 3 TU x 1 FV ^D	3
Total Vessels in Scenario 809 for the first 72 hours ^E			283

F = Figure, TM = Technical Manual, TF = Task Force, ST = Strike Team, TU = Tactical Unit

A: NM-3 calls for 3 FV and 1 Tender. Tender is included as FV as they are included in FV Database and program.

B: The Waste Management section of the Technical Manual does not define number of vessels so one vessel was included in each taskforce for a total of four fishing vessels

C: The SCAT section of the Technical Manual does not address transportation modes but it is assumed that The SCAT members will need at least one boat to get to the various shorelines.

D: Table 1-14 indicates that by Day 3, 12 people will be needed, which would be 3 units. Each unit would require 1 FV.

E: This number is only the vessels indicated in the Scenario 809 and does not include other vessel needs such as Logistical (personnel transport, re-supply, etc), safety vessels, backup vessels to replace vessels with mechanical problems, or other operational needs. Nearshore Taskforces 6-8 (a total of 81 vessels) could be made up in whole or part by out-of-region vessels. Therefore, of the 283 vessels identified, at least 202 would need to come from within the PWS region.