

Vessel/Rail Traffic Risk Assessment

The Issue

Washington State is experiencing rapid changes in the types of crude oils moving through our state, the methods used for oil transportation, and the locations where crude is moved. National experts have documented that these changes in oil movement will increase the probability of major and catastrophic oil spills into the foreseeable future. A major oil spill or fire has the potential for severe consequences to public safety, the environment, local economies, and overall quality of life.

Beginning in 2012, the Puget Sound Partnership working with the Department of Ecology (Ecology) completed a Vessel Traffic Risk Assessment (VTRA) for Puget Sound. That risk assessment was completed by national experts from George Washington and Virginia Commonwealth Universities using a model of Puget Sound. The final report from the VTRA project was published in March of 2014 and received a universally favorable reception from stakeholders. However, the VTRA does not include additional vessel traffic expected to occur as a result of oil transported by rail and pipeline, and no such assessment exists for other affected waterways or inland areas of Washington State.

The 2014 Legislature provided funding in the supplemental budget (ESSB 6002) to conduct a Marine and Rail Oil Transportation Study (Study). The Study developed a number of draft recommendations and concluded that additional technical work is necessary to understand the nature of oil spill risk and inform federal and state decision making. The recommendations also suggest future work be focused on Grays Harbor, the Columbia River, and the outer coast, as well as inland areas of the state that now have the potential to be impacted by oil spills from trains and pipelines.

The Solution

Focused attention on oil spill risk assessment is needed to produce targeted cost-effective risk mitigation measures and ensure our state's public health and safety, and environmental protection. Ecology proposes to retain two risk management experts (2.0

WHY IT MATTERS

Washington State is faced with the increasing risk of major and catastrophic oil spills associated with moving oil in ships, pipelines, and trains.

Transportation of crude oil by trains represents a new and a relatively high risk to public safety.

Proposals for six new rail/marine transfer terminals will increase vessel traffic, as well as the risk for a major spill incident over the state's waterways. These on-going changes in the state's energy transportation infrastructure require thoughtful attention and technical expertise to identify and evaluate the new risks associated with such changes.

Only by understanding the evolving risks, can we propose adequate measures and oversight strategies for risk mitigation. The citizens of Washington State deserve targeted, cost-effective measures to ensure adequate safeguards for public health and safety, environment, economy and quality of life.

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FTEs) to continue progress in assessing and managing the rapidly changing energy picture. These staff would work with national experts to complete the necessary studies and associated consensus-based stakeholder work. This strategic initiative would expand the application of the technical risk assessment and consensus risk management methodologies developed during the VTRA process to other waterways in the state. The VTRA process will also serve as a basis for development a Rail Traffic Risk Assessment model to analyze changes to the oil by rail transportation system and assess risks to inland areas of the state.

Proposed Legislation

Provide additional dedicated funding to address new and emerging oil spill risks. Ecology requests the legislature make the following additional appropriations from the Oil Spill Prevention Account (OSPA) on an ongoing biennial basis for marine and rail oil spill risk assessment and risk management:

- \$500,000 for contracts to hire nationally recognized experts
- \$577,000 to retain two risk management specialists/experts

How it will Work

If the funding was provided, the state would manage this with support from key maritime stakeholders from the Puget Sound, Grays Harbor, and Columbia River Harbor Safety Committees, as well as stakeholders from the outer coast and inland areas.

The funding would be used to conduct ongoing risk assessments, risk management work to further inform state decision-making related to public health and safety, and environmental protection as it relates to the changing energy picture to address large oil pipelines, crude oil trains, maritime, and potentially other transportation modes. The funding would also support continuous improvements in transboundary risk communication and mitigation related to vessel traffic in waterways the state shares with British Columbia and Oregon.

How the Legislation Benefits Washington

The proposed increased funding from the dedicated oil tax revenues would help protect public health and safety, the environment, and economy from the increased risk of major oil spills resulting from the changing energy picture and transportation.

More information

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/OilMovement/index.html