

Focus on:

Grays Harbor Vessel Traffic Risk Assessment



Tank ship alongside a pier at a facility in Grays Harbor. (Photo by Port of Grays Harbor)

More information

Full report and workshop handbooks:

<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/1808017.html>

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Special accommodations

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-7211 or visit

ecology.wa.gov/accessibility.

People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

In 2018, Ecology conducted an oil spill risk assessment of commercial vessel traffic in Grays Harbor. Our report provides recommendations to enhance prevention and preparedness measures.

Current vessel traffic in Grays Harbor

Approximately 100 deep-draft commercial vessels call on the Port of Grays Harbor each year. Commercial and tribal fishing boats operate from Westport Marina, along with recreational boats.

The Quinault Indian Nation has adjudicated usual and accustomed treaty fishing areas within and adjacent to Grays Harbor and the Chehalis River.

The last major oil spill near Grays Harbor was the tank barge *Nestucca* in 1988. Since then, there have been significant improvements in vessel design, operation, and management.

Locally, an active partnership of maritime professionals work to facilitate the safe, efficient movement of ships. The Grays Harbor Safety Committee meets regularly and publishes a Harbor Safety Plan.

While the current system of prevention measures has proven effective, continued diligence is essential in all of Washington's waters. A major spill in Grays Harbor could have significant impacts to public safety, the environment, local economies, cultural resources, and quality of life.

Risk assessment

In 2017, the state legislature provided Ecology with funding to conduct a risk assessment for oil spills from commercial vessels in Grays Harbor.

This follows a recommendation in the [Washington State 2014 Marine and Rail Oil Transportation Study](#).¹

The goals of the Grays Harbor Vessel Traffic Risk Assessment were to:

- Assess baseline and changing oil spill risks.
- Identify measures that could help reduce the risks of oil spills.
- Assess oil spill response preparedness.
- Identify baseline oil spill response capability.

Ecology used the International Maritime Organization [Formal Safety Assessment process](#)² to conduct the assessment. Ecology facilitated two workshops to complete Hazard Identification, the first step in Formal Safety Assessment.

Results

During the Hazard Identification workshops, participants identified local factors related to oil spill risks, reviewed safeguards currently in place, and discussed recommendations that could improve spill prevention for commercial vessel traffic.

The report provides recommendations for current traffic levels and for potential increased traffic in the future. Recommendations address topics such as: aids to navigation, anchorages, the Bar and approaches, currents, response to fire/explosion, fishing vessels and fishing gear, the Harbor Safety Plan, offshore traffic, and hydrographic survey needs.

Next steps

Building on the Hazard Identification outcomes, Ecology met with governments and stakeholders to discuss a follow-on project, which will assess oil spill response preparedness in Grays Harbor.

Ecology also held a workshop for commercial and tribal fishermen and recreational boaters. This workshop provided an opportunity to identify practices for improving safety and preventing oil spills from smaller vessels.

Ecology will remain engaged with the Grays Harbor community through participation in the Grays Harbor Safety Committee, the Washington Board of Pilotage Commissioners, and ongoing collaboration with area tribes, government agencies, industry, and non-governmental organizations. Through this engagement, Ecology will work with tribes and stakeholders to consider the recommendations from the Hazard Identification process, and continue to strengthen oil spill prevention and preparedness for Grays Harbor.

Workshop participants

Representatives from the following governments and organizations participated in Hazard Identification workshops:

- Brusco Tug & Barge
- Contanda
- General Steamship Agencies
- Grays Harbor Pilots
- Marine Exchange of Puget Sound
- National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration
- Port of Grays Harbor
- Quinault Indian Nation
- REG Grays Harbor
- The Nature Conservancy
- U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
- U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Portland
- Washington Dungeness Crab Fishermen's Association
- Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Ecology acknowledges the significant input and assistance from these participants.

¹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/1508010.html>

² <http://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/safety/safetytopics/pages/formalsafetyassessment.aspx>