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Comments on Rulemaking - Chapter 173-182 Oil spill contingency plan
Submitted to the Washington State Department of Ecology via on-line portal:
<http://cs.ecology.commentinput.com/?id=V6ATc>

I live in the San Juan Islands, which are both a critical habitat for forage fish, salmon, and Southern Resident Killer Whales and a critical habitat continually at risk due to the increasing shipping activity in the surrounding major shipping lanes. These shipping corridors are made up of narrow channels whose edges are home to not only endangered sea life, but shoreline residences and businesses as well. They need the utmost protection. That is why I am writing to you regarding the draft of the oil spill contingency plan. It does not do enough to provide these needed protections.

The increase in tanker traffic transporting non-floating oils (especially from the looming Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project) increases the risk of non-floating oil spills. Given the swift currents and depths of our San Juan Islands' waterways, oil spill response operations would be especially challenging. The importance of early and aggressive containment and collection of non-floating oil spills and effective wildlife deterrence operations are crucial to protecting this environmentally valuable corner of our State. We need to have tough, rigorous, completely-funded and -staffed disaster response plans.

Washington's oil spill response program has not kept up with the latest science associated with realistically calculating oil spill response effectiveness as well as the growing and changing risks non-floating oils pose to our region.

Additional equipment and personnel must be prepared to be deployed more quickly to contain and collect the spill of non-floating oil — before it begins to submerge and sink.

The non-floating Canadian Tar Sands crude oils should be regulated commensurate with their unique risks and spill response challenges. The draft update requires additional but unquantified resources and equipment to detect, contain and collect non-floating oils to arrive within 6-12 and 12-24 hours. These timeframes are not soon enough and the draft update provides no assurance that the amount and type of resources and equipment will be sufficient to respond to a worst-case spill. This must be remedied in the final plan.

The plan should include requirements for notifying shoreline residents and businesses and providing public health and safety in the early hours of an oil spill.

Additional requirements for respiratory protection as well as air quality monitoring need to be established to protect oil spill responders.

It is essential that wildlife response actions are initiated as soon as possible. In particular, deterrence actions that keep wildlife from entering a spill are critical to have underway immediately following a spill. Only 2 responders within 12 hours is not good enough!

The plan must require experts who can identify Southern Resident Killer Whales. SRKWs were listed as Endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act, in part, because of concerns about potential oil spill impacts. We all know how fragile this population currently is.

The monitoring and deterrence operations to prevent Southern Resident Killer Whales from encountering spilled oil should be required for all killer whales in order to provide certainty that Southern Resident Killer Whales are deterred from entering an oil spill.

The update should have included the 2015 San Juan County Oil Spill Response Capacity Evaluation which has important findings and recommendations that address deficiencies on the current oil spill contingency plan. Please include this information in the final plan.

We need a fully-funded and -staffed, tougher oil spill response plan than is presently drafted. Please do your utmost to ensure that the final plan provides ultimate protection for our State's waters, shorelines, and sea life.

Thank you.