

Alex Ramel

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Afternoon. Alex Ramel, field director with Stand dot Earth. Sonja mentioned earlier that there have been a number of letters and communications back and forth between us, the environmental community and the Department of Ecology over more and a year and a half on this issue. And it feels to me like we've been talking past each other in a number of ways and I want to use the couple of minutes that I have here to do my best to bridge some of that divide. And the best way that I know to do that is to start off by acknowledging what I've heard you say and where we appreciate it. Where I think we agree.

The draft rule has improved provisions for observation and identification of sinking oils. Has significant improvements in terms of wildlife response, wildlife clean up. Better rules for modeling the risk of sinking oils in the geographic response plans. That's great work, and I appreciate it if we see it. On a conference call last week I also heard Dale talk about the amount of change in the rules and regulations around oil spill prevention and response over the last decade. And I want to acknowledge that that change has been significant. If we're looking at where things were in 2010 versus where they are now, the rules we have now are significant improvement and have been improved almost every year. And that's meaningful.

And unfortunately, the only thing that has changed in the intervening period isn't the rules and regulations. It's also the industry's practices. And watched an industry that's dramatically increase the risks that they're willing to take in our spaces. We've watched oil trains increase dramatically and the added risks to our community those have presented. Similarly, we've watched a rise in the use of articulated tug barges and barges to, from where I sit circumnavigate rules that are designed to make tanker traffic safe.

We've had to respond to those things. And we're now watching dramatic increases in the risk associated with tar-sands. And the -- in particular, the sinking oils. And those changes happened in many cases since the start of this rulemaking. We've watched the Tacoma -- the refinery in Tacoma was sold. And we've learned as a community that one the selling points on that refinery was that's it could be used as a tar-sands transshipment point.

We've watched, despite Washington's best efforts, we've watched the utilization of the Columbia River as an export corridor for tar-sands. And we've watched our neighbors to the north take significant steps in increasing the tar-sands tanker traffic through the Salish Sea by seven-fold. And so I guess what I want to say is thank you for the work that's being done to improve the rules so that we can respond to those threats and a lot more still has to be done. And so what I'm asking for, what I think we're all asking for here is a commitment in this rule that this is not the last step, and that's it's not going to be another five years.

It's not going to be until 2021 to start the next evaluation of whether the models can be improved. We would love to see the end of this rulemaking begin the start of an emergency rulemaking that responds to the emergency that's being caused by an industry that's willing to take risks that are unacceptable in our region. That's what we are asking for. Thank you.

