

**Oil Spill Early Action Task Force**  
**APPENDIX 1 - RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Oil Spill Early Action Task Force**  
***Recommendation***

**Recommendation No. 1**

**Increase opportunities for the public to participate in the response planning process for spill preparedness.**

1. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs ensure that the committee work plans and meeting agendas are published and distributed to as many public groups and citizens as possible, while simultaneously improving the way meeting times, locations and agendas are advertised on the Regional Response Team (RRT) website. The Task Force further recommends that meeting notices will be published in the newspaper local to meeting locations. It is further recommended that the meeting notices include a description of the specific purposes of the meetings.
2. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs create and fund a position or positions on the Area Committee to represent public groups and citizens. The Northwest Area Committee and other appropriate entities, in conjunction with public groups and citizens, will appoint a person or persons to be designated a member or members of the Northwest Area Committee.
3. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs better advertise/solicit public groups and citizens to participate in each of the Area Committee work groups. These participants would coordinate with the citizen representative on the Northwest Area Committee to ensure that their issues and actions are coordinated and informed.
4. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that industry and agencies reemphasize regulated plan-holders include members of the public, local government and citizens in their exercise design process. The Task Force further recommends that industry and agencies encourage regulated plan holders to involve members of the public, local government and citizens in their exercises, for example as observers, players in the liaison process, players at mock press briefings, participation in the simulation cells, participation in debriefing sessions.
5. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs encourage response contractors and regulated plan holders to ensure citizen participation in deployment training and Geographic Response Plan deployment drills. The Task Force further recommends that the Northwest Area Drill Calendar provide the appropriate response contractor or regulated plan holder contact information on the Website.
6. The Washington Department of Ecology will add to the evaluation checklist for drills and exercises, a section which determines whether the plan-holder invited local citizen groups to participate in the planning and implementing drills.

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7. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that state and federal agency representatives attend NGO meetings as appropriate.
  
8. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs coordinate the scheduling of work group and advisory committee meetings to be held immediately before or after Area Committee meetings. The Task Force further recommends that the locations of these meetings should continue to be rotated around the state, and that meeting agendas should be relevant to issues appropriate to the geographic area where the meeting is to be held.
  
9. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends as a high priority that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs seek funds to pay for reasonable and appropriate mileage, food, and housing/accommodations for the local public representatives to the Northwest Area work group or advisory meetings, committee meeting, drills and deployment exercises.

**Rationale:**

The use of volunteers and outreach to stakeholders during spill planning enhances community involvement and provides the benefit of giving stakeholders a stake in spill preparedness, better access to information for responders, and potentially improves communications between responders and stakeholders.

The final vote for this recommendation was 12 for and 0 against.

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**Recommendation No. 2**

**Increase opportunities for volunteers, organizations and communities to participate in the assessment and response phases of oil spills.**

1. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology develop and provide a standardized program to volunteer groups, organizations and communities focusing on the following components:

- a. Documentation of shoreline access, launch and view point information.
- b. Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training for responders in low risk or non-hazardous environments.
- c. Training materials for a core of assessment responders.

On water training should include sheriff, harbor patrol, fire, ports, ferry system, professional boaters, labor unions, response and marine contractors, citizen boaters and insured volunteers, U.S. Coast Guard auxiliary, shellfish industry and any others who may provide value-added assistance in assessment, response and/or cleanup.

On shore training should include tribes, local government, ports, citizens, contractors and any others that should be included to assure standardized and effective training.

- d. Information provided through the Washington Department of Ecology should include: outline of types of information to be included in access-launch-viewpoint documentation, standard curriculum for classes, information about legal training requirements, insurance requirements, how the liability issues are addressed, safety training requirements, requirements for how training records are tracked.

The Task Force further recommends that training courses should be provided annually throughout Puget Sound. This would require new funding.

2. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology provide information outlining organizational components necessary for effective functioning within the spill response network and develop guidelines for involved community volunteers members/groups. The guidelines should ensure each group has a point of contact with accountability that tracks and takes care of the groups needs, ensures requirements are met, and helps create cohesion in the group. The guidelines should also ensure that the leader and an alternate of each volunteer group be reachable by pager 24 hours a day.

3. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology evaluate using skill centers to teach appropriate curriculum in order to provide more widespread access to classes and that all involved governmental, including tribal, commercial and non governmental agencies are leveraged to assist with skill trainings, such as the National

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Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, Washington Department of Ecology and local agencies.

4. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology evaluate application of Ecology's small town environmental program, Island Oil Spill Association and other citizen involvement programs to facilitate organization/training of NGO's, industries, and/or community volunteer oil spill responders.

5. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology immediately begin working with community leaders and citizen volunteers on Vashon-Maury Islands, and in other interested communities, to create opportunities for local groups to become actively involved in effectively and safely assisting future potential oil spills. These opportunities should range from:

- Establishing a communication network(s) for oil spill notification, and improving community information flow during future spill incidents;
- Providing basic oil recognition and safety training to enable volunteers to provide valuable real-time information on the status their beaches during oil spill incidents; and
- Where there is a strong interest, helping community leaders form citizen-based oil spill response organizations.
- Develop a comprehensive database to track volunteer information such as liability release forms, volunteer contact information, volunteer monitoring data and performance measures for the agency relating to volunteer hours accomplished annually. If there is a central clearinghouse for all this information, ensure that each individual community group has their own database as well.
- Distribute printed information on basic spill facts and contact numbers for residents to use when calling in spill to shoreline owners.

**Rationale:**

The use of volunteers and effective, ongoing outreach to stakeholders could increase the timeliness and effectiveness of oils spill response. In addition, doing so provides the benefit of giving stakeholders an informed stake in spill assessment and response, better access to information for responders, and potentially improves communication between responders and stakeholders. It also leverages public private participation to empower affected communities to work together with responders in tackling major events.

The final vote for this recommendation was 12 for and 0 against.

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**Recommendation No. 3**

**Evaluate and invest in appropriate early assessment and remote sensing technologies that will equip response agencies with the best available and appropriate capabilities to assess initial spill reports in the dark and inclement weather in the operating marine environments of the Northwest.**

The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology and the U.S. Coast Guard contract for a survey of experts and a literature search to determine the existing state-of-the-art technologies in remote sensing capability worldwide. The study is to be completed by July 1, 2005, and an agency implementation plan will be done by October 1, 2005. The Governor, the Washington legislature and the Washington State Congressional Delegation will receive the final report and agency implementation plan.

1. The Task Force further recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology and the U.S. Coast Guard should assess existing technologies and resources within the Pacific Northwest and develop written agreements for joint access and use during spill response.
2. The Task Force further recommends that the Northwest Area Committee response technologies workgroup contract with a remote sensing expert to then distill the results of the aforementioned expert survey and literature search, and narrow the scope of the investigation to determine the technologies that are appropriate for the operating environments in Washington State and the Pacific Northwest. The response community should attempt to leverage the systems that are currently available, as well as the technologies that will be available within five years. Investigate other applications and/or agencies which could benefit from this technology and examine the possibility of partnering with them.
3. The Task Force recommends after the studies are completed and recommendations are forwarded, that the Northwest Area Committee and agencies purchase, lease or contract for the use of the recommended remote sensing technology systems as soon as possible.. The Task Force further recommends that the co-chairs ensure that Northwest response personnel are trained in the use of any sensing technologies acquired and on an ongoing basis. An emphasis should be placed on purchasing entire technology systems that leverage currently existing systems, equipment and platforms throughout the Puget Sound including local agencies. Total system costs, should include but not be limited to the equipment itself, ongoing maintenance, platforms, operators, training and lifecycle costs.

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4. The Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs educate the public on the capabilities and limitations of the remote sensing technologies now in use in the region and those that may be acquired now or in the future.
  
5. Identify funding to ensure technology recommendations and acquisitions are implemented.

**Rationale:**

The utilization of remote sensing, especially in periods of darkness and inclement weather, can increase the window of time for oil contamination detection in various marine environments and assisting in the early assessment of the extent and magnitude of an oil spill, thereby increasing the timeliness of response. These technologies may also prove useful during night-time clean up operations and extend the productive hours of on-water oil recovery operations. This could be an effective tool in the first twelve hours of a spill response under adverse weather conditions. This effort is viewed to augment previous technology reviews and testing efforts.

The final vote for this recommendation was 12 for and 0 against.

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**Recommendation No. 4**

**Improve initial spill reporting mechanisms.**

1. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee public affairs workgroup ensure that the phone number for the National Response Center is included in all area and local community phone books. The Task Force further recommends that the co-chairs educate the public and all 911 centers about how to call in spills. The education should:

- a. Specifically promote the National Response Center phone number as the default spill notification number.
- b. Evaluate the effectiveness of current state education funding already provided for how to report a spill.

2. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs educate all member state's 911 call centers to receive and transfer calls to the National Response Center to ensure that accurate spill information is reported and recorded. This will further reduce caller frustration with being told to hang up and call a variety of other state and federal agencies.

3. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology and the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs evaluate and carry out best outreach practices or methods for communicating spill information to stakeholders particularly those in affected communities. The Task Force recommends an improved system of early notification of reported spills to county departments of emergency management and affected tribes. Notification shall be implemented as soon as possible not to exceed two hours. Outreach should include, but not be limited to:

- a. Specifically evaluating the use of further leveraging the use of Websites accessible to all stakeholders.
- b. Ensuring liaison officers have contacts with all governments (local, state, federal, and tribal governments).
- c. Ensuring that liaison officers have contacts with key stakeholders representatives in all communities, such as NGO's and local community groups
- d. Recommend an improved local community notification system.

4. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs evaluate the best methodologies for obtaining local stakeholder input which may involve having them in the command post or receiving remote input during response.

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5. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology and the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs have all parties signatory to the Northwest Area Contingency Plan agree to use a common initial assessment and initial action form, with (if possible) a common format,

- The form will include specifics on weather (sea state, wind, tide, currents, visibility) and local conditions.
- Form can include separate attachments pertinent to individual agencies but should have common content and organization.
- Form should include specific early response actions including timely contact with key partners (e.g. Washington Department of Ecology, Environmental Protection Agency, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and affected community representatives).

6. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs continue to have government spill response call takers immediately contact a trained pollution investigator for a phone conference. The call taker may initiate an immediate response; however, he/she may not make the decision to not respond. That decision must be referred up the chain of command.

7. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs evaluate the best methodology for passing initial response information to other involved spill assessment/response agencies. Spill reports should be immediately shared between the spill entity agency who first receives the report and all other spill responder entities. A caller reporting a spill should not be asked to make multiple calls to report the information unless the caller is responsible for the spill and is required to make legal notifications.

8. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that spill response agencies evaluate more timely and standardized ways to share information about spills. Potential ways of accomplishing this include:

- Identify specific times for regular communications between federal, state and local agency partners from notification until the Unified Command is established at an Incident Command Post and is set up.
- Have a dedicated open line(s) between the agencies upon spill response system activation.
- Evaluate use of virtual information sharing.

9. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the State of Washington establish an interoperable communication system between local, state, federal, tribal agencies for use in oil spill coordination. This would allow response entities to access common frequencies.

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10. A predetermined communications plan template (ICS 205 form) should be developed to ensure that Primary Response Contractors, other contractors, agencies and the responsible party can communicate effectively.

11. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the State of Washington encourage interagency agreements to plan, site, and operate multi-jurisdictional cell towers, encourage co-location and joint public/private partnerships to enhance cell phone coverage in coastal areas.

**Rationale:**

Communications between response entities clearly play a definitive role in any spill. Leveraging local agency resource, participation and response should be improved in early hours of notification. Enhancing involved agency assessment/response procedures and mechanisms some the issues common to any response would have a clear benefit to the outcome of future spill incidents.

The final vote for this recommendation was 12 for and 0 against.

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**Recommendation No. 5**

**Improve community liaison/outreach during spills.**

1. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs publish and distribute “user friendly” information on the way the liaison function works within the Incident Command System (ICS) process. Further, the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs will offer ICS/liason awareness training in different locations around the state and solicit industry support for this educational effort.

2. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs develop Standard Operating Procedures/detailed guidance for liaison officers that provides information pertinent to:

- When and how local government, tribal, and other constituents be kept apprised of an actual or potentially significant oil spill;
- Detailed constituent telephone and e-mail lists should be developed and maintained electronically; and
- Automated voice and e-mail technology should be acquired and used to rapidly notify key assessment, response and affected stakeholders.

**Rationale:**

Early notification of aquaculture interests, local governments, tribes, elected officials, local community organizations, maritime stakeholders, and others has been a focus of both Washington Department of Ecology and the U.S. Coast Guard during past oil spills. These processes and procedures should be reviewed, improved and formalized on a regular, ongoing basis. Local agencies may have resources to assist in early assessment and should be contacted within first hours of initial notification.

The final vote for this recommendation was 12 for and 0 against.

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**Recommendation No. 6**

**Strengthen early action spill assessment and response procedures for the Washington Department of Ecology and the U.S. Coast Guard.**

1. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology and the U.S. Coast Guard revise standard operating procedures (SOPs) to provide additional detailed guidance for spill responders. The SOPs should emphasize aggressive action on actual or potentially significant oil spills. Specifically, clear guidance should be provided to staff on the following:

- There is a stated policy that “over-responding” by agencies is required if there is doubt as to the severity of a spill.
- Describes when helicopter over flights, on-water reconnaissance, and trajectory models to predict oil slick movement should be initiated;
- Describes actions to be taken when weather or safety considerations could impact potential response actions, and requires consultation with senior personnel to make response decisions when safety is a concern;
- Includes a simplified and standardized response decision tree in plain English to aid initial response personnel in their early actions. Emphasis should be placed on notifying senior management; on aggressive and early assessment. Not responding is not an option for the initial contact.
- Describes a method for ensuring accurate and timely information sharing with the National Response Center and the local and state Division of Emergency Management. This will require a link up with the original caller when possible.
- Describes how tribes, local governments, and local volunteer groups will be activated.
- Encourages local/on-site contact assessment (safe, prepared personnel).
- For the Washington Department of Ecology, includes guidance on when the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) team should be contacted, and when other state trustee agencies should be notified;
- For the Washington Department of Ecology, includes a decision process for deploying the Incident Management Action Team. This guidance should describe a multi-level approach that scales the state response to the potential or actual threat posed by the incident;
- For the Washington Department of Ecology, includes a decision process for when and how the Spill Program’s command post should be deployed;

2. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology and the U.S. Coast Guard review and update a comprehensive list of tribes, local government and non government resources available to partner in response actions. The Task Force further recommends that written agreements with local resources are sought, where necessary, to ensure mutual aid and assistance.

**Rationale:**

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U.S. Coast Guard and the Washington Department of Ecology report that the existing SOPs have served the organization well in managing the agency's response to routine spills for several years. However, during the Dalco Passage Mystery oil spill, Ecology's after-hours spill response duty officer and NRDA duty officer felt they had discretion in applying the SOPs. They made a "judgment call" at about 2:00 a.m. that there was nothing they could do until first light. That has proven to have been a mistake; therefore, the Washington Department of Ecology procedures should provide additional detail on response actions, local resources available (including local government agencies), response contractor assets available and other topics. The Washington Department of Ecology will continue to coordinate with all appropriate entities in setting up joint command posts.

The final vote for this recommendation was 12 for and 0 against.

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**Recommendation No. 7**

**Sufficient and appropriate response equipment should be pre-positioned to respond to potential worst case spills. Unannounced drills should be used to test the effectiveness of the equipment and the response system in the Pacific Northwest.**

1. The Washington Department of Ecology is encouraged to file its final contingency plan rule no later than November 30, 2005.
2. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington State Department of Ecology and U.S. Coast Guard evaluate the risk of spills and the sensitivity of Washington's environment and economy when strengthening the oil spill contingency planning regulatory standards. The state should develop objective and measurable planning standards that ensure there is sufficient and appropriate response equipment pre-positioned to protect sensitive resources in areas at highest risk from spills. Outreach to all agencies and industry is encouraged to gain the most comprehensive regulations possible.
3. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington Department of Ecology ensure that the on-going contingency plan rule making process include an impartial and objective analysis of the adequacy and appropriateness of response equipment in the State of Washington. This assessment should include local government agency partners and non-traditional resources i.e.: fishing industry, marine construction industry, volunteer/non-profit agencies (equipment type, number, location) to be completed within six months of the Oil Spill Early Action Task Force final report. Outreach to tribes, all agencies and industry is encouraged to gain the most comprehensive review possible.
4. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Washington State Department of Ecology contingency planning rules incorporate improved performance standards for unannounced drills that will test the effectiveness of Washington's response system, the Northwest Area Plan and industry plans, and involved agencies response to orphan spills. These requirements will include agency sponsored orphan spill drills designed to test agency response and the Northwest Area Plan.
5. The Task Force recommends that tribes, industry and agencies stage equipment with local agencies/groups and near identified Geographic Response Plans where possible and beneficial.

**Rationale:**

The geographic area impacted by the Dalco Passage spill has high value natural resources, particularly in Quartermaster Harbor. This sensitive area is located adjacent to an area that is at higher risk of spills - Commencement Bay. The Washington Department of Ecology is currently revising its oil spill contingency plan rules and developing regulatory standards that will ensure

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that equipment is appropriately pre-staged. The department should consider spill risks and environmental sensitivity as they revise the rule.

The final vote for this recommendation was 12 for and 0 against.

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**Recommendation No. 8**

**Incorporate lessons learned from recent spills should be incorporated into Washington Department of Ecology and the U.S. Coast Guard policies, procedures and regulations to improve the Northwest Area Plan.**

1. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs improve the effectiveness of the Area Plan by:
  - Developing an “Orphan Spill Response Plan” that will guide the responding agencies on spills when a responsible party is not immediately identified. The plan should address early decision making processes, leadership and coordination between the federal, tribal, state, and local governments and procedures for more intensive assessment of spill magnitude and hazards. The Task Force further recommends that the “Orphan Spill Plan” be tested through agency led unannounced drills. These unannounced drills are to focus on agency (Coast Guard and Department of Ecology) performance, but may not be exclusive to only these agencies.
  - Improving the guidance in the Northwest Area Plan for the initial phase/early response actions by:
    - a. Pre-identifying suitable command post locations throughout the state. The Committee co-chairs will first establish enhanced and improved criteria for suitable command posts, such as communication and space needs and will establish mutual aid agreements where needed for command posts throughout the state.
    - b. Updating the communications plan contained in the Area Plan to enhance initial communication procedures for spill response. For example, the Area Committee should encourage agencies to establish a common VHF and/or UHF radio frequency for responders, helicopters and regulators working initial spill. Agencies should sponsor more communications drills that test the communications plan once it is developed.
  
2. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs perform impartial and objective reviews of significant spills. The co-chairs should develop guidance for this process that includes a threshold for what is considered a “significant spill”.
  
3. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the U.S. Coast Guard, Washington Department of Ecology, and the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs incorporate spill response lessons learned are incorporated in a timely manner into the Northwest Area Committee and Northwest Area Contingency plans and these plans are reviewed on a continual basis.

**Rationale:**

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The Northwest Area Plan provides policies, guidance and tools for responders in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. It serves as the response plan for both the Coast Guard and the Washington Department of Ecology. The recent Foss Maritime and Dalco Passage spills have highlighted some areas where plan improvements can be made in order to maximize the benefits of human and technology strengths.

The final vote for this recommendation was 12 for and 0 against.

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**Recommendation No. 9**

**The Geographic Response Plans (GRPs) contained in annexes to the Northwest Area Contingency Plan need additions of new and updates to existing GRPs using a thorough public participation process. The Task Force recommends that more financial resources be dedicated to the GRP update and addition process so that the pace of the work is increased significantly with the goal of completion within three years.**

1. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs immediately proceed with revising and updating the Central Puget Sound GRP, which includes the areas of Vashon, Maury Islands and Point Wells. Specifically the Area Committee co-chairs should ensure:

- That affected community stakeholders have meaningful involvement in the process to revise the GRPs.
- That a thorough review of up-to-date information sources and the best science are used to conduct the update.
- That the response tactics devised are appropriate, and the priorities are based on up-to-date information. Available resources and best available assessment and cleanup technologies.
- That the GRP is converted to a geographic information system (GIS) based format in order to take advantage of the best science and most up-to-date information sources.

The lessons Learned on both process and science through updating this GRP should be applied to future GRP revisions.

2. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs aggressively ensure that current, up-to-date information is collected and used in developing and improving GRPs throughout the State of Washington, and that the strategies/tactics are reviewed and tested for appropriateness. Further the Task Force further recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs educate the public on GRPs, get their input as new GRPs are developed and existing GRPS are updated. Tribes and regional groups such as the Marine Resources Committees in the Northwest Straits Commission jurisdiction should be invited to be active participants.

3. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs review to ensure that there is a systematic way to test and verify existing GRP strategies and tactics on a regular basis, and that updates to the GRPs occur based on the information learned from drills and spills. The plan should identify how the comments on GRPs will be collected, the frequency of updates and define how the work will be prioritized.

4. The Oil Spill Early Action Task Force recommends that the Northwest Area Committee co-chairs establish a system of special aid buoys that would provide permanent pre-anchoring

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mechanisms in sensitive areas where normal anchoring techniques are difficult or take a long time to accomplish, deflection or containment strategies. The Area Committee co-chairs should identify and prioritize the applicable strategies and consider navigation and safety issues with stakeholder involvement, in order to develop a budget for this work.

**Rationale:**

Currently in Washington there are 13 marine water GRPs containing 573 individual sites that identify strategies to contain oil for removal or deflect oil away from sensitive sites. There are two inland water geographic response plans. This work is done under the direction of the Northwest Area Committee. GRPs identify high value natural resources. Protection strategies for these resources are developed in agreement with other government, private sector organizations and the public. These strategies may call for oil deflection, collection or for site exclusion. There is a need to improve and update the GRP's due to ever changing natural resource issues such as new Endangered Species Act listings, new tidal/current information, and real world conditions experienced during spill responses such as the Dalco Passage and the Foss Maritime spills. Local knowledge can also contribute invaluable information that can maximize protection strategies and should be fully utilized to the maximum extent practicable.

There should be more oversight and direction from the Northwest Area Committee regarding the testing of the GRPs for effectiveness. This work is often done voluntarily and paid for by the regulated community, or as required in drills and during spills. The efforts to date have largely centered in the vicinity of the fixed facilities. A systematic way of tracking the information should be developed.

Over time field verification has revealed that some of the GRP response strategies are impractical, out of date due to changing tidal or river outflow conditions. Currently there is no set process and timeline for updating the GRPs, even after a spill provides valuable information about the effectiveness of the response strategies. This is partly due to inadequate funding and resources.

There are some GRP strategies that require extensive sections of boom for protection, deflection or containment strategies. Establishing a system of special aid buoys or other equipment that would provide permanent pre-anchoring mechanisms will maximize our ability to protect high value sensitive resources.

The final vote for this recommendation was 12 for and 0 against.

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**Recommendation No. 10**

**Evaluate all appropriate citizen advisory and involvement models including Alaska's Regional Citizens Advisory Council (RCAC) and Regional Stakeholder Council (RSC), which can work effectively with the existing Northwest Area Committee framework to improve spill response in the first twelve hours.**

The Task Force recommends that up to \$40,000 be set aside within Washington Department of Ecology and U.S. Coast Guard funds to conduct an impartial and objective assessment of existing Pacific Northwest regional response and advisory functions and how an RCAC or RSC-like organizations could work with the existing Northwest Area Committee framework. Existing regional programs, such as Beach Watchers and Island Oil Spill Association, should be considered in the assessment. The goal is to maximize involvement of stakeholders and to provide value-added spill response, assessment and clean-up expertise and advice.

The Task Force would review a specific scope of work, interview and hire the independent consultant within thirty days. A final report from the consultant would be completed and due no later than February 18, 2005.

The Task Force recommends that an independent consultant evaluate the following:

1. What the RCACs or RSC's do that the current Northwest Area Committee or work groups do not.
2. What is similar between the RCACs or RSC's and the existing Northwest Area Plan
3. Focus on the first twelve hours of a response, and how the affected communities and local experts can contribute to improvements in the response system
4. Conduct a literature search to include the U.S. Coast Guard/Government Accounting Office report on the RCAC and other models, as well as the North Puget Sound Risk Management Panel report.
5. Evaluate the costs of employing a RCAC or RSC like effort and/or other regional citizen involvement models within the Northwest Area.

The Task Force will meet again to assess the results of this study.

**Rationale:**

The Task force believed they needed a more independent detailed analysis of how a Prince William Sound or Cook Inlet RCAC or a RSC process could work within the existing Northwest Area Committee process. In addition, Task force members wanted to more closely examine the costs associated with such a program.

The final vote for this recommendation was 9 for and 3 against.

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**Recommendation No. 11**

**Create an independent assessment process for regional oil spill response**

The State of Washington should establish a mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of our current spill response system. The Task Force did not have enough time in its one month of deliberations to adequately assess this complex issue. The Task Force, however, urges that state and federal policy-makers consider establishing an independent spill response assessment entity whose charge will be to provide advice and guidance to the state.

This assessment entity will have the following characteristics:

1. It will be independent.
2. Its membership will be selected in order to speak on behalf of the general public's interest in spill response. Its membership will not simply represent one member each of the various factions involved in spill response policy. Instead, membership will strive to reflect an unbiased public perspective on spill response.
3. It will have adequate resources available to it to hire some level of independent spill response expertise.
4. Its processes and deliberations will be routine and transparent.
5. Its recommendations will need to be assessed and responded to by the Washington Department of Ecology, and will also be transmitted for consideration to the U.S. Coast Guard.

**Rationale:**

Washington's spill response program will benefit from assessment and comment from an independent and unbiased entity whose goal is to improve regional oil spill response.

The final vote for this recommendation was 7 for and 5 against.