

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

February 14, 2005

1:36 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Thomas Wagoner
Senator Johnny Ellis

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Albert Kookesh

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Carl Mosses

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

USCG/State of Alaska Situation Report and overview M/V Selendang Ayu grounding

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record.

WITNESS REGISTER

USCG Admiral Jim Olson
USCG District 17
P.O. Box 25517
Juneau, AK 99802

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave joint overview of M/V Selendang Ayu grounding

Acting Commissioner Kurt Fredriksson
Department of Environmental Conservation
410 Willoughby
Juneau, AK 99801-1795

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave joint overview of M/V Selendang Ayu grounding

Rick Steiner
Shipping Safety Partnership

Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Commented on grounding of M/V Selendang Ayu

Russ Thorpe

Construction Resources

No address provided

POSITION STATEMENT: Reported difficulty associated with grounding of M/V Selendang Ayu

Dani Havland

Chill Out Parts and Equipment Supply

No address provided

POSITION STATEMENT: Reported difficulty associated with grounding of M/V Selendang Ayu

Tom Lokosh, Lead Investigator

Parker Associates

Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Commented on grounding of M/V Selendang Ayu

Walter Parker

Parker Associates

Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Commented on grounding of M/V Selendang Ayu

ACTION NARRATIVE

^USCG/State of Alaska Situation Report and Overview M/V Selendang Ayu Grounding

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at [1:36:18 PM](#). Present were Senators Stedman, Ellis, Wagoner and Chair Gary Stevens. Representative Carl Moses was also in attendance.

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ADMIRAL JIM OLSON, USCG, introduced agency representatives in the room then advised he would give a short PowerPoint presentation after which he would respond to questions.

[1:37:25 PM](#)

Slide 1: The 738-foot M/V Selendang Ayu sailed from Seattle on November 28, 2004 loaded with more than 60,000 pounds of soybeans. She was bound for China following the great circle

route. The ship passed through Unimak Pass into the Bering Sea on December 6.

Slide 2: At 4:00 am on December 7 the Coast Guard was notified that the ship had lost engine power and was drifting toward Unalaska Island. The tug Sydney Foss attempted to tow the freighter, but the tow cable broke under severe conditions. Attempts were made to anchor the vessel.

Slide 3: The anchor wasn't holding and by 5:15 pm December 8 the USCG began evacuation of some crewmembers. At 6:23 pm a USCG rescue helicopter crashed with ten persons on board. A second helicopter rescued four persons, but six persons were lost at sea.

By 7:14 pm December 8 the M/V Selendang Ayu broke in two.

CHAIR GARY STEVENS asked why the vessel was going north of the Aleutians.

ADMIRAL OLSON explained that when sailing from any point on the west coast of the U.S. to China you travel close to the Aleutians and most ships go through Unimak Pass.

Slides 4-8: The Coast Guard asked the vessel to transfer fuel and close all valves. Initial estimates of fuel on board included 443,000 gallons of IFO 380 and 21,000 gallons diesel fuel.

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Slide 9-11: The success of the event was due in large part to the Coast Guard, the State of Alaska, and party responsible for the Selendang Ayu working together to create a unified response under the Incident Command System. A unified command ensures that the key stakeholders are properly represented and that all are working toward common goals and objectives.

Slide 12: Lists the plan and permit requirements for the individual unified command. The plans include an incident action plan, wildlife, lightering, waste management, site safety, decontamination, salvage, and winter operations. The permits required include archaeological, decanting, tideland use, wildlife capture and treatment, fish habitat, waste handling, Native corporation land use.

Slide 13: Artist's rendition of the vessel showing the seven cargo holds, three double-bottom fuel tanks and aft wing tanks. They recovered about 144,000 gallons of fuel and diesel oil and believe that nearly 300,000 gallons of IFO fuel oil was lost.

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KURT FREDRIKSSON, acting commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), made the point that weather is very much a factor in this type of incident. Weather was a cause of the grounding and the real-time action taken after the grounding was very weather dependent. The safety of personnel was the number one priority.

Slide 14: Assessing the impacts is done by Shoreline Cleanup Assessment (SCAT) teams. They conduct over-flights and assess wildlife impacts and affected commercial fisheries.

Slide 15: Shows the shoreline with oil and soybeans on the beaches.

Slide 16: Indicates wildlife impacts. The International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC) opened a treatment center, but recovery was difficult. 29 birds were recovered and at last count over 1,000 had died.

Slide 17: Addresses the fisheries impacted. The Makushin Bay fishery was closed because of the State of Alaska zero tolerance policy regarding crab and fish exposure to oil. The state worked with fishermen, processors, local interest groups, and the community to determine how to manage the fishery to ensure product safety.

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Slide 18: Shows the Bering Sea district and the commercial fisheries affected.

Slide 19: Indicates there is still much to do in addition to figuring out how to open the fishery safely. December 23, 2004 the bow section sank and 176,000 gallons of IFO 380 in number 1 tank became inaccessible.

Slide 20: Indicates the shoreline-oiling map.

Slides 21-23: Shows cleanup and protection efforts. Protective boom was placed on sensitive streams, but beach cleanup was hampered by poor weather.

Slide 24: Shows large vessel offshore oil recovery efforts that proved to be rather unproductive. The "Current Buster" was taken out of service but some skimmers are still working.

Slide 25: Lightering efforts with the use of heavy-lift helicopters were quite successful and recovered between 25 and 30 percent of the oil onboard.

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ADMIRAL OLSON described lightering procedures under very tough conditions.

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MR. FREDRIKSSON described winter shutdown in slide 26.

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Slides 27-29: Dispersants weren't used, but were available. Water quality monitoring was very successful. Tow net trawls were used to identify where the oil was concentrated and to advise the fishermen to transit elsewhere.

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Slide 30-31: Fishermen were taught how to monitor for oil using pom-poms. Seafood inspections were conducted and the fishery was successful.

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Slide 32: The fishermen and state did everything possible to ensure uncontaminated seafood.

Slide 33: Daily public meetings kept locals, tribal groups and Native corporations informed. The web site was updated frequently to keep the public and the media informed.

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Slide 34: Salvage operations were described.

Slide 35: Wreck assessments were conducted remotely.

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Slide 36: Winter operations plans include: surveillance flights, water quality monitoring, oil tracking, and HAZWOPER training for residents.

Slide 37: Local Area Map

Slide 38: Spring/Summer Operations Plan includes SCAT surveys, cultural resource protection, waste management, fisheries water quality sampling and termination endpoints.

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Slide 39: Major accomplishments: the lightering is complete, gross contamination is removed, the Opilio crab fishery is complete and zero tolerance was achieved.

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For additional information visit the Unified Command Website:
<http://www.state.ak.us/dec/spar/perp>

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CHAIR GARY STEVENS said he was pleased to hear that the unified command structure appears to have worked very well.

MR. FREDRIKSSON complimented the unified command.

ADMIRAL OLSON said the website was very successful and received 1 million hits the first week. He also complemented everyone that was on scene.

CHAIR GARY STEVENS noted that Mr. Ron Philemenoff, representing the Saint Paul village corporation, TDX, was listening with interest because it has major landholdings in and around the spill site.

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RICK STEINER, Shipping Safety Partnership representative, informed the committee he is also a professor and conservation specialist with the University of Alaska Marine Advisory Program. He commended the committee for holding the overview

because of the cultural, subsistence and natural resources that have been impacted. Certainly there are success stories in the response to this disaster, but standing back and looking at the entire scope of incident "the glass was about 95 percent empty and maybe 5 percent full," he said.

The risk in using this maritime transportation route is well documented and has been pointed out to the State of Alaska and the U.S. Coast Guard for decades. If anything was learned from the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill it is that any response is largely ineffective. In this disaster six human lives were lost, tens of thousands of birds and marine mammals died, a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter was lost, and the vessel and its cargo are gone. The financial loss will likely fall between \$100 and \$200 million and it was a disaster that was waiting to happen.

The Shipping Safety Partnership that has been formed among non-governmental organizations is focused on preventing future disasters. The goal is to improve safety of this maritime transit area and they applaud the Governor for asking that a risk assessment be done. Also sorely needed are a rescue tug and a tracking system for the 4,000-6,000 vessels transiting this area every year, Mr. Steiner said.

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In closing he asked the Legislature to make an emergency appropriation for an interim protection system for the Aleutians for the time it takes to conduct a risk assessment. He suggested \$5 million be given to DEC out of the Oil and Hazardous Substance Release Prevention and Response Fund so an adequate open ocean rescue tug could be on station immediately in the Unimak Pass area. "This is a state responsibility as well as a Coast Guard responsibility."

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CHAIR GARY STEVENS thanked Mr. Steiner for his letter with specific recommendations and asked him to explain his suggestion regarding routing further from shore since vessels still need to go through the Aleutian chain.

MR. STEINER acknowledged there is only so much the state and Coast Guard can ask of vessels in terms of route, but through voluntary agreement with the National Maritime Organization areas to be avoided (ATBA) or particularly sensitive sea areas (PSSA) have begun to be established. The farther vessels transit

from sensitive habitat, the better. The voluntary agreements are very encouraging.

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SENATOR WAGONER asked where the information about loss to sea life came from.

MR. STEINER replied bird carcass recovery of 1,600 comes from the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Unified Command website. The Exxon Valdez ratio of recovered carcasses to the number of lost and uncounted birds was about ten to one. Fish and Wildlife is extrapolating from the number of dead to determine what the range of total mortality has been. Using the ratio, the acute mortality to date is 16,000 and that doesn't count the chronic mortality that will occur for years to come.

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RUSS THORPE, Construction Resources, testified for himself and Dani Havland with Chill Out Parts and Equipment Supply, to report that they have been having difficulty getting paid for services and supplies rendered.

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MR. FREDRIKSSON responded the payer would be the responsible party.

CHAIR GARY STEVENS agreed that everyone should be paid for work done. He assured Mr. Thorpe the Admiral said the Unified Command would take this matter up and he encouraged him to contact his office if further attention was warranted.

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TOM LOKOSH said he was the lead investigator for Parker Associates that was contracted by the Alaska Oceans Program to investigate the grounding of the Selendang Ayu and provide recommendations in the future. He faxed his testimony to Chair Gary Steven's office and a copy is in the committee file.

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WALTER PARKER, Parker Associates, said shipping in the North Pacific is changing rapidly and will require a lot of work. He cautioned that the Republic of China is very new in

international maritime trade and might present a great challenge.

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CHAIR GARY STEVENS noted there was no other further testimony. He thanked Mr. Fredriksson and Admiral Olson for participating and asked both to contact him to discuss the suggestions regarding vessel tracking, a rescue tug, and interim protection.

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Gary Stevens adjourned the meeting at [2:57:06 PM](#).