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Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference

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Tribal and First Nations leadership on trans-boundary shipping safety and cultural resource protection

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Session Title: Tribal and First Nations leadership on trans-boundary shipping safety and cultural resource protection

Panelists:

Roger Girourard, Canadian Coast Guard

CAPT Linda Sturgis, U.S. Coast Guard Sector Puget Sound

Chad Bowechop, Makah Tribe, Office of Marine Affairs

John Konovsky, Tsleil-Waututh Nation

Terry Williams, Tulalip Tribes Natural Resources

Background:

Existing levels of vessel traffic carrying oil and hazardous materials, including crude oil and diluted bitumen, through the Salish Sea region carry a potential risk for a catastrophic oil spill. As traffic increases, so do the associated risks. The U.S. and Canadian federal governments, State of Washington, Province of British Columbia, Washington State Treaty Tribes, and Canadian First Nations share a mutual responsibility as resource trustees, traditional stewards, and regulators to cooperatively govern the areas of oil spill prevention, preparedness and response as well as marine environmental management. For the past decade, Tribes and First Nations have provided increasing leadership to protect their cultural resources, health, safety and the shared environment by working to ensure coordinated, efficient, and effective support of a range of efforts to reduce risks from oil and hazardous substance shipments within the Pacific Northwest.

Panel Discussion and Outcomes:

This panel brought together leaders from the U.S. and Canadian governments, First Nations and Treaty Tribes to consider existing and potential future mechanisms through which Tribes and First Nations may contribute to the reduction of risks from vessel traffic in the Canadian/US Pacific NW Transboundary Region. The panel

discussion explored opportunities to strengthen formal working relationships, information sharing, and strategic actions to ensure Tribes and First Nations in the U.S. and Canada are fully engaged in effective oil spill prevention, preparedness and response. Active leadership by Tribes and First Nations enables them to represent and protect their cultural and marine resource interests.

Each panelist provided a brief opening statement, highlighting recent activities that their organization has undertaken to promote Trans-boundary marine oil spill prevention, preparedness, and response. The panelists discussed how ongoing efforts on both side of the border interrelate, and identified opportunities for First Nation and Tribal leadership to participate in ongoing regulatory processes, and other initiatives such as Treaty Rights at Risk and National Ocean Policy, the Oceans Protection Plan, US Coast Guard Ports and Waterways Safety Assessments, Harbor Safety Committees, CANUSPAC oil spill exercises, and the US/Canada Joint Contingency Plan.

Panelists agreed that while there are strong partnerships and coordinating mechanisms already in place, it is important to provide opportunities to evaluate and enhance preparedness in support of Tribal and First Nation stewardship responsibilities.