



RESOLUTION SUPPORTING CITIZENS OVERSIGHT FOR THE TRANS-ALASKA PIPELINE SYSTEM

Spanning 800 miles of Alaska, from Prudhoe Bay on the North Slope to the Valdez Marine Terminal on Prince William Sound, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline is an engineering marvel that crosses the Brooks Range at Atigun Pass (elevation 4,739 feet), the Yukon River, and five major tributaries to the Copper River (among other waterbodies). Residents of this region fear a spill from a pipeline breach could quickly end up in the main stem of the Copper River and damage spawning and migratory habitat of the world-famous Copper River salmon. Based on our experience attempting to reduce the risks posed by TAPS for the Copper River watershed, we recommend that Congress establish a citizen oversight council for the TAPS.

As an example, Alyeska's estimated response time for Containment Site 10-21 and 10 – 20 on the Tazlina River is just over six hours.¹ Analysis by the CRWP of a hypothetical spill at the TAPS' crossing of the Tazlina River using USGS hydrologic flow rates makes a critical point: even under perfect weather conditions allowing for timely spill response, *oil will have passed designated containment sites and entered the main stem of the Copper River before response and clean-up are expected to begin.* Alyeska Pipeline Service Company has no containment sites on the Copper River, no on-site training for tactics or strategies in the Contingency Plan to address such a disaster.

Therefore, we, the directors of the Copper River Watershed Project, find and resolve that:

WHEREAS over 160 miles of the Trans-Alaska pipeline run through the upper Copper River watershed, crossing over seventy-six fish-bearing rivers and streams; and

WHEREAS wild Copper River salmon are the cornerstone of the Copper River watershed's economy, culture, subsistence and way of life; and

WHEREAS events on Alaska's North Slope in March, 2006 highlight the growing danger of corrosion-caused spills from the 30-year old pipeline system; and

WHEREAS the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System's proximity to the Copper River and risk of a pipeline spill is the greatest threat to ecological health of the Copper River watershed, including wildlife and fish habitat; and

WHEREAS an oil release into a tributary to the Copper River could, under high – flow summer conditions or poor winter weather conditions that lengthen response times, travel past designated containment sites and enter the main stem of the Copper River before Alyeska Pipeline Service Company responders reach the containment site; and

WHEREAS Alyeska Pipeline Service Company has no established containment site on the Copper River; and

WHEREAS a 1969 US Geological Survey dye tracer study showed that a dye cloud traveled from the Chitina Bridge to the Million Dollar Bridge in 21 hours; and

WHEREAS research conducted in the wake of the Exxon *Valdez* indicates oil is more persistent and toxic in water than previously measured; and

¹ Det Norske Veritas, *Screening Risk Assessment, Appendix III, Transit Time Model Documentation and Results*, May 10, 2005, p. III-7.

WHEREAS, safe transportation of oil through pipelines requires continued diligence in oversight of operations on the part of all three interests: operators, regulators, and regional stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, operators' interests in the TAPS are represented by the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company; and

WHEREAS, State and Federal regulator interests are represented by the Joint Pipeline Office, responsible for providing permitting services to pipeline operators; and

WHEREAS, those people who have the most to lose in the event of an oil spill – regional stakeholders and local citizens dependent on fish, game, clean water and aesthetic resources – are not formally represented in the process of oversight of pipeline operations; and

WHEREAS, local citizen involvement in oil pipeline oversight requires formal authority and authorization, funding and independence to be a relevant and meaningful component of the process to monitor safe operations of oil pipeline systems; and

WHEREAS, citizen oversight is already being accommodated for oil terminal and tanker operations through congressionally recognized and established regional citizens advisory councils; and

WHEREAS, those councils have become an integral part of safe operations, and this effective partnership has developed what is considered by many to be the safest marine oil transportation system in the world; and

WHEREAS a mechanism should be established that fosters the same type of long-term partnership between industry, government and local residents and communities in overseeing compliance with environmental concerns in the safe operation and continued maintenance of the TAPS and the oil transportation system that feeds it,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Copper River Watershed Project is gravely concerned about ensuring the Copper River watershed is protected from the risk of pipeline oil spills and expressly supports efforts to authorize citizen oversight and monitoring of Trans-Alaska Pipeline System operations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the TAPS citizen oversight body have a membership that reflects the diverse interests of the communities and residents within the areas exposed to impacts expected from catastrophic and chronic oil pipeline features and oil spills.

Adopted this 26th day of October, 2009.

ATTEST:

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Cory Larson, President
Copper River Watershed Project



Kristin Smith, Executive Director
Copper River Watershed Project