

RESOLUTION 2009-01

A RESOLUTION OF COPPER COUNTRY ALLIANCE

Calling for the creation of a Trans-Alaska Pipeline Citizens Advisory Council.

Since 1991, Copper Country Alliance (CCA) has represented conservation interests in the Copper Basin/Wrangell Mountains region of Alaska. The mission of CCA is "to protect the rural and wild natural environment of the Wrangell Mountains/Copper River region." CCA is an all-volunteer organization. Most members reside in the region; all have stakes in keeping this region a healthy place to live, work, hunt, fish, and/or recreate. Copper River salmon are an important source of subsistence food for residents of this region and other parts of Alaska. Salmon are a key part of the natural food web, feeding bears, eagles, and ravens, and adding nutrients to the soil. Visiting subsistence, personal use, and sport fishermen contribute to the local economy. The village of Gulkana draws its drinking water from the Gulkana River, below the pipeline crossing.

The Trans-Alaska Pipeline (TAPS) is aging, and spill risks typically increase in aging pipelines. TAPS was designed for a thirty-year life but has been operating for nearly thirty-two. Over the years, there have been many near-misses and occasional significant spills, but fortunately, no oil has reached any of the five major Copper River tributaries that the pipeline crosses--so far. It is generally recognized that an oil spill into our fast-moving rivers would be impossible to clean up.

Because of our region's dependence on healthy rivers and healthy salmon, an oil spill into any of the tributaries would have devastating consequences for the environment, its natural resources, and the people of the region. The health of TAPS employees, of other responders, and of those living near or utilizing the affected waters--many of whom would be local residents--could be endangered during spill response.

Copper Country Alliance and others in this region have seen the success of the nearby Prince William Sound Citizens Advisory Council in making marine oil transportation much safer. We believe that a similar citizens advisory council for the TAPS is essential to ensure safe and environmentally sound pipeline operation. Therefore, we, the members of the board of directors of Copper Country Alliance, find and resolve that:

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 which 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 Copper Country Alliance formally requests the Federal Government and State of Alaska to take appropriate action to create a Trans-Alaska Pipeline System Regional Citizens Advisory Council (TAPS RCAC), which shall be authorized to provide independent citizen oversight and monitoring of pipeline operations.

Be it further resolved:

That the Federal Government and State of Alaska provide an ongoing funding mechanism for the TAPS RCAC.

Be it further resolved:

That the TAPS RCAC 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 failures and oil spills.

Adopted this 12th day of June 2009.

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