

Alaska State Legislature

Official Business



State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska
99801-1182

Representative Les Gara
Representative Beth Kerttula
Representative Berta Gardner
Representative Harry Crawford
Representative Pete Petersen
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Bob Buch
Representative Max Gruenberg
Representative David Guttenberg
Representative Woodie Salmon

March 27, 2009

To the Commissioners of the Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Environmental Conservation

Re: Drift River Oil Terminal & Catastrophic Oil Spill Danger

Dear Commissioners:

We are writing to express concern about the danger to our Cook Inlet fisheries created by the Drift River oil storage terminal. It's now obvious, and has been for a long time, that the existence of West Cook Inlet's main crude oil storage facility in a volcanic floodplain poses a danger to one of the state's most important fisheries.

It is our understanding that the danger that is presented today may be great. We believe there may be a risk to the terminal, and an oil release, due to river flooding, and a current inability to offload crude oil from the Drift River tanks. We also face the Catch-22: If we don't continue producing oil from the Cook Inlet wells, then the wells have to be shut in and it will be expensive to restart them. As that oil is produced, it will ultimately have to be sent to the Drift River terminal, and as of yesterday, no oil could be offloaded from that terminal due to dock area debris caused by the Mt. Redoubt eruption.

First, we would like to offer whatever assistance we can in solving this immediate problem and also in developing and implementing plans to avoid similar situations in the future.

We would also ask for responses to the following concerns, which largely address future efforts to make sure the risk we face today doesn't repeat itself after this round of volcanic activity is over.

1) We would like to know details of the plan to move oil from the Drift River terminal when the dock is closed. At what point will wells be shut in? What does it take to reopen them? Is it possible in the future to create a surplus storage facility away from Drift River for times like this?


2) With continued oil production, we are told that within a week more crude oil is going to have to be sent to the endangered Drift River storage tanks, increasing the chance of a spill into Cook Inlet's salmon rich waters. What are the plans for opening the dock? What are the impediments to reopening the dock? Does the state have a roll? Certainly we would be concerned about human safety matters, and would not want to risk grave injury for people if that's what would be required to re-open the facility.

3) What is the long term plan for this facility? It seems clear that the current set up poses a great public danger.

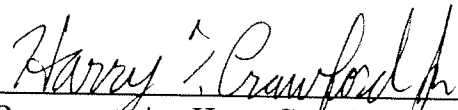
Again, if we can provide any assistance, we are eager to help.

We look forward to hearing from you as time permits.

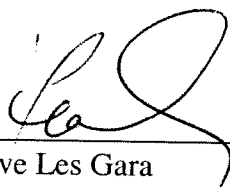
Thank you,



Representative Bob Buch




Representative Harry Crawford



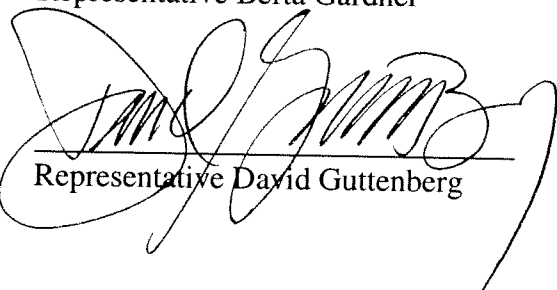
Representative Les Gara



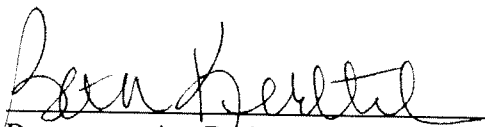
Representative Berta Gardner



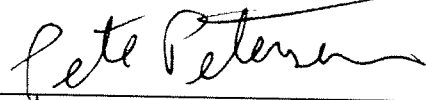
Representative Max Gruenberg



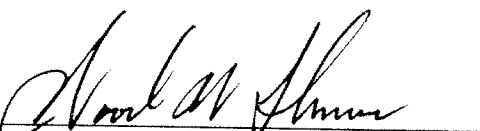
Representative David Guttenberg



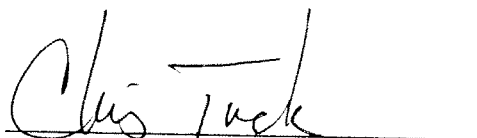
Representative Beth Kerttula



Representative Pete Petersen



Representative Woodie Salmon



Representative Chris Tuck

cc: Governor Sarah Palin
Bob Shavelson, Executive Director, Cook Inlet Keeper
Mark Vinsel, Executive Director, United Fisherman of Alaska
Michael Munger, Executive Director, Cook Inlet Regional Citizen's Advisory Council
Lance Hankins, President, Alaska Flyfishers Association
Rod Arno, Executive Director, Alaska Outdoor Council
Ricky Gease, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association