

# SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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**TO:** Commissioners and Alternates

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**SUBJECT: Briefing on the Role of Harbor Safety Committee of the San Francisco Bay Region Following the Cosco Busan Oil Spill**  
(For Commission consideration on November 6, 2008)

## Introduction

The Commission will receive a briefing from Commissioner Joan Lundstrom, Chair of the Harbor Safety Committee of the San Francisco Bay Region, on the Committee's work since the Cosco Busan oil spill. The November 7, 2007 allision of the container ship with the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge resulted in approximately 53,000 gallons of fuel oil spilling into San Francisco Bay, prompting months of response and cleanup activities. The focus of the Harbor Safety Committee is the prevention of such incidents and associated potential environmental damage.

## Staff Report

Following the November 7, 2007 Cosco Busan oil spill, Governor Schwarzenegger directed the Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) to investigate the causes of, and response to, the allision of the Cosco Busan and resulting oil spill. OSPR called upon the Harbor Safety Committee of the San Francisco Bay Region (HSC) to analyze the navigational safety-related issues of the Governor's directive and make appropriate recommendations regarding the prevention aspects of the incident. The twenty-member committee, established by the state legislature, is comprised of port authorities; cargo, tanker, tug, barge and ferry operators; labor; bar pilots; recreational boaters; environmental organizations; commercial fishermen; the Coast Guard Captain of the Port; BCDC; NOAA and the Corps of Engineers.

Beginning in late November 2007, the HSC proceeded to address the following navigational and operational safety issues outlined in the Governor's directive: speed restrictions, tugboat escorts, inclement weather sailing conditions, crew staffing, navigational equipment, Vessel Traffic Service system, and Physical Oceanographic Real time System (PORTS). During public meetings held over a number of months, the HSC Work Groups of maritime experts discussed the issues, and based on facts available of the allision, developed recommendations to improve



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vessel transit in the Bay. A series of reports were prepared and submitted to OSPR for transmittal to the Governor. A summary of the recommendations adopted by the HSC follows.

**Physical Oceanographic Real Time System (PORTS).** On January 10, 2008, the HSC adopted the PORTS Work Group recommendation to permanently fund the San Francisco Bay Region PORTS from the Oil Spill Prevention and Administration Fund. PORTS has proven value to the maritime community. The Work Group also recommended that a prioritized series of additional sensors be deployed in critical locations in San Francisco Bay, to reflect conditions within the Bay's microclimates.

**Tug Escorting.** On March 13, 2008, the HSC adopted the Tug Escorts Work Group finding that there was no evidence to suggest tug escorting would have prevented the Cosco Busan incident, or similar incidents, from occurring. Additionally, the Work Group concluded that the risks associated with using an escort tug as a "leader" in limited visibility outweigh potential benefits.

**Navigating in Reduced Visibility.** On March 13, 2008, the HSC adopted 'Guidelines for Navigating in Reduced Visibility' and designated Critical Maneuvering Areas in the Central Bay. Developed primarily by the San Francisco Bar Pilots with the Coast Guard, and augmented by the Navigation Work Group, the guidelines will be incorporated in the Bar Pilots' Operations Guidelines as well as their Tide Book, the Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) Training Manual, U.S. Coast Pilot 7, and the Harbor Safety Plan.

**Vessel Traffic Service, Coast Guard Authority.** On March 13, 2008, the HSC adopted the Prevention Through People Work Group findings that adequate Coast Guard authority to regulate shipping and control vessel movements already exists in current law, and that the best skills for maneuvering a vessel originate from onboard the ship itself, not from the Vessel Traffic Service. VTS Operators on Yerba Buena Island do not have instantaneous knowledge of the particular ship's characteristics and of the tidal and wind forces acting on a vessel.

**Navigational Safety for Commute Ferries.** To increase the safe transport of commute passengers, a major segment of maritime traffic on San Francisco Bay, the HSC, on May 8, 2008, adopted ferry routes developed by the Ferry Operations Work Group with ferry operators, ferry masters and the VTS, to be incorporated into the Harbor Safety Plan and by NOAA on area nautical charts. In 2007, commute ferries carried a total of five million passengers on six routes. Additional routes are planned within the next few years.

**Speed Restrictions.** On May 8, 2008, the HSC adopted the Navigation Work Group findings that federal regulations and international guidelines adequately limit the speed of large vessels transiting the Bay during periods of reduced visibility. The San Francisco Bay region, consisting of several bays and rivers, is one of the foggiest harbors in the United States. To aid mariners, the Coast Guard established Regulated Navigational Areas (RNAs) designed to improve safety by organizing traffic patterns and limiting vessel speeds.

**Crewing Requirements.** On May 8, 2008, the HSC adopted the Navigation Work Group findings that sufficient regulations and guidelines exist under federal and international law for crewing requirements.

**Navigation Tools.** The HSC voted on July 10, 2008 to urge the Board of Pilot Commissioners, which has oversight authority over licensed San Francisco Bar Pilots, to work with the Bar Pilots to incorporate in the Pilot training program enhanced training in advanced electronic navigation systems, providing exposure to a greater number of systems, as a near-term priority. The HSC also voted to support adoption of a regulation to require that pilots licensed by the Board be equipped with portable electronic navigation equipment, commonly known as Portable Pilot Units at all times while piloting San Francisco Bay.

