



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
Washington, D.C. 20230

JAN 19 2007

Dr. Terrie Klinger, Chair
Olympic Coast National Marine
Sanctuary Advisory Council
115 East Railroad Avenue
Port Angeles, Washington 98368

Dear Dr. Klinger:

Thank you for your letter forwarded by Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary (OCNMS) Superintendent Carol Bernthal, concerning the OCNMS Advisory Council's resolution supporting the stationing of a year-round rescue tug at Neah Bay.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), working through the OCNMS, recognizes that oil spills constitute a significant threat to sanctuary resources and is working to reduce this risk on multiple fronts. Ongoing efforts include monitoring vessel traffic within OCNMS and working with the Coast Guard and maritime industry to ensure compliance with a voluntary Area to be Avoided. NOAA also is working with the State of Washington Governor's Office through the Ocean Policy Work Group to identify additional strategies to protect coastal resources, including the prevention of oil spills. NOAA believes the rescue tug is one component of such a prevention strategy, but has not taken a position on the duration of the tug stationing (i.e. seasonal or year round). I will take into consideration the views of the OCNMS Advisory Council on this matter, and will convey your views to other offices within NOAA as may be appropriate.

Protection of sanctuary resources is a priority for NOAA and I believe prevention of oil spills in sanctuaries is an important component of providing that protection. I commend the OCNMS Advisory Council for its continuing attention to this issue and appreciate your service to NOAA and the Nation.

Sincerely,

Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr.
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Under Secretary of Commerce for
Oceans and Atmosphere

THE ADMINISTRATOR

