

Borough Assembly Wants Two Tugs for PWS Tankers

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

With the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill just days away, there is the possibility that the giant super tankers that ply the waters of Prince William Sound will be able to do so unescorted by powerful tugboats to keep them out of trouble.

The law that requires two escort tugs for each tanker will expire once each boat in the tanker fleet has double hulls, which the Exxon Valdez did not. There is a movement among communities and groups in Alaska - especially those areas oiled by the 11-million-gallon spill, like Kodiak - to keep the tug escort requirement.

The Kodiak Island Borough Assembly last night passed a resolution to that effect.

Meanwhile, there are a number of Exxon Valdez commemorative events in Kodiak, starting this evening at Kodiak Island College. At 5 p.m., a collection of photographs from Kodiak Island residents of the spill's devastation on the island will be on display, with a reception catered by Mill Bay Coffee. That will be followed by two presentations about the human and environmental effects of the spill, and a short film.

At 11 a.m. on Saturday at the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center, Sharon Bushell and Stan Jones will be signing their new book, "The Spill: Personal Stories from the Exxon Valdez Disaster." At 7 p.m., Tim Richardson will give a talk on habitat restoration in the Kodiak Archipelago. The photography exhibit will be open all afternoon back at the college.

Mayor Jerome Selby pointed out that Prince William Sound is notorious for its navigational hazards:

-- (Boro 1 31 sec "And
just because Prince ... out of Prince William Sound.")

Assemblywoman
Sue Jeffrey said the memories of the spill are still fresh in her mind:

-- (Boro 2 40 sec "Well
as many of us ... so I strongly support it.")

Selby said
having the two-tug escorts have averted other disasters over the years:

-- (Boro 3 31 sec "There's
been actually ... other rocks or whatnot.")

The
resolution, which passed unanimously, will be sent to President Obama, our
congressional and legislative delegations, and a dozen others in government and
industry.

