



Spill Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Program

Sea Grant Fellowship Program 2019 Application

1. Host location and contact information

Washington State Department of Ecology Northwest Regional Office
Spill Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Program (Spills Program)
3190 160th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98008

2. Names of fellowship supervisor

Sara Thompson, Spills Program, Spills Prevention Section Unit Supervisor

3. Position description

Work Description

VESSEL SAFETY AND TUG ESCORTS

The selected fellow will focus primarily on coordinating major portions of new legislative direction that the Department of Ecology (Ecology) is expected to receive regarding vessel safety. The Washington Board of Pilotage Commissioners (BPC) will be working in close concert with Ecology on these matters and will be developing regulatory tug escort requirements based on Ecology's work and analysis. This work will likely include a synopsis of changing vessel traffic trends, identifying potential geographic zones to model, and to consider tug escort requirements. There will be a high amount of stakeholder and tribal government coordination which this fellow would assist with planning and organizing.

We are looking for a person with good judgement, strong policy and writing skills, who can work collaboratively with a diverse group of staff, stakeholders and tribes to gather information, conduct analysis, and develop key documents.

Background

More than 20 billion gallons of oil is transported through Washington State each year by vessel, pipeline, and rail. For decades, tug escorts have been required for large loaded oil tankers in the Salish Sea. The powerful tugs can quickly act to rescue a vessel if it loses propulsion or steering, preventing a tragic accident and oil spill.

However, small loaded tank vessels are not escorted, leaving a gap in the safety regime. These include Articulated Tug Barges (ATBs), towed oil barges, and smaller oil tankers that transport millions of gallons of oil through Washington's waters. The recent Ecology *Report of Vessel Traffic Safety in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound* found that tank barges have the highest potential accident frequency rate in the Salish Sea.

Requiring tug escorts for ATBs, towed oil barges and smaller oil tankers is one of the most effective measures Washington could implement. Research provided by Ecology shows the use of tug escort with these vessels can decrease potential accident frequency by as much as 15

percent. Some of the greatest benefits, according to research, would be to the Rosario Strait and connected waters east. The recent *Ecology Report of Vessel Traffic Safety in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound* identified multiple other studies that found that tug escorts are a reliable way to reduce vessel accidents and oil spill risks. Additional modeling and rulemaking is required to work with tribes and stakeholders to determine where else tug escorts would be most beneficial. This fellowship will directly support this effort by laying out the needed groundwork for BPC to conduct thoughtful rulemaking.

RAIL SAFETY

This fellow will also work on rail traffic risk assessment, which seek to provide a better understanding of rail safety. The work involves coordinating stakeholder outreach with industry, environmental organizations and tribes. Washington State is a leader on addressing oil spill risk associated with transporting oil by rail. As part of this work we are embarking on a multi-part Rail Transportation Safety effort culminating in the establishment of a WA Rail Safety Committee involving numerous complex stakeholders and tribes. The purpose of this Committee is to look at all things rail safety in the state and to establish a WA Rail Safety Plan and voluntary safety standards to be applied to rail operations that travel over 3000 miles of track in our state. This has never been done, so this fellow will be involved in cutting edge safety work involving rail, enhancing public safety and environmental protection.

Also this work will involve conducting qualitative and quantitative rail safety modeling including GIS data analysis and display techniques. This too has never been done, so we need a fellow that is skilled with people, data work, higher mathematical work related to modeling, and safety analysis report writing and presenting same to a diverse audience.”

OTHER

In addition, this position will serve as a key resource during legislative session by assisting with developing bill analyses, fiscal notes and legislative talking points. The fellow would have the opportunity to participate in the program’s legislative team meetings, in which we discuss and decide the best course of action to responding to a legislative issue.

Supervision and Mentoring

This position will be directly supervised and mentored by Sara Thompson, Spills Program, Spills Prevention Section Unit Supervisor who will oversee activities and guide development. The fellow will also be mentored by other senior staff, such as the program’s Legislative/Strategic Policy Analyst, Management Analyst, and the Rule and Process Coordinator.

The fellow will have a tailored Performance and Development Plan that provides a comprehensive and integrated approach to managing the relationship between mentors and fellows, evaluating fellows’ progress on tasks and professional growth, and ensuring clear and open discussions about opportunities for improvement - using goal-setting, self-evaluation, and supplemental information. These elements establish the foundation for a successful fellowship and career.

Growth and Networking

The fellow will interact with a wide range of oil spill experts throughout the program and state government as a whole. Other state agencies and decision makers that this position will interact

with will include: U.S. Coast Guard, the Governor's Office, Washington State Board of Pilotage Commissioners, maritime industry, oil industry, environmental organizations and tribes. The fellow will be encouraged to attend relevant meetings, trainings, and other opportunities to gain exposure of how government organizations work on oil spill issues. When opportunities arise, the fellow will be encouraged to present work to a variety of internal and external audiences. The fellow will be invited to spill drill exercises, where they can view firsthand how government and industry work along side each other to mount a rapid, aggressive and well-coordinated response. This opportunity will provide the fellow an understanding of the many facets of oil spill policy, which involve the state, while at the same time helping inform decision makers about how best to fund and direct oil spill policy into the future.

Agency and Program Background

Ecology's mission is to protect, preserve, and enhance Washington's environment, and promote the wise management of our air, land, and water. Ecology's goals are to prevent pollution, clean up pollution, and support sustainable communities and natural resources.

The Spills Program's mission is to protect Washington's environment, public health, and safety through a comprehensive spill prevention, preparedness, and response program. The Spills Program's vision is to prevent, prepare for, and respond aggressively to oil spills, and to be our best for the State of Washington. Our Spills goal is "zero spills".