

1-1-2011

## The role of the United States Coast Guard in marine environmental protection: the USCGC Alex Haley example

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### Recommended Citation

Watts, Ted and McNair-Connolly, Carol J.: The role of the United States Coast Guard in marine environmental protection: the USCGC Alex Haley example 2011, 1-14.  
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/commpapers/1877>

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## Abstract

Few countries in the world task their military with the role of marine pollution response in addition to its responsibility as a military service. One country that does is the United States of America. The United States Coast Guard has, in addition to its military and security missions, the task of marine pollution response and enforcement. This program includes the prevention of oil and chemical spills, unauthorized ocean dumping and to prevent the introduction of invasive marine species into the maritime environment . This paper considers the operational and environmental costs associated with a major oil spill and the revenue recovered from the responsible parties. It does this through the example of the USCGC Alex Haley and its role in preventing a major oil spill and protecting local wildlife sanctuaries during its search and rescue efforts following the grounding of the M/V Selendang Ayu in December 2004. The vessel was carrying approximately 1,601,055 litres of fuel and was seen as a potential risk. The paper concludes with a summary of recent emergencies involving the US Coast Guard.

## Keywords

era2015

## Disciplines

Business | Social and Behavioral Sciences

## Publication Details

Watts, T. & McNair-Connolly, C. J. (2011). The role of the United States Coast Guard in marine environmental protection: the USCGC Alex Haley example. 10th Australasian Conference on Social and Environmental Accounting Research (CSEAR 2011) (pp. 1-14). Launceston Tasmania: University of Tasmania.

# **The Role of the United States Coast Guard in Marine Environmental Protection: The USCGC Alex Haley example**

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A paper for submission to  
The 10<sup>th</sup> Australasian Conference on Social and Environmental Accounting Research  
5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011  
Launceston, Tasmania

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## **Acknowledgements**

The authors wish to acknowledge the contribution of LCDR Kevin Lopes, US Coast Guard Academy and the support of CDR M. Bell, CO of the Alex Haley, CDR Gilbert, LCDR Diaz-Rosario, LCDR Carroll, LCDR Mike Sim and other Coast Guard personnel with earlier versions of this paper. Names and facts may have been altered to protect confidential information. All errors and omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

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## **Abstract**

Few countries in the world task their military with the role of marine pollution response in addition to its responsibility as a military service. One country that does is the United States of America. The United States Coast Guard has, in addition to its military and security missions, the task of marine pollution response and enforcement. This program includes the prevention of oil and chemical spills, unauthorized ocean dumping and to prevent the introduction of invasive marine species into the maritime environment . This paper considers the operational and environmental costs associated with a major oil spill and the revenue recovered from the responsible parties. It does this through the example of the *USCGC Alex Haley* and its role in preventing a major oil spill and protecting local wildlife sanctuaries during its search and rescue efforts following the grounding of the M/V Selendang Ayu in December 2004. The vessel was carrying approximately 1,601,055 litres of fuel and was seen as a potential risk. The paper concludes with a summary of recent emergencies involving the US Coast Guard.

**Key Words:** Marine environmental protection, oil spills, United States Coast Guard

# **The Role of the United States Coast Guard in Marine Environmental Protection: The USCGC Alex Haley example**

## **Introduction**

*FEMA National Situation Update: Thursday, December 9, 2004*

*At 12:30 am EST, December 9, 2004, the M/V Selendang Ayu, a Malaysian flagged bulk cargo ship transiting from Seattle, Washington to China, grounded and broke apart in two at the entrance of Skan Bay, Unalaska, Alaska in the southwestern Aleutian Islands. A US Coast Guard rescue swimmer, along with the master of the vessel, remained on board the ship during its break-up. They both have since been hoisted to safety. The site of the incident is located near Dutch Harbor.*

*During the rescue and recovery attempts, a US Coast Guard HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter out of Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak, Alaska crashed near Skan Bay while evacuating seven of eight remaining members of the ship's crew. A second Coast Guard HH65 helicopter from the US Coast Guard cutter (USCGC) Alex Haley was able to rescue the three downed aircrew members and one injured crewmember from the water and transported them to Dutch Harbor for medical treatment (FEMA, 2004).*

This paper considers the operational and environmental costs associated with a major oil spill and the revenue recovered from the responsible parties. It does this through the example of the *USCGC Alex Haley* and its role in preventing a major oil spill and protecting local wildlife sanctuaries. The first section of the paper provides a brief background to, and the organisational structure of, the US Coast Guard. This is followed by a description of the USCGC Alex Haley, its function and operating costs. A description of the incident detailing the search and rescue efforts and the environmental protection role played by the Coast Guard following the grounding of the M/V Selendang Ayu in December 2004 provides the setting. The final section details the costs of the operation in total, the cost of the Coast Guard operation and an interaction of the costs recovered by the National Pollution Fund Center. The paper concludes with a summary of recent emergencies involving the US Coast Guard.

## **Background to the US Coast Guard**

The US Coast Guard (USCG) is one of the oldest of the five armed services in the United States. It traces its roots back to 1790 when the first Congress created the Revenue Marine, the Coast Guard has constantly evolved and expanded to fill an ever-widening array of missions. The US Coast Guard was re-assigned to the newly created Department of Homeland Security in 2002 (USCG Historians Office, 2011).

The USCG is responsible for the following four missions: (1) *Maritime Security*; Search and Rescue (SAR), Drug Interdiction, International Ice Patrol. (2) *Maritime Mobility*; Aids to Navigation, Icebreaking Services, Vessel Traffic/Waterways Management, (3) *National Defense*; General Defense Duties, Homeland Security, Port and Waterways Security and (4) *Protection of Natural Resources*; Marine Pollution Prevention, Response

& Enforcement, Living Marine Resources Protection, Marine and Environmental Science (USCG, 2011).

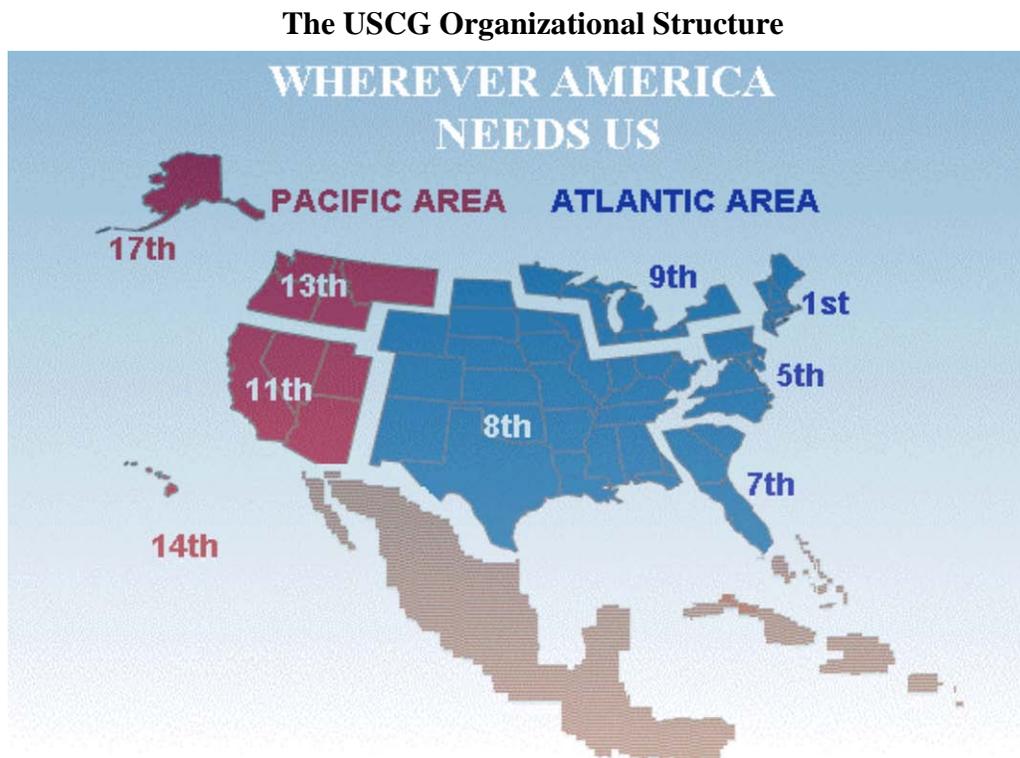
While the range of missions and responsibilities is large, the USCG corps is actually modest in size. In July, 2004 there were approximately 39,000 active duty Coast Guard personnel, 8,000 selected reservists, and 6,000 permanent civilian employees. Of the 39,000 active duty corps 31,000 are enlisted seamen, 1,300 Chief Warrant Officers, and 6,000 in the officer ranks. The major physical assets available to the USCG include 24 cutters (ships 20 metres or greater in length), 68 fixed winged aircraft, 143 helicopters and 1,400 boats (ranging from 19.5 to 4 metres in length) (USCG, 2005).

### **The USCG Organizational Structure**

The USCG's organizational structure helps deploy its scarce resources responsiveness across the 8.69 million square kilometres that comprise the U.S. Economic Enterprise Zone, or protected waters. The command structure is focused on two primary regions or areas (see Figure 1) the Atlantic Area and the Pacific Area.

The Atlantic area covers the majority of the landmass of the United States, covering the entire Atlantic seaboard through the states of Utah, Colorado and Arizona. Comprised of five districts, the 1<sup>st</sup> (Boston, MA), 5<sup>th</sup> (Portsmouth, VA), 7<sup>th</sup> (Miami, FL), 8<sup>th</sup> (New Orleans, LA), and 9<sup>th</sup> (Cleveland, OH).

Figure 1



(USCG, 2011)

Where the Atlantic Area encompasses the majority of the landmass of the United States, the Pacific Area (PACAREA) has responsibility for the 191.65 million square kilometres, from South America north to the Arctic Circle and west to the Far East and has its headquarters in San Francisco. There are four districts that make up PACAREA: the 11<sup>th</sup> (Alameda, CA), 13<sup>th</sup> (Seattle, WA), 14<sup>th</sup> (Honolulu, HI), and 17<sup>th</sup> (Juneau, AK).

### **The USCGC Alex Haley**

The 17<sup>th</sup> District of PACAREA is the homeport for the CGC Alex Haley covering the waters surrounding Alaska, the northern Pacific, and the Bering Straits. The Alex Haley is a Medium Endurance Cutter (WMEC) that was originally commissioned in 1971 as the USS Edenton, a Navy rescue and salvage ship that provided towing, rescue, and diving services to the Fleet prior to undergoing a US\$20 million refit.



**The USCGC Alex Haley**

### **Function and Operating Costs**

Based in Kodiak, Alaska, the Alex Haley conducts maritime homeland security (MHS), search and rescue (SAR), fisheries law enforcement and Marine Pollution and Response missions in the Gulf of Alaska, the Bering Sea, and the North Pacific. As with all WMEC's, the Alex Haley is scheduled to be away from its homeport in Kodiak, Alaska about 185 days a year. Normally these days are spent on active patrol of the MBL Boundary Line, responding to emergencies, steaming to and from the Alaskan fishing grounds where they enforce domestic fishing laws, and re-provisioning in Dutch Harbor or Cold Bay.

The Alex Haley is billeted for a crew of 99 officer and enlisted personnel (see Figure 6). At times the crew size will increase to 104 with the addition of over-billets and an

aviation detachment (AVDET) when underway. This detachment usually consists of 2 officers and 3 enlisted personnel.

Total personnel costs for 2004 were over \$4.7 million (see Table 1)

**Table 1**

**Crewing Details for the CGC Alex Haley in 2004**

Position Title	Grade	Number in Grade	Average Annual Individual Salary**	Total Salary by Position
Commanding Officer	CDR	1	\$ 114,505	\$ 114,505
Executive Officer	LCDR	1	\$ 101,613	\$ 101,613
Operations Officer	LT	1	\$ 82,937	\$ 82,937
Engineer Officer	LT	1	\$ 82,937	\$ 82,937
Deck Watch Officer	LTJG	2	\$ 62,383	\$ 124,766
Student Eng. Tab	ENS	2	\$ 49,553	\$ 99,106
Deck Officer--Training Billet	ENS	2	\$ 49,553	\$ 99,106
Engineering-Duty	ENG4	1	\$ 42,000	\$ 42,000
Finance & supply	F&S4	1	\$ 42,000	\$ 42,000
Boatswain Mate--Master Chief	BMC	2	\$ 87,795	\$ 175,590
Boatswain Mate--1st Class	BM1	1	\$ 56,128	\$ 56,128
Boatswain Mate--2nd Class	BM2	2	\$ 47,240	\$ 94,480
Boatswain Mate--3rd Class	BM3	4	\$ 35,894	\$ 143,576
Seamen--General	SN	27	\$ 31,603	\$ 853,281
Gunner's Mate--1st Class	GM1	2	\$ 56,128	\$ 112,256
Machinery Technician--Master Chief	MKC	2	\$ 87,795	\$ 175,590
Machinery Technician--1st Class	MK1	4	\$ 56,128	\$ 224,512
Machinery Technician--2nd Class	MK2	3	\$ 47,240	\$ 141,720
Machinery Technician--3rd Class	MK3	6	\$ 35,894	\$ 215,364
Communications Operator--1st Class	OS1	1	\$ 56,128	\$ 56,128
Communications Operator--2nd Class	OS2	1	\$ 47,240	\$ 47,240
Communications Operator--3rd Class	OS3	2	\$ 35,894	\$ 71,788
Damage Control--Master Chief	DCC	1	\$ 87,795	\$ 87,795
Damage Control--3rd Class	DC2	1	\$ 47,240	\$ 47,240
Damage Control--2nd Class	DC3	4	\$ 35,894	\$ 143,576
Electronics Mate--Senior Chief	EMCS	1	\$ 74,560	\$ 74,560
Electronics Mate--1st Class	EM1	1	\$ 56,128	\$ 56,128
Electronics Mate--2nd Class	EM2	1	\$ 47,240	\$ 47,240
Electronics Mate--3rd Class	EM3	4	\$ 35,894	\$ 143,576
Information Technician--2nd Class	IT2	1	\$ 47,240	\$ 47,240
Fireman	FN	10	\$ 31,603	\$ 316,030
Yeoman--1st Class	YN1	2	\$ 56,128	\$ 112,256
Storekeeper--1st Class	SK1	1	\$ 56,128	\$ 56,128
Storekeeper--3rd Class	SK3	2	\$ 35,894	\$ 71,788
Food Service--Master Chief	FSC	1	\$ 87,795	\$ 87,795
Food Service--1st Class	FS1	1	\$ 56,128	\$ 56,128
Food Service--3rd Class	FS3	5	\$ 35,894	\$ 179,470
Health Services	HS1	1	\$ 56,128	\$ 56,128
<b>Total Annual Salaries</b>				<b>\$ 4,739,701</b>

\*\*The average pay and allowances averages include basic pay, BHA, BAS, FICA, Incentive/special pays, clothing allowances, COLA/OHA, SRB payments.

In addition to its lifecycle projected maintenance costs and personnel costs, the Alex Haley has an operating budget of just under \$900 thousand per year (Table 2). Each time the cutter stops at Dutch Harbor or some port other than Kodiak Island, it has to pay

docking fees. These amounted to \$23.5 thousand in 2004 alone. Food was the largest operating cost in 2004, at over \$327 thousand, or 36.5 per cent of the total operating budget. Energy (fuel) was a close second at over \$250 thousand, or 28% of the budget.

**Table 2**

**2004 Operating Costs for the CGC Alex Haley**

<b>Non-personnel Costs</b>	<b>2004</b>
Emergency travel	\$ 26,479
Enlisted training travel	6,971
Patient/attend travel	13,994
Mail & messenger service – Freight	6,556
Trucks/transport of government property	10,074
Telecommunications & electronic equipment	3,849
Utilities – Water & sewer	13,910
Ships/Cutter – Housekeeping	11,508
Docking fees & services – AFHP	23,532
Energy – Ships/Cutters	250,427
Food service supplies	327,078
Safety supplies	6,335
Other supplies – Cutter	70,818
Lease of motor vehicle, GVT	9,610
Maintenance and repairs – Normal	114,121
<b>Total Operating Costs</b>	<b>895,262</b>
Annual Lifecycle Maintenance Projected Cost (LCMP)	618,352
Amortisation of Original \$20 Million Overhaul – 20 years	1,000,000
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$ 2,513,614</b>

**The Alex Haley in Action—The Rescue of the Crew of the Selendang Ayu**

The most critical element of the mission structure for any USCG vessel or crew is its search-and-rescue (SAR) operations and an equally dangerous element is added when it involves marine pollution responses. On any average day the USCG, performs over 106 SAR missions and 11 lives are saved. Each SAR also has the potential to escalate into an environmental crisis or a law enforcement event. Maritime emergencies, by definition, are most likely to occur when conditions are extreme and the danger to the victims and their rescuers are grave.

On its final deployment for 2004, the Alex Haley actively and effectively engaged in the rescue of the crew of the 225 metre Malaysian freighter, Selendang Ayu (PACAREA, 2005) and engaged in a marine pollution response to prevent a potential oil spill feared greater than the Exxon Valdez disaster. On December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the freighter was transporting a shipment of soybeans from Tacoma, Washington, the most north westerly state in the USA, to a port in China when its main engine ceased operating. The incident

occurred near Bogoslof Island, about 80 kilometres northwest of Dutch Harbor. Carrying a crew of 26, the Selendang Ayu began drifting toward Unalaska Island in the Aleutian Island chain at a rate of two kilometres per hour.

Upon receipt of the distress signal from the Selendang Ayu, the 17<sup>th</sup> District Command Center diverted CGC Alex Haley from patrol and ordered the cutter to intercept and assist the freighter. The Alex Haley arrived on the scene of the distressed vessel at approximately 11:30 am Alaskan Standard Time on Tuesday, December 7<sup>th</sup>. Two tugboats were also deployed from nearby Dutch Harbor to aid the crippled freighter, as the weather was driving it to the northern shore of Unalaska Island. The ship had been drifting for more than 38 hours as it neared the island's coast. Late on the night of the 7<sup>th</sup>, the tug Sydney Foss successfully established a tow on the Selendang Ayu, slowing its drift speed to less than one and a half kilometres per hour. As the seas rose and weather continued to deteriorate the strain became too great on the towline. Early on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>, the line snapped, once again setting the freighter fully adrift and heading for shoal-water. The crew of the freighter had been able to drop one of the ship's anchors in an attempt to slow the drift, but the anchor broke.

Rescuing the crew was clearly becoming imperative. At the same time the captain and crew of the CGC Alex Haley had to deal with an ever-increasing risk that the grounding of the freighter would create an environmental disaster. Carrying about 1,601,055 litres of heavy fuel oil and 63,130 litres of diesel fuel the Selendang Ayu represented a major threat to environmentally sensitive areas on the island (three salmon streams, two lakes and a wild life refuge).

Just one and a half kilometres off the beach, the winds and seas caused the towline to part as it was being passed between the two ships. In the early afternoon on the 8<sup>th</sup>, shortly after the Alex Haley's unsuccessful attempt to tow the freighter, the crew of the freighter was successful in dropping the ship's second anchor. Struggling against the seas on its only remaining anchor, the Master of the Selendang Ayu agreed to have 18 of his crewmen airlifted to safety by HH-60 Jayhawk helicopters based out of Kodiak. Nine were taken to the Alex Haley and the other nine to Dutch Harbor.

During the early evening of December 8<sup>th</sup>, events grew worse as the Master of the vessel reported grounding and taking on water. He requested that all remaining personnel be removed from the ship. As the Jayhawk helicopters had not returned from Dutch Harbor, Alex Haley had no options but to respond by immediately launching their HH-65 Dolphin helicopter. Once airborne, the HH-65 would remove the remaining crewmen from the Selendang Ayu.

During the seventh hoist, the HH-65 was engulfed by a huge wave and crashed into the ocean. Carrying a crew of three and seven members of the freighter's crew, the helicopter went down in rough seas (swells over nine metres), high winds (gusts over 64 kilometres per hour), and ongoing sleet and rain. The aircrew of the Alex Haley's second HH-65 circling above the crash site was quick to respond, immediately recovering only

four of the victims from the crash (the three-man helicopter crew and one crewmember from the crippled freighter) and transporting them to Dutch Harbor for medical treatment.



### **The Selendang Ayu Broken in Two**

Within hours of the grounding, the Selendang Ayu broke in two as it continued to be pounded by waves and weather. A Coast Guard rescue swimmer and the master of the vessel were stranded on board the Selendang Ayu during the crash of the Jayhawk and the subsequent break-up of the ship. The HH-65 was finally able to return to the scene, recovering the rescue swimmer and the Master from the bow section of the ship. The helicopter aircrew joined in the search for the missing Selendang Ayu crewmen.

The search continued for the missing crewmembers of the Selendang Ayu until Friday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, when the search was called off. Two Coast Guard cutters, the USCGC Sherman from Alameda and the USCGC Sycamore, from Cordova, Alaska were deployed to assist the Alex Haley and relieve it so that it could return to Dutch Harbor with the 10 surviving crewmembers it had on board.

On December 11<sup>th</sup> the Alex Haley arrived in Dutch Harbor carrying the rescued crewmembers from the Selendang Ayu, where they were to meet with representatives of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). The NTSB was appointed the lead agency in investigating the marine casualty.

### **The Alex Haley in Action—Environmental Actions**

As the SAR element of the incident began to wind down, the environmental impacts of the grounding were also emerging. Flights over the wreckage on December 9<sup>th</sup> revealed an oily sheen surrounding the vessel, with some of the spillage already soiling the Unalaska coastline. While some fuel was transferred, environmental officials estimate that up to 1.28 million litres of fuel oil had leaked from the freighter (CBC News, 2004).

Oil containment booms had been moved by the Coast Guard to Dutch Harbor in anticipation of the oil spill, but poor weather and limited daylight hampered the operation. As the weather began to subside on December 10<sup>th</sup>, a Unified Command (Coordinating Authority), established by the Coast Guard and including the State of Alaska and the National Academies of Science, recruited the aide of three commercial vessels to begin on-water skimming and booming operations to try to protect the salmon lakes and streams affected by the spill.

The research vessel Cape Flattery was brought in to deploy a boom across the three main streams of the Skan Bay area as well as to look for any fuel oil that might have already reached the shore of the island. Crews aboard the salvage vessels Redeemer and Joshua were tasked with booming off the creeks on either side of the mouth of the Makushin Bay to protect the salmon habitat in that area. Once the boom was deployed, the crew of the Redeemer would support the Cape Flattery's crew in laying down the boom in the Skan Bay area. Crews continued to pump the oil-slick water into holding tanks to be transported to Seattle for treatment. As at January 31, 2005, over 540 thousand litres of intermediate fuel oil/diesel/water had been removed from the wreck.

However, this was not the end of the Coast Guard's involvement. Under their Protection of Natural Resources mission the Coast Guard has responsibility for maintaining surveillance of the effected area and supervising the cleanup. During May 2005 Unified Command Coast Guard personnel took control of the cleanup of the 756 kilometres of effected coastline (USCG, 2005). By mid May 2005 158 field response personnel and 21 vessels were involved in the cleanup operation and 1.076 million litres of oily waste had been collected. The impact on wildlife was reported as 781 birds observed oiled, 29 captured for rehabilitation, 10 released and 1609 dead. Mammals consisted of 18 observed oiled, zero captured and six dead (USCG, 2005). In October 2005 the Coast Guard Marine Safety Detachment reported that storm activity in the Bering Sea had dislodged the stern section of the Selendang Ayu driving it closer to the shore (CGPA, 2005). The helicopter crew reported emulsified oil and light to heavy sheening in the water but no oiled wildlife. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2006 the Unified Command determined the cleanup had been completed (CGPA, 2006)

### **Operational Costs**

In late December, 2004, the National Pollution Fund Center (NPFC) estimated that the clean-up of the oil spill will cost approximately \$100 million dollars (Table 3) of which the Coast Guard had contributed approximately \$7.5 million (Table 4) in additional costs. Continuing to fight the difficult seas and climate that defines the region, a variety of agencies and vessels, coordinated by Unified Command and the NPFC, were recovering dead birds and wildlife and cleaning those that were still salvageable. The bodies of the lost crewmembers from the Selendang Ayu remain missing and presumed lost. Despite the \$100 million cost the owners and operators only paid \$850,000 to settle oil spill claims, wreck removal and lost fish tax claims.

**Table 3**

**Estimated Cleanup Costs**

<b>Cost Summary on M/V Selendang Ayu Dutch Harbor 08 DEC 04 10 JAN 05</b>				
RP Owner: AYU Navigation SND BND RP Operator: IMC Shipping Company Pte Ltd RP Guarantor: Shoreline Mutual (Bermuda) Ltd (for the Swedish Club) (LOL \$23,8M) Consultant: Gallagher Marine & M.R. Associates				
RP Costs to Date and Projections				
Date	Current Costs	Burn Rate to 8 FEB and Burn Rate to 01APL	Projected Burn Rate 01 APL to 01 OCT 05	Projection to OCT 05
16 FEB 05	\$ 23,853,000	8,257,000	67.890,000	\$100.000,000

(NPFC, 2005)

**Table 4**

**US Coast Guard Costs**

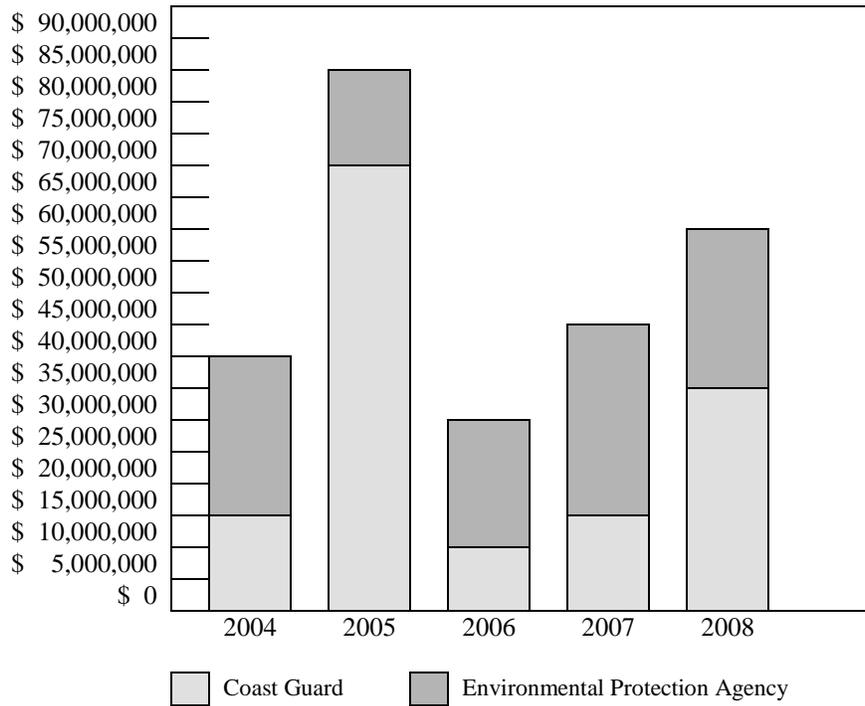
<b>US Coast Guard Costs to Date and Projections</b> Current Ceiling \$7,000,000				
Date	Category	Current Cost	Projected Burn Rate	Projected to October 2005
16 FEB 05	CG Personnel	\$ 648,718		
	CG Equipment	1,715,742		
	CG Travel	362,943		
	CG Purchases	37,902		
	CG Contracts	1,211,920		
	OAG Costs			
	Obligations	1,630,000		
Total	\$ 5,607,225	\$ 7,500	\$ 7,497,225	

Figure 2 represents funds recovered from the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund by the Coast Guard between 2004 and 2008 for removal expenses. It is apparent that the CG expenses are increasing as a proportion of total costs compared with the costs of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The reason for this is simple. The CG has responsibility in the costal zone, while the EPA has responsibility in the inland zone, so with both a increase in shore drilling and a general increase in the movements of container ships the prospect for at see emergencies is increasing.

Figure 2

### Funds Recovered by the Coast Guard



(OSLTF, 2009)

It must be emphasised that these recovered amounts result from claims against the ‘responsible person’ and only represent a small proportion of the total costs.

### Conclusion

*Dec. 10, 2004 (6:30 p.m. AST)*

*ANCHORAGE, Alaska – Peter Chew, Group Managing Director for IMC Shipping, issued the following statement this evening from Singapore regarding the Coast Guard’s search efforts for six missing freighter crewmen.*

*“At this very sad moment, I am deeply appreciative for the many heroic efforts made by the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard. It is with deep regret and sadness that we note the suspension of the search and rescue efforts for our brave and appreciated crew. At this time, the company offers its sincerest condolences to the families and friends of the lost crew. Again, we are deeply appreciative of the efforts, thoughts and prayers of the community near Dutch Harbor and the world at this moment of loss,” said Chew.*

There was no mention of damage to the environment. It is clear that the costs of environmental emergencies will continue to rise placing greater pressure on limited resources, However, this problem is exacerbated by the general perception that ‘blue suites are free’, that the cost of equipping and operating the coast guard is separate from the economic and public costs associated with environmental protection.

But the environmental issues continue:

25 JUL 2008, New Orleans, Louisiana: A 61-foot barge, carrying 419,000 gallons of heavy fuel, collides with a 600-foot tanker ship in the Mississippi River near New Orleans. Hundreds of thousands of gallons of fuel leak from the barge, causing a halt to all river traffic while cleanup efforts commence to limit the environmental fallout on local wildlife.

30 AUG 2005, New Orleans, Louisiana: The Coast Guard was placed on stand by as Hurricane Katrina approaches New Orleans to assist with planning, response, and recovery efforts within their mission areas of search and rescue and marine pollution response. Over 5,600 Coast Guardsmen participated in the Coast Guard's response efforts.

04 DEC 2010, Alaska: The Coast Guard responded to a Greek-owned bulk cargo container ship carrying canola seeds and thousands of gallons of fuel adrift in rough seas near Alaska's Aleutian Islands.

24 JAN 2010, Port Arthur, Texas: The oil tanker *Eagle Otome* and a barge collide in the Sabine-Neches Waterway, causing the release of about 462,000 gallons of crude oil. Environmental damage was minimal as about 46,000 gallons were recovered and 175,000 gallons were dispersed or evaporated, according to the U.S. Coast Guard.

24 APL 2010, Gulf of Mexico: The *Deepwater Horizon*, a semi-submersible drilling rig, sank on April 22, after an April 20th explosion on the vessel. Eleven people died in the blast. When the rig sank, the riser—the 5,000-foot-long pipe that connects the wellhead to the rig—became detached and began leaking oil. In addition, U.S. Coast Guard investigators discovered a leak in the wellhead itself. As much as 60,000 barrels of oil per day were leaking into the water, threatening wildlife along the Louisiana Coast. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano declared it a "spill of national significance." BP (British Petroleum), which leased the *Deepwater Horizon*, is responsible for the cleanup, but the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Coast Guard supplied the company with resources to help contain the slick. Oil reached the Louisiana shore on April 30, affected about 125 miles of coast. By early June, oil had also reached Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. It is the largest oil spill in U.S. history.

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