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CALIFORNIA COASTKEEPER ALLIANCE AND BAYKEEPER CALL FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN OIL SPILL PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Organizations Respond to Release of Phase I U.S. Coast Guard Review of Cosco Busan Oil Spill

San Francisco, CA. The California Coastkeeper Alliance (CCKA), a coalition of 12 Waterkeeper groups spanning the coast from the Oregon border to San Diego, and San Francisco Baykeeper today called on the U.S. Coast Guard and the State of California's Office of Spill Prevention and Response to work with the public and lawmakers to improve oil spill preparedness and response in the San Francisco Bay Area and around the state. CCKA and Baykeeper spoke in response to the U.S. Coast Guard's release today of its Phase I Incident Specific Preparedness Review (ISPR) Report on the *Cosco Busan* oil spill. CCKA and San Francisco Baykeeper, both of whom participated in the review, called for swift implementation of the Report's recommendations. CCKA was the environmental representative on the ISPR Team, and Baykeeper was the environmental alternate.

"The Report highlights the need for more drills, better training, and greater coordination among those responsible for spill preparation and response," stated Linda Sheehan, Executive Director of CCKA and the Environmental Coalition representative on the ISPR Team. "Much of the damage caused by the *Cosco Busan* spill could have been avoided with a swifter response to the situation at hand."

The Report makes a number of findings about the response:

- Almost 16,000 feet of boom were available on-scene within the first six hours after the spill, but only about half of that (8,500 feet) was actually deployed.
- Total on-water oil recovery capability on-scene the first day was over 75,000 barrels, yet only 170 barrels were actually recovered.
- Low visibility due to heavy fog impeded early spill tracking, but critical Vessel Traffic Service information about the movement of the spill southward was not forwarded to responders in time for quick containment.
- Thousands of volunteers were trained to assist with the response after significant public pressure.
- 73 birds were cleaned and released during the first two weeks, though at report drafting 1,682 birds had died at the rescue facility or were collected dead (later figures were over 400 released and 2,500 dead).

"One of the most important themes in the report was the inability of the responders to incorporate local government and volunteer resources into the oil spill response," said Deb Self, Executive Director of Baykeeper. "Baykeeper also looks forward to working with the Coast Guard and California Office of Spill Prevention and Response to ensure that they are prepared to protect the most sensitive shorelines along the Bay and coast from future oil spills."

"Quick and hard-hitting response after a spill is the most effective way to minimize the damage, especially in a dynamic environment like San Francisco Bay," concluded Ms. Sheehan. "For that we need sufficient, highly-trained personnel who can swiftly assess the size, location and the movement of spills, and provide that information immediately to the public and government decisionmakers."

The California Coastkeeper Alliance provides a statewide voice for safeguarding California's waters, and its world-renowned coast and ocean, for the benefit of all Californians. Member organizations are Klamath Riverkeeper, Humboldt Baykeeper, Russian Riverkeeper, San Francisco Baykeeper, Monterey Coastkeeper, San Luis Obispo Coastkeeper, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, Ventura County Coastkeeper, Santa Monica Baykeeper, Orange County Coastkeeper and its Inland Empire Waterkeeper chapter, and San Diego Baykeeper.

www.cacoastkeeper.org

Founded in 1989, Baykeeper is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the water quality of the San Francisco Bay and Pacific near-shore environment for the benefit of the fish, wildlife and the human communities who depend on it. Baykeeper uses advocacy, science and litigation to hold polluters accountable and enforce our clean water laws. www.baykeeper.org