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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State, City of Unalaska, other partners team up to test emergency towing system for Aleutians

Towing demonstration set for July 30-August 1, 2007

Unalaska, Alaska--Following the near grounding of the *Salica Frigo* on March 9, 2007, Unalaska Mayor Shirley Marquardt convened a Disabled Vessel Workgroup to develop an emergency towing capability for disabled vessels in the Aleutians using locally available tugboats and an emergency towing system.

Now Unalaska, along with the Department of Environmental Conservation, Alaska Marine Pilots LLC, the U.S. Coast Guard, Horizon-Lines, Pacific Coast Maritime, Dunlap Towing, Samson Tug & Barge, Alaska Maritime Agencies, and Freight Logistic Services is ready to put the emergency towing system to the test in Dutch Harbor on July 30 to August 1.

The demonstration will test the effectiveness of an emergency towing system consisting of a towline capable of towing a distressed vessel, a messenger line to assist in deploying the towline, a line-launcher, a buoy, and chaffing gear. It may be deployed to a disabled ship from the stern of a tugboat or airdropped via helicopter to the deck of the ship. Two towing systems have been purchased to cover most vessels found in the Aleutian Islands. The City of Unalaska has purchased a system suitable for vessels up to 50,000 dead weight tons (DWT) and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation is purchasing a system capable of towing vessel greater than 50,000 DWT.

In the last decade, several distressed or stricken vessels in the Aleutian Islands have adversely impacted the community of Unalaska. In a few cases, these incidents were the cause of environmental and economic repercussions. In each situation, the vessel was a large

tramper or cargo type ship, generally carrying fuel in bottom tanks, thus posing a significant pollution risk. Roughly 67% of port calls to Unalaska/Dutch Harbor in 2004 were either container ships or tramper/reefer vessels.

“These accidents can be devastating to Alaska’s environment and communities. Our goal is to enhance the ability of local assets to respond to distressed vessels in need of assistance due to engine failure, rudder failure, or any other failure which compromises the safe navigation of a vessel,” said DEC Commissioner Larry Hartig.

Generally tug boats (primary responders in this area) have some capability of retrieving vessels but they are not dedicated to this service and therefore the equipment aboard is not representative of equipment needs in this highly specialized situation. The recommended emergency towing system will enhance local assets with the ability to respond to an emergency with all the proper equipment necessary to retrieve a distressed vessel. The Unalaska resident tugs Gyrfalcon and James Dunlap are the most consistent local assets in the Unalaska region, but there are many other tugs in the area at any one time and thus this system is intended to be universally deployable.

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Contact: Mayor of Unalaska Shirley Marquardt, or City Manager Chris Hladick, at 907-581-1251

Note: Video and still photographs of the demonstration will be made available to interested media.

For more information visit the Emergency Towing Systems for the Aleutians website at:

<http://www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/perp/aiets/home.htm>

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