



DEC NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State charges Greenpeace for violating environmental laws

(KETCHIKAN) – July 22, 2004--State prosecutors filed charges against Greenpeace, Inc., Capt. Arne J. Sorensen and ship's agent Willem Jan Beekman in Ketchikan today alleging violations of two state environmental laws. The information charges that the defendants were criminally negligent for operating in state waters without an oil discharge prevention and contingency plan and for failing to file proof of financial responsibility for oil discharge damages.

On July 14, the Department of Environmental Conservation's Environmental Crimes Unit learned that the Greenpeace vessel, Arctic Sunrise, had entered Alaska waters without the required oil spill prevention plan and proof of financial responsibility. The vessel can carry 128,000 gallons of fuel and lubricants.

According to the information, Greenpeace's ship agent Mr. Beekman agreed the vessel would remain on anchor in Ketchikan pending compliance with state law; however, on the morning of July 14th the vessel left port while still in violation.

Following the Kuroshima oil spill in Dutch Harbor, Alaska's Legislature passed a law requiring nontank vessels over 400 gross tons demonstrate they have resources available and committed to respond to a spill.

“There is no such thing as a paperwork violation,” DEC Commissioner Ernesta Ballard said. “Compliance is not a mere technicality. We require evidence of spill response capability because we know that any ship can hit a rock at any time. The vessel relocated from a safe anchorage to navigate remote, high risk, narrow Southeast waters in traditional subsistence use and environmentally sensitive areas during peak salmon runs; without care or consideration for the catastrophic impacts that would occur from failure to have the necessary resources to initiate a response.”

DEC referred the results of the investigation to the Department of Law for prosecution. Each charge is a class A misdemeanor carrying a maximum sentence of one year in jail and a \$10,000 fine for individuals, and a maximum penalty of \$200,000 for organizations.

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State of Alaska v. Greenpeace, Inc., et. al., 1KE-S04-771 CR

State of Alaska v. Arne J. Sorensen, 1KE-S04-772 CR

State of Alaska v. Willem Jan Beekman, 1KE-S04-773 CR