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## **TUG ESCORT BILL WOULD PROTECT COAST FROM DISASTROUS CHEMICAL TANKER SPILLS**

### **Environmentalists and fishers urge Governor to sign SB1480**

Sacramento, CA – New safety measures that would help prevent a chemical tanker spill due to an accident or terrorist attack along the California coast are provided in a bill recently sent to Governor Schwarzenegger.

SB 1480 would authorize the use of tug escorts to guide carriers of high-risk chemical cargoes in and out of port. It closes the loophole for chemical carriers in the Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act of 1990 that requires tug escorts only for vessels carrying oil products.

“We sounded the alarm about these toxic carriers and believe that tug escorts are the best rescue,” said Senator Byron Sher, author of SB1480.

Over the past decade in San Francisco Bay, the US Coast Guard has documented at least 23 accidents involving chemical ships. Nine years ago a chemical ship came within yards of hitting the Golden Gate Bridge, which would have led to a mass evacuation. Such a spill could release millions of gallons of highly toxic substances into the air and water, causing an environmental and public health catastrophe.

“There have been many close calls in the past ten years with chemical carriers and other types of ships, and each time we’ve been lucky,” said Russell Long, Executive Director of Bluewater Network. “But unless the Governor signs this urgent bill, chances are our luck will eventually run out. We’re playing Russian roulette.”

Chemical tankers carry explosive fertilizers, pesticides, liquid petroleum gas and other dangerous materials. While the US Coast Guard has the authority to require tugboat escorts on these vessels, it has not acted, thereby leaving state waters needlessly at higher risk.

**The bill is supported by Bluewater Network, the Ocean Conservancy, Sierra Club California, and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations.**

#### **SB 1480 Provisions**

- Provides authority for the administrator of Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) to require tug escorts on large vessels that carry anhydrous ammonia, ammonium nitrate, and liquid petroleum gas into California ports beginning January 1, 2005.
- Double-hulled ships would be exempt.
- Directs OSPR to work with Harbor Safety Committees to review the need for tug escorts for vessels carrying other hazardous materials.
- Costs passed on to vessel operators

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