

United States and Canadian officials met in Washington, D.C., on January 17 to discuss mutual problems related to the expected increase in oil transport and refining on the Pacific Coast. Central to these discussions was the problem of how to assure that marine transit and refining of oil in the Puget Sound/Straits of Juan de Fuca area can be accomplished in the most environmentally responsible fashion. The two sides expressed their satisfaction at the progress being made in bilateral efforts to ensure protection of the environment in this area.

United States and Canadian officials reviewed the status of plans for joint vessel traffic management systems in the Puget Sound/Juan de Fuca area. It was announced that a voluntary traffic separation plan will go into effect March 1. The system was developed and implemented jointly by the United States and Canada. The officials also discussed proposed offshore routes to be used by tankers from Alaska to West Coast ports.

United States officials tabled at the meeting a draft report on present and proposed United States scientific investigations in the Juan de Fuca/Puget Sound area. Canadian officials had tabled a similar report at the committee's previous meeting in Ottawa. It was agreed that technical representatives of both governments would review and assess the compatibility of existing research programmes in both countries and that the committee would make recommendations to the governments early this spring on priorities and joint co-ordination of research activities.

The officials also discussed questions relating to liability and compensation for oil spills. Both sides undertook to provide detailed responses in the near future to questions regarding relevant domestic legislation. United States officials noted that further legislation affecting this field may soon be introduced.

A State of Washington study on the feasibility of establishing offshore petroleum transfer facilities in the state's coastal waters was described in detail at the meeting. The study outlines several possible alternatives to tanker traffic into Puget Sound, including terminals at or near Port Angeles, Washington on the Straits of Juan de Fuca. A representative from the State of Washington also raised a number of alternatives to increased oil tanker traffic.

United States officials inquired about the status of Canadian plans for additional oil refining capacity in British Columbia. Canadian officials stated that consideration of any expansion of refinery capacity is at an early stage. In any event, the expanded facilities under consideration are expected to be supplied by pipeline and therefore should be