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August 29, 1974

MEETING OF UNITED STATES AND CANADIAN OFFICIALS ON
WEST COAST TANKER TRAFFIC

OTTAWA, AUGUST 29, 1974

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

United States and Canadian officials met in Ottawa on August 29, 1974, to discuss the problems raised by the transport of Alaska oil by tanker to the U.S. West Coast. These discussions were forecast in an exchange of Notes between Canada and the U.S. earlier in the year. In its Note, Canada reiterated its concern that increased tanker traffic in the Juan de Fuca and Rosario Straits could lead to serious pollution of a valuable recreational and fisheries area. In the exchange of Notes, the U.S. noted that it shared Canada's concern that the marine transit of oil be undertaken in the most environmentally responsible fashion and informed Canada that it had initiated a number of measures to mitigate or eliminate environmental risks to U.S. and Canadian waters.

At the August 29 meeting the Canadian side stressed its apprehensions concerning tanker traffic on the West Coast. The U.S. side reported on the progress of the measures to which it had referred in its Note. These include a Vessel Traffic Management System that is planned to be in place before the TAPS tanker movements begin; a radar surveillance system planned for Puget Sound by the end of 1975; and a proposal for a Loran-C West Coast navigational system. Both sides expressed satisfaction that the Joint Oil Spills Contingency Plan is now in place.

The two sides discussed various concerns which fell within four subject areas: 1) possible alternative means of supply to the refineries of the Pacific Northwest of the U.S.; 2) cooperative research programs designed to achieve a better understanding of the physical and biological environment of the area; 3) compensation procedures, including those under the TAPS legislation, for damages and clean-up costs; and 4) cooperative traffic management systems to lessen the danger of oil spills occurring.

Examination of a number of technical aspects of these problems will continue between the agencies concerned, and both sides agreed to meet again, in Washington, in early November, to receive reports and for further exchanges of information and discussion. The agencies represented on the American side were the Departments of State and Interior, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Council on Environmental Quality, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and on the Canadian side, the Departments of External Affairs, Transport, Environment, National Defense, Energy, Mines & Resources, and the National Energy Board.