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No marine traffic exclusion zone for Kinder Morgan tankers - Patrick Brown

A Kinder Morgan proposal for a moving exclusion zone to surround laden tankers has been rejected by Transport Canada's TERMPOL Review Committee. In its submission, the pipeline company had proposed that the area around tankers travelling outbound from Trans Mountain's Westridge loading facility be cleared to reduce any chances of collisions. The proposed exclusion zone would have travelled with the ship for the entire 257 kilometres to Buoy Juliet at the mouth of the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Exclusion zones are used to protect ships that could present very serious consequences in the event of a collision, or in very hazardous passages. For example, they are typically declared around LNG tankers in crowded waters. The Saint John Harbour Authority has exclusion zones for crude oil tankers and LNG vessels within harbour limits.

The TERMPOL Review Committee (TRC), in arriving at their decision to reject Kinder Morgan's plan, said that declaring such a zone for over 400 tankers per year could cause conflict with existing shipping patterns through Vancouver Harbour, the Strait of Georgia, Boundary Pass, Haro Strait, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

The trip takes 14 to 15 hours. The review committee felt that such a lengthy application of an exclusion zone was 'unprecedented', that it presented great 'complexity of implementation', and that enforcement would be difficult. Its conclusion was that the zone would present many challenges but limited benefits to navigation safety.

Current Safety Precautions

Navigation and collision avoidance is typically managed by adhering to 'rules of the road' under the well recognised Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea.

In addition, the outbound passage of laden tankers from Burrard Inlet is governed by:

- tethered and untethered tugs, daylight and tidal restrictions, special vessel trim requirements, and two onboard pilots through Second Narrows (inbound tankers also require tug assist);
- an accompanying tethered tug through Vancouver Harbour

and First Narrows to two miles southwest of Point Atkinson, with two onboard pilots, and daylight and tidal restrictions. (A request by Kinder Morgan for 24/7 use of the Harbourmaster's launch to clear small boats out of the way was left to Kinder Morgan to negotiate with the Harbourmaster.);

- from English Bay to Rosenfeld Buoy at the entrance to Boundary Pass, a single untethered tug no more than a mile from the tanker, recommended a mile ahead to 'prevent close quarter situations from developing', and a maximum tanker speed of 11 knots;
- from Boundary Pass to Race Rocks, two pilots and a tethered tug, plus following the rules around Turn Point (see *Island Tides* May 29, 2014 online);
- extended pilot disembarkation zone and termination of tethered tug west of Race Rocks;
- untethered tug escort from 2 nautical miles (nm) west of Constance Bank to abreast of Sombrio Point (on Strait of Juan de Fuca);
- tankers leaving Juan de Fuca Strait will take a course no more northerly than due west (270°) until they are outside Canada's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), 200 nautical miles from coast; and
- inbound light tankers require one pilot from Victoria Boarding Station to English Bay; another from English Bay to Westridge.

Additional Navigational Aids

In Kinder Morgan's application, several additional navigational aids were suggested:

- navigation lights on Berry Point, Indian Arm, and Admiralty Point, Belcarra, to assist in navigating tankers to their Westridge berths. (Coast Guard representatives indicated that their policy was not to provide navigational aids for specific users);
- range lights close to shore in West Vancouver (Coast Guard to review); aid to navigation on Beaumont Shoal (Coast Guard stated this is not necessary).
- tide and current gauges at First and Second Narrows, capable of communication with pilots' radio equipment (First Narrows already in operation; Coast Guard to review need for

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Second Narrows gauge).

- extra weather monitoring buoy in southern Strait of Georgia (Environment Canada says one, at Halibut Bank, is enough, along with wind gauges at Sand Heads, Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal, Saturna Island, Vancouver International Airport, and Kelp Reefs).

Oil Spill Preparedness

Current planning (not yet implemented) is for a response capacity to a maximum spill of 15,500 tonnes, based on Kinder Morgan advisor Det Norsk Veritas' estimates. Western Canada

Marine Response Corporation (WCMRC) proposed five new base locations to bring response capacity to 20,000 tonnes and reduce response initiation times to two hours for Vancouver Harbour and six hours for the rest of the proposed route; a maximum of 36 hours for any location between the terminal and Buoy Juliet.

The lead federal agency Canadian Coast Guard is 'transitioning' to an incident command system, interoperational with the US Coast Guard. ☞