



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
OFFICE OF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES
Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary
115 East Railroad Avenue, Suite 301
Port Angeles, WA 98362-2925

July 12, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Support for Neah Bay Oil Spill Response Access Dock Construction – RAISE 2021 Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am pleased to write in support of the Makah Tribe's RAISE 2021 construction grant application to build an oil spill response access dock at the Port of Neah Bay in Washington State. This project will enhance emergency response operations at the Port of Neah Bay to address the expanding risk of marine accidents and oil spills as vessel traffic through the Strait of Juan de Fuca increases.

The Port of Neah Bay is the only all-weather port accessible year-round within 100 nautical miles on the outer coast of Washington State. It is strategically located to protect Washington's remote and biologically rich Outer Coast and prevent disruptions of major international commerce to major ports in the Puget Sound and Southern British Columbia from vessel traffic and oil pollution incidents. In addition to the Makah lands and waters, this region is home to the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, Olympic National Park, five national wildlife refuges, and numerous species protected under the Endangered Species Act. The Outer Coast of Washington and the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca are high risk areas for vessel traffic safety and oil pollution. Since the 1970s, over 2 million gallons of oil have been spilled within the Makah treaty fishing area.

Existing infrastructure at the Port of Neah Bay limits the stationing of prevention and response resources at this strategic location. The construction of the expanded oil spill response access dock through the RAISE program will allow for greater oil spill prevention and response assets to be stationed in Neah Bay and facilitate their effective deployment in our transboundary waters and protected areas such as Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. Unimpeded access to and the rapid deployment of spill response assets is vital for Port of Neah Bay to take the best advantage of its geographically strategic location to provide regional coverage to this remote region, including any incidents that may occur within Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary.

The Makah people depend on clean and safe waters and thriving ocean resources to support their identity, economy, food security, and cultural and spiritual practices. The benefits of this transportation infrastructure project would support the protection of these resources, seafood safety and the safe exercise of Makah treaty rights, a rural and natural resource-based economy, local jobs, and environmental justice outcomes.



Both the Makah Tribe and the federal government have demonstrated their commitment to this project through significant investments in previous project stages. This project is essential to the protection of the waters that support the Makah Tribe's livelihood, the quality of life of over 8 million residents in the region in United States and Canada, habitat for many marine species, and a significant portion of the Washington State's economy.

In conclusion, I believe this project would be a great asset to the transportation infrastructure in the State of Washington, and I hope you will give this project serious consideration.

Sincerely



Carol Bernthal
Sanctuary Superintendent
Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary

