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Saving a National Treasure

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March 31, 2014

The Honorable Admiral Robert J. Papp, Jr.
Commandant United States Coast Guard
US Coast Guard Headquarters Stop 7000
Douglas A. Munro Coast Guarding Headquarters Building
2703 Martin Luther King Jr., Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20593-7000

Dear Admiral Papp:

The oil spill in Galveston Bay reminds us once again that the Chesapeake is on borrowed time in the face of a major oil spill. Due to the unique characteristics of our estuary, a spill in the Chesapeake could produce far more long lasting damage than many other estuaries in the country. The Chesapeake is extremely shallow, enclosed, with thousands of miles of very sensitive and productive shoreline. Oil released in the Chesapeake is guaranteed to affect the most vulnerable elements of the estuary – bottom sediment, underwater grasses, fringe wetlands, and certainly juvenile species of crabs, oysters, and fin fish.

We have been lucky in that the last major spill in the Chesapeake Bay watershed was in 2000, caused by a ruptured pipeline near Chalk Point, Maryland. We are still concerned, however, that the numerous vessels transiting the Bay on a daily basis, loaded with oil or other petroleum products, often in busy shipping channels, leaves the region vulnerable to the consequences of a large spill. Furthermore, the number of vessels transporting oil within the Bay is likely to increase dramatically in the coming years as Bakken crude oil from North Dakota is transported to East Coast refineries.

In particular, an oil transfer terminal in Yorktown, Virginia is expected to receive up to 800 trains per year carrying an estimated 60-65,000 barrels of oil per train. The oil will be unloaded into storage tanks before it is transferred to a dock on site and loaded onto barges and ships for delivery to refineries along the East Coast.

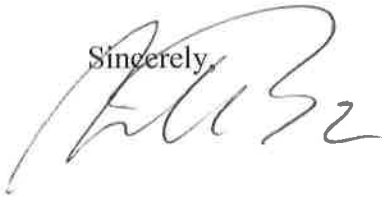
In light of this, we urge you to undertake three actions in order to better understand and reduce the risks associated with an oil spill in the region. First, immediately establish a

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work group to evaluate the risk of an oil spill on the Chesapeake given the increased vessel traffic and new terminal in the region. Second, determine our readiness to respond to an oil spill based on the current deployment of assets by the Coast Guard, Marine Spill Response Corporation, and other local, state, and federal partners. Finally, I ask that the Coast Guard engage in an open dialogue so that public can better understand and provide input on what the Coast Guard and its partners are currently doing to avoid a spill in the region.

Now is the time to prepare and ensure we are ready, not after a spill occurs. Thank you for your consideration of this request

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. C. Baker', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

William C. Baker
President