

Mare Forum USA 2010

Energy Transportation

**THE NAMEPA PERSPECTIVE: COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS TO
ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS**

Houston, TX

February 19, 2010

Clay Maitland

Chairman, North American Marine Environment Protection Association

claymaitland@yahoo.com

The mission of NAMEPA, now in its 3rd year of existence, is to bring together like-minded individuals and organizations in the maritime and environmental communities, to promote “best practices” and a greener marine environment, throughout North America, from the Arctic to the Caribbean, and including the rivers, lakes, and inland waterways of the continent. Part of its guiding vision can be summarized in the word “partnership” - - industry, local and national governments, environmental organizations and concerned individuals acting together as preventers and responders. NAMEPA, with more than 80 members and growing, supports the mission of the United States and Canadian Coast Guards in, as one Coast Guard officer has put it, “putting responders out of business.” But it is not always possible to anticipate or prevent a spill or other incident.

When a spill or other incident occurs, government often finds that it needs an interlocutor. In the highly political atmosphere that surrounds such diverse incidents as Hurricane Katrina, the EXXON VALDEZ oil spill, the COSCO BUSAN collision, first responders and those who work with them often find themselves in the direct line of fire from the media, representatives of the public, politicians, bloggers and critics of other kinds.

For many years, the environmental community, trade unions and government agencies, as well as the maritime industry in general, have understandably found it difficult to communicate with one another, and across the barricades and battle lines of organized outrage. One consequence of this climate has been a failure to give credit to so-called first responders and other agencies, such as coast guards and other agencies such as NOAA, that contribute so much to prevention and remediation. It is also true that our industry as whole, including classification societies, port authorities, flag states, and private organizations, such as salvors, perform functions that are often unclear to the public and academic communities. There is a high price to be paid for the famous phrase: “What we have here is a failure to communicate.”

Nowhere is this more true than in the period of investigation and remediation after an environmental incident.

Although NAMEPA is a young organization, it has already become a significant interlocutor between local government and environmental groups in sensitive coastal areas. One such field of endeavor is the growing

local and national awareness, in the United States and Canada of what may be called “old wrecks.” The Wreck Oil Removal Program (WORP) is a Coast Guard / NOAA – private sector effort to measure, assess and where necessary remediate pollution from existing coastal and inland waterway wrecks, some of which have been “out there” for many years. These problem wrecks are not necessarily susceptible to the same types of salvage operations that can be undertaken on a ship or barge that went down quite recently.

NAMEPA as an organization fulfils the need for a private sector entity that, in effect, conveys the message that remediation and prevention projects promoted by the private sector are precisely those that are intended to safeguard the marine environment in four major ways:

- merchant marine industry research, training and response;
- port safety and terminal industry environmental protection and response;
- marine environment protection industry programs and response; and
- government and local authority response and training

The role of classification societies is critical in all of these relationships. Anyone who has attended a conference on tanker safety will be aware of the emergency planning and management tasks routinely performed by members of the oil and natural gas industries. As the U.S. and Canadian Coast Guard budgets are subjected to growing deficit reduction pressures, working relationships with key industry representatives, such as the members of the classification societies represented here today, the maritime academic community, the environmental community and other stakeholders become more vital than ever. In effect, the Coast Guard and other government agencies must be given more bang for the buck, without passing the bill along to the taxpayer.

When retired VADM James Card wrote his now-famous report, “The Coast Guard Marine Safety Analysis: An Independent Assessment and Suggestions for Improvement”, one of its most significant points was the promotion of more industry-government cooperation, coordination and outreach.

Through organizations like the American Petroleum Institute (API), and more recently NAMEPA, the somewhat insular world of our technical bodies and entities, including classification societies, is being increasingly integrated in the entire concept of marine environmental protection. Plans such as the National Response Framework (NRF) embody a comprehensive management plan covering emergency preparedness, disaster management and remediation and restoration of our marine and riverine environments, as part of a single approach. A simple way of putting this is that all of the resources that can be brought to bear when an incident occurs must be known, must be available, and must be put to use if necessary. Hence the need for partnership.

Finally, there is no substitute for drills. I am speaking not of drilling equipment, or drilling rigs, but of exercises aimed at developing preparedness and teamwork before the incident occurs. Much of what we are doing, and planning, should be credited to the establishment of new systems of national security preparation after September 11, 2001. The importance of the U.S. Coast Guard, and its new organizational framework, has required that not only the U.S. Coast Guard and NOAA, but also its private sector partners, establish and evaluate their objectives and goals, based upon field exercises and test results. This requires tracking and analysis of real-world as well as hypothetical events, and the participation of government and private entities in planning for the future.

One such not-so-hypothetical event might be a major hurricane on the North East coast of the United States. No such great storm has appeared in many years. Preparedness goes beyond the saving of life, which is of course the first priority; as we learned from Katrina / Rita, and later Hugo, major storms have major and lasting environmental effects.

NAMEPA, which includes classification societies within its membership is therefore looking ahead to cooperation across a broad span of agencies, companies and individuals, in contributing its own growing fund of experience and talent to evaluating and preparing for future events. Not all of these are within our control.

-oOo-