



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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International task force focuses on protecting West Coast from oil spills

HONOLULU – Western states and provinces on the Pacific Ocean will gather this year in Honolulu to discuss how best to protect the West Coast from oil spills.

The Hawaii Department of Health is hosting this year's Annual Meeting of the Pacific States/British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force, comprised of Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, California, and Hawaii. The Task Force provides a forum where members can work together to implement regional initiatives to help protect 56,600 miles of coastline stretching from Alaska to California, including the Hawaiian Islands.

The meeting is taking place on Thursday, Sept. 28 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., in the Coral Ballroom at the Hilton Hawaiian Village. The event is open to the public and attendance is free of charge. To register, go to: <https://2017taskforceannualmeeting.eventbrite.com>.

At this year's event, the six Task Force jurisdictions will provide updates on their spill-response programs, projects and initiatives. Guest presentations and panel discussions will highlight pollution prevention measures in the cruise ship industry, issue involving the clean-up of heavy oils, and the challenges with managing data during a spill.

The Task Force was authorized by a Memorandum of Cooperation in 1989 by Governors of Alaska, Oregon, Washington and California, and the Premier of British Columbia following the Exxon Valdez and Nastucca oil spills. These events highlight the common concerns regarding oil spill risks shared by West Coast states and provinces, and the need for cooperation across shared borders.

The Task Force is committed to improving, preventing, preparing for and responding to oil spills. It collects and shares data on spills, coordinates spill prevention projects, and promotes regulatory safeguards.

The Task Force members include:

- Thomas M. Cullen Jr., Administrator, Office of Spill Prevention and Response, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Keith Kawaoka, Deputy Director of Environmental Health, Hawaii Department of Health
- Larry Hartig, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
- Dale Jensen, Spills Program Manager, Washington Department of Ecology

- Richard Whitman, Director, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Mark Zacharias, Deputy Minister, British Columbia Ministry of the Environment

For more information visit: <http://oilspilltaskforce.org/task-force-events/annual-meeting/>

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