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CALIFORNIA COASTKEEPER ALLIANCE AND BAYKEEPER CALL FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN OIL SPILL PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Organizations Respond to Release of Phase II U.S. Coast Guard Review of Cosco Busan Oil Spill

San Francisco, CA. The California Coastkeeper Alliance (CCKA), a coalition of 12 Waterkeeper groups spanning the coast from the Oregon border to San Diego, and San Francisco Baykeeper today called on the U.S. Coast Guard and the State of California's Office of Spill Prevention and Response to work with the public and lawmakers to improve oil spill preparedness and response in the San Francisco Bay Area and around the state. CCKA and Baykeeper spoke in response to the U.S. Coast Guard's release today of its Phase II Incident Specific Preparedness Review (ISPR) Report on the M/V *Cosco Busan* oil spill. The Phase II Report assessed issues spanning beyond the initial two weeks after the spill, as well as Phase I issues that required more time to research. CCKA was the environmental representative on the ISPR Team, and Baykeeper was the environmental alternate.

"The Report found that communication breakdowns were one of the top issue areas for further action," stated Linda Sheehan, Executive Director of CCKA and the Environmental Coalition representative on the ISPR Team. "For example, the Report found that the state's decision to close fisheries only to three miles from shore may have been made without the benefit of Unified Command overflight data that showed oil outside three miles. The Report also found that a catalogue of local and regional response resources, which currently does not exist, would have helped Unified Command in making decisions for resource deployment. Clear procedures need to be established and responsible personnel identified to ensure that all critical information is readily available and shared quickly."

The Report also found that a large oil spill can threaten 400 miles of sensitive Bay Area shoreline and called for more coordination among the Coast Guard, State authorities, and the Bay Area's nine counties, national recreation area, two national marine sanctuaries, national wildlife refuge and vast system of regional shoreline parks. Deb Self, Executive Director of Baykeeper, says that with advance planning, local governments can play a key role in providing important stop-gap protections to protect high priority shorelines. "By staying involved in planning efforts and exercises, local communities may be able to mobilize staff and volunteers to keep oil out of important marshes and lagoons until official teams arrive – and to provide unique knowledge of affected shorelines and wildlife habitats."

"The overwhelming public response to the spill highlighted the tremendous importance of effective, ongoing partnerships in preparing for and responding to oil spills," concluded Ms. Sheehan. "One of the Report's recommendations was to look at using fishing and other vessels in cleanups. Involving trained members of the public will be essential should another, larger spill occur."

A copy of the report can be found at http://www.uscg.mil/FOIA/Reading_Room.asp.

The California Coastkeeper Alliance provides a statewide voice for safeguarding California's waters, and its world-renowned coast and ocean, for the benefit of all Californians. Member organizations are Klamath Riverkeeper, Humboldt Baykeeper, Russian Riverkeeper, San Francisco Baykeeper, Monterey Coastkeeper, San Luis Obispo Coastkeeper, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, Ventura County Coastkeeper, Santa Monica Baykeeper, Orange County Coastkeeper and its Inland Empire Waterkeeper chapter, and San Diego Baykeeper. www.cacoastkeeper.org

Founded in 1989, Baykeeper is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the water quality of the San Francisco Bay and Pacific near-shore environment for the benefit of the fish, wildlife and the human communities who depend on it. Baykeeper uses advocacy, science and litigation to hold polluters accountable and enforce our clean water laws. www.baykeeper.org