

May 25, 2010

Senator Joe Simitian, Committee Chair
Environmental Quality Committee
California State Capitol, Room 2205
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: 916-323-3519

Re: AB 234 (Huffman) Oil spill prevention – SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Simitian,

I am writing on behalf of East Bay Bird Advocates to register our strong support of AB 234 by Assembly Member Huffman. AB 234 will improve California's requirements for oil transfer operations across open waters to ensure, for all who would benefit from oil-free coasts and waters in California, that we are practicing the most effective protective measures.

AB 234 would require pre-booming for all vessel-to-vessel oil transfer operations. Current regulations stop short of this level of precautionary prevention and mandate the deployment of personnel and boom equipment only in the event of a spill, and only within 30 minutes of the discovery of a spill.

The Dubai Star spill in October 2009 shed light on the deficiencies of our current oil spill prevention and response practices. Because pre-booming is not required, oil transfers occurring at anchor in S.F. Bay are rarely, if ever, pre-boomed. The Dubai Star spill highlighted an opportunity for greater preparedness of personnel and equipment during risky transfers. The State Lands Commission requires prebooming of onshore transfer operations to protect the environment. Public health and the rest of our valued beaches, wildlife, and their associated significant economic benefits are entitled to equally protective measures.

AB234 builds on the positive experience of Washington State, which has mandated pre-booming as the gold standard for safe oil-transfers to protect people, wildlife, and the environment. Training requirements and a mandate to have equipment readily available have significantly increased preparedness of personnel to respond to a spill. Experience and data from Washington State demonstrates that 80% of oil is recovered when operations are pre-boomed, or a spill is boomed immediately. If the operation is not pre-boomed or boom is not readily available for immediate deployment then the recovery rate drops below 10%.

When oil is spilled, every minute counts and pre- or immediate booming is the best line of defense. AB234 will ensure that Californian has the equipment and trained personnel on site, and at the ready to respond immediately in the event of a spill during an oil-transfer operation. If we intend to protect San Francisco Bay and our rich coastal environment we must mandate this proven prevention measure for the predictable, yet risky oil transfers in open waters.

We strongly support AB 234 and urge your legislative colleagues to pass this important legislation to improve preventative measures and provide the best available protection for California's invaluable coasts, bays, and beaches, wildlife and public health.

Sincerely,

Joanne Wile
Mayor