

U.S., Russia Sign Joint Contingency Plan for Pollution Response in the Bering and Chukchi Seas



The Coast Guard Cutter Alex Haley's small boat transfers their boarding team onto the fishing vessel Northwestern to conduct a safety inspection in the Bering Sea in this 2018 photo. U.S. Coast Guard / Ens. Douglas Zimmerman

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard and the Russian Federation's Marine Rescue Service recently signed the 2020 Joint Contingency Plan of the United States of America & the Russian Federation in Combating Pollution on the Bering & Chukchi Seas, the Coast Guard 17th District said in a Feb. 2 release.

On Feb. 1, 2021, Acting Director Andrey Khaustov of the Russian Federation's Marine Rescue Service (MRS) and the U.S. Coast Guard's deputy commandant for operations, [Vice Adm. Scott Buschman](#), signed the 2020 update to the Joint Contingency Plan (JCP), a bilateral agreement focused on preparing for and responding to transboundary maritime pollution incidents.

The updated JCP promotes a coordinated system for planning, preparing and responding to pollutant substance incidents in the waters between the U.S. and Russia. The U.S. and Russian Federation have shared a cooperative bilateral agreement on transboundary marine pollution preparedness and response in this area since 1989. The newest JCP revision requires joint planning and transboundary exercise efforts to be coordinated by a Joint Planning Group led by Coast Guard District 17, and is guided by a non-binding two-year work plan. In addition, the updated JCP creates the new International Coordinating

Officer role to help facilitate the critical sharing of information during coordinated response efforts.

“This is an important agreement between the U.S and the Russian Federation that ensures coordination between respective authorities and actively promotes the protection of our shared interests in these environmentally and culturally significant trans-boundary waters,” Buschman said. “We look forward to continuing our necessary and productive relationship with the Marine Rescue Service and the opportunity to conduct joint training and exercises in the near future in order to ensure the protection of our nations’ critical natural resources.”

The shared maritime boundary between the U.S. and Russia in the Bering and Chukchi seas has notoriously poor weather conditions and limited resources to respond to pollution incidents. This plan primarily addresses international collaboration matters and as such is meant to augment each country’s national response system as well as state, regional, and local plans. In the United States, the operational aspects of the plan fall under the responsibility of the U.S. Coast Guard’s 17th District Commander and Sector Anchorage.