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October 28, 2014

Rear Admiral R.T. Gromlich
Thirteenth Coast Guard District
915 Second Avenue, Room 3590
Seattle, WA 98174

Dear Rear Admiral Gromlich,

Oregon Sea Grant is an organization within Oregon State University that focuses on marine research, education, and extension. We have over forty years of history working with coastal communities on issues that are important to them. Marine safety has been an issue that we have consistently focused on. We were the first in the nation to provide training classes to commercial fishermen on the use of survival suites, EPIRBs, and life rafts. Our extension faculty were involved in creating the public process that allowed for dialogue between the community and the USCG in regards to the air facility opening in Newport, Oregon. We continue to have an active role in the safety of commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen, marine researchers, coastal visitors and residents.

We are reaching out to you in regards to the decision to close the USCG air facility in Newport, Oregon. Our concern is two-fold. First and foremost, we echo concerns that you have heard repeatedly from ocean users and coastal residents. Many of those ocean users are our own faculty and staff who conduct research and education at sea, as well as community members who are recreational users of the ocean. We know from our own work that increases in technology (as you state in your letter) have increased survival time at sea, but that survival time is still incredibly limited, particularly for waters in the Pacific Northwest. The basis of Drill Conducting training, as set by your own guidelines, is to use education to help buy people time so that they can hang on, *until help arrives*. Help arriving is always the bottom line in survival. In our effort to understand this issue, we have done extensive literature reviews on all relevant research, and can find no peer reviewed literature that suggests that current safety equipment guarantees people can survive an extra hour in the waters off of our coast.

Our second concern is that of the process you used to make this decision. Oregon Sea Grant is funded by federal taxpayer dollars, through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). As a steward of public funds, we take extra steps to engage the public and interested parties in our strategic planning and prioritization of programming. We are concerned that such a significant decision was made in the absence of a robust public engagement process. The lack of such a process was also a missed opportunity for the USCG. Newport and neighboring coastal communities are extremely innovative, creative, and collaborative when it comes to solving problems. Early engagement with these

communities offers opportunities to reach alternative solutions and promote a more positive environment.

As you re-examine this decision, we encourage you do to so with a well thought out and deliberate approach to engaging the public, stakeholders, and elected officials. Oregon Sea Grant extension personnel facilitated the community meeting on October 21, as we did with the discussions that brought the helicopter to Newport 30 years ago, as part of our responsibility to support broad community dialogue and informed decision-making on critical issues. We stand ready as you consider the extensive input and information that you have received on this issue and welcome assisting the USCG with further community dialogue as you re-assess the decision to remove the helicopter.

Oregon Sea Grant has a deep appreciation for the scope and scale of the USCG responsibilities along the Oregon coast. We also recognize the brave efforts of the men and women of the Coast Guard who put themselves at risk to meet these responsibilities.

I would be more than happy to discuss further how we can facilitate this process moving forward.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shelby E. Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Shelby E. Walker
Director, Oregon Sea Grant