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EXXON VALDEZ 20th ANNIVERSARY MARKED BY IMPROVEMENTS IN MARITIME SAFETY

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The American Waterways Operators (AWO), the national trade association for the tugboat, towboat and barge industry, is marking the 20th anniversary of the oil spill in Prince William Sound by the Exxon *Valdez* tank ship by noting the improvements that have been made to maritime safety since the infamous accident. Although the Exxon *Valdez* was a tank ship, not a tank barge, the maritime industry as a whole has embraced significant new safety measures, including Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90) regulations for tankers and tank barges to prevent oil and chemical spills. These measures have led to dramatic reductions in oil spills while vessel owners continue to strive toward the goal of zero spills.

Tank barge oil spill volumes have plummeted by 99.39% since the *Valdez* accident, with a record low of 4,527 gallons achieved in 2007. This means that more than 99.99% of the oil moved by tank barges is delivered safely. In addition, OPA 90 mandated double hulls by 2015 for vessels carrying oil in U.S. waters; currently, 86% of tank barges are fitted with double hulls, six years ahead of schedule. Coast Guard-approved tank vessel response plans are now required for quick response to any spill, and comprehensive drug and alcohol testing programs are in place throughout the maritime industry. Since the largest number of spills occurs during product transfers, new regulations require tank overfill alarms and tankermen overseeing cargo transfers undergo more rigorous training and certification.

To address human error as a cause of spills, the tugboat, towboat and barge industry has embraced the Crew Endurance Management System (CEMS), a science-based program developed by the Coast Guard to reduce the risks of operating in a 24/7 environment. Demonstrating its deep commitment to safety and environmental stewardship, AWO instituted the groundbreaking Responsible Carrier Program, a third-party audited safety management system, with which its members must comply or lose their AWO membership.

One of the most profound changes brought about by OPA 90 was the Coast Guard-AWO Safety Partnership, the first public-private partnership of its kind in the maritime industry. The Partnership has launched over 30 action teams to collaboratively address and develop

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solutions to the most pressing safety issues in the industry. The Partnership's biggest initiative led to the passage of historic new legislation that will bring all towing vessels under a Coast Guard inspection program and require all towing vessels to have a safety management system, raising the bar of safety for the entire industry.

Tom Allegretti, President & CEO of AWO, remarked, "The tugboat, towboat and barge industry has gone through a metamorphosis and has made a true commitment and huge investment in safety and environmental protection. We understand our responsibility to move petroleum products in a way that protects people, property and the environment. We know that we need to earn the public's trust each and every day. Because of this, we continue to work hard toward our goal of zero spills."

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