

Press Statement

USARC Supports Arctic Oil Spill Response Management Tool From U.S. Arctic Research Commission Chair, Fran Ulmer

February 8, 2012

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced yesterday that they are partnering to develop a management tool that will help them respond to oil spills and other environmental threats.

The tool, called Environmental Response Management Application (ERMA®), is an interactive online mapping [instrument](#) that federal responders used during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. It's being adapted for use, this year, in the Arctic region, in light of the increasing likelihood of offshore oil and gas development.

"The Arctic is facing numerous challenges due to expanding ship traffic and energy development," said Fran Ulmer, Chair of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission (USARC). "An Arctic version of ERMA will greatly aid U.S. response capacity in the event of an oil spill or chemical release and I strongly support it. Now is the time to create useful tools like this."

BSEE and NOAA aim to complete development and make the tool available to responders ahead of any future drilling in federal waters offshore Alaska, where limited assets, personnel, and facilities might hinder responses. In an emergency situation, ERMA® is equipped with near real-time oceanographic observations and weather data from NOAA, and critical information from BSEE and other federal and state response agencies. When operational, Arctic ERMA® will contain information such as the extent and concentration of sea ice, locations of ports and pipelines, and vulnerable environmental resources for spill responders to make rapid, science-informed response decisions.

For more information about Arctic ERMA®, [click here](#).

The USARC is an independent federal agency, established by the Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984, to develop a national policy on integrated Arctic research and a program plan to implement the policy. USARC advances federal arctic research in coordination with the State of Alaska and international partners.

To learn more about the U.S. Arctic Research Commission, [look here](#).

###

USARC Media Contact: Kathy Farrow, 703-525-0112, kfarrow@arctic.gov