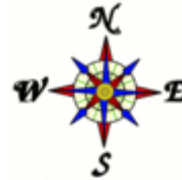


CSAW  
Campaign to Safeguard America's Waters



Earth Island Institute



*Responsible Cruising in Alaska*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 7/4/08

### **Royal Caribbean Cruise Ship Admits Dumping Wastewater in S.E. Alaska**

Royal Caribbean International announced on July 3<sup>rd</sup> that the cruise ship Rhapsody of the Seas dumped ~20,000 gallons of contaminated wastewater into Chatham Straits in S.E. Alaska in violation of State law. Details of the incident are under investigation by the U.S. Coast Guard and Alaska's Department of Environmental Conservation. The cruise line admits the discharge, regardless of the reasons for its release, constitutes a violation of State and federal laws, which prohibit the release of untreated wastewaters into the Alexander Archipelago. The Rhapsody of the Seas treatment systems are the same decades-old technology shown to be literally nonfunctional in testing by the Coast Guard and EPA in 2000, so the discharge was likely contaminated with high levels of fecal bacteria and other pollutants.

According to Gershon Cohen, Project Director of CSAW and co-sponsor of the Alaska Cruise Ship ballot measure that enacted strict pollution regulations on the industry through a popular vote in 2006, the circumstances surrounding the incident, while still unclear, raise numerous, significant questions: "How was this spill "discovered" a week after the fact? When did DEC find out about the spill, and why was the public not informed for three weeks? These waters are regularly used by Alaska commercial and subsistence fishermen who have a right and a need to be promptly informed of an incident of this magnitude. For that matter, if this dumping truly went unnoticed for a week as claimed by the company, how do we know this is the only time it occurred this season and whether or not the same scenario could be occurring on other ships?"

Chip Thoma, President of RCA which co-sponsored the Alaska cruise ship initiative, echoed these concerns. "We're very concerned the Ocean Ranger was not aware of this violation of Alaska and federal law. Obviously a major adjustment in Ocean Ranger monitoring efforts needs to occur if 20,000 gallons (or so they claim) of wastewater left the ship unnoticed. This incident raises serious questions about the day-to-day oversight procedures incorporated into the Ocean Ranger program, which was designed in large part by contractors with a history of doing consulting work for the cruise lines."

Joe Geldhof, RCA's legal counsel, is preparing the required notice paperwork to demand charges be brought against the company by the State Attorney General. "RCI should not simply receive a slap on the wrist for what appears to have been a gross act of mismanagement." Geldhof noted further that: "Providing notice of intent to bring a lawsuit may force the State and possibly the federal administrations to conduct a full investigation into this dumping incident and hopefully lead to procedural recommendations that will prevent further crimes of this nature."

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