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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – June 8, 2017

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DEC Services Threatened by Potential Government Shutdown

(JUNEAU, AK) — Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is working with the Alaska Attorney General's office to identify those services being provided by DEC that may continue even if the legislature does not pass a fully funded budget before July 1, 2017.

Based on analyses to date, DEC anticipates a limited number of services would continue at some level during a shutdown to meet constitutional obligations to protect life, health, and safety. The Division of Spill Prevention and Response would maintain a level of preparedness to respond in the case of an oil or hazardous substance release in Alaska. There are, on average, about 2,000 reported spills each year, and the majority of spills are to land, surface water, and groundwater where the State is the lead responder.

Other programs impacting public life, health, and safety that will likely continue at a reduced level are certain air quality advisories, disease prevention duties, and ensuring clean drinking water.

DEC has additionally identified a number of services potentially at risk if there is a government shutdown:

- Issuance of permits, including air, wastewater, and retail food programs. This could potentially impact new resource development projects as well as small food service businesses looking to get up and running for the summer visitor season.
- Loans and grants to municipalities for water and sewer infrastructure projects during construction season.
- Oversight of cruise ships in Alaska waters.
- Retail food inspections and complaint response.

DEC management remains optimistic the department will have a budget approved by the legislature by July 1, but believes it is prudent to start making contingency plans for a shutdown.

This year's preparations for a government shutdown are different than in 2015, when the legislature had passed a partially funded budget. This year, money has not been appropriated for any government services. As a government shutdown in Alaska is unprecedented, Department of Law is examining what money could be spent to continue vital state services if the legislature has not fulfilled its constitutional obligation to pass a budget.

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