

Outreach



The charter boat Auklet catches the early morning sun in a Prince William Sound bay during a council research trip. Photo by Bill Driskell.

MEMBER RELATIONS

The council staff includes a full-time position, called Outreach Coordinator, to maintain productive relations with the 18 communities and interest groups that make up its membership. The coordinator visits communities in the region, attends member group functions, gives presentations, coordinates special events involving the council and its member groups and generally encourages citizen involvement in the council's work.

Over the past year, the council participated in outreach activities on both local and national levels. Locally, the council participated at the Seward Art and Music Festival, the premier of the film *Black Wave* in Cordova, Chugach summit in Anchorage, Alaska Municipal League in Ketchikan, Alaska Forum on the Environment in Anchorage, Alaska Wilderness, Recreation and Tourism Conference in Girdwood, Cook Inlet RCAC meeting in Kenai, Copper River Nouveau in Cordova and the Alaska Oceans Festival in Anchorage.

A major event this year was the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, which fell on March 24, 2009. A multi-community event was held with five sites connected via videoconferencing. The council also assisted with a panel discussion on "Oil Spills in the North Pacific and Arctic 1989-2008", and gave a presentation to University of Alaska students.

In March the council participated in a reception co-sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Washington DC to recognize the anniversary of the spill.

The council participated in several national events, including Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle; the Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry's annual meeting in Tampa; and the Arctic Marine Oilspill Program Technical Seminar in Vancouver BC.

Also, the Outreach Coordinator helped organize a presentation by Kodiak students on invasive species at a council meeting, sponsored public receptions in Cordova and Valdez, and made a presentation to students in Chenega Bay. Other council staffers made presentations to Valdez students.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Information and Education Committee, formed in May 2008, has held seven meetings, one in person. The committee is working on a grant application for students; outreach ideas to replace the radio campaign which was cut from the coming year's budget; a possible update to the council website; assisting with outreach for projects from other committees, such as invasive species, community impacts planning, and geographic response strategies; and discussing ways to recruit volunteers. Plans have begun for events commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council on February 20, 2010.



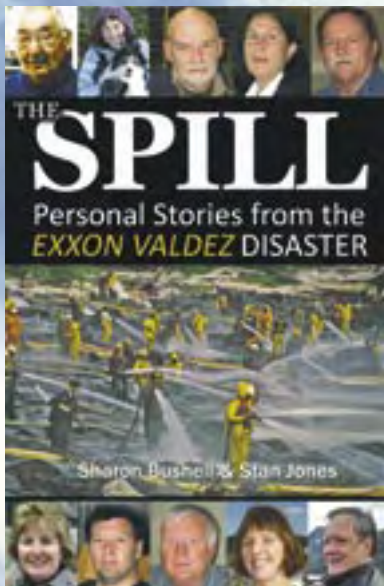
A Kodiak fishing boat passes under a highway bridge. Like most of the council's member communities, Kodiak is heavily dependent on commercial fishing. Photo by Tom Kuckertz.

PUBLICATIONS

The council increases public awareness on a wide range of issues pertaining to crude oil transportation through printed and electronic publications.

The Observer, a free quarterly newsletter, is distributed throughout Prince William Sound, the northern Gulf of Alaska, lower Cook Inlet and the Kodiak Archipelago. The Observer is also sent on request to interested citizens elsewhere, as well as to regulators and industry. In addition, it is posted on the council website, www.pwsrcac.org.

The Observer covers council activities, developments in the oil transportation industry, and news about policy and operational issues related to marine oil transportation. Major oil spill drills are covered, and Alyeska is invited to submit a column for each issue. In the course of preparing articles for The Observer, the council frequently invites feedback from appropriate industry and regulatory personnel.



This year the council restructured an existing staff position to better enhance outreach efforts. Formerly the “webmaster” position, the new public communications project manager produces and edits the Observer, manages the council web site, and is expanding the council’s outreach efforts via social media such as Twitter and Facebook. You can find us at www.twitter.com/pwsrcac or become a council Facebook “fan” at www.facebook.com/pwsrcac.

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The council makes available a 14-minute video about its origins, mission and activities. This video, titled “A Noble Experiment: The Story of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council,” is shown at conferences and other events attended by the council, and is distributed free to member entities for use in informing their constituents about the council.

Once a year, the council summarizes its work in an annual report such as this one.

The council produced two publications in connection with the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez spill in March 2009.

The first is an oral history of the event and its aftermath, titled: “The Spill: Personal Stories from the Exxon Valdez Disaster.” This book features interviews with over 60 people who had first-hand experience with the spill. They include such Alaskans as fishermen, villagers, and local government officials; officials of Exxon Corp. and other companies involved in the spill and the cleanup effort; government agency personnel who dealt with the event, and Joe Hazelwood, captain of the Exxon Valdez when it struck Bligh Reef on March 24, 1989. The book also includes numerous photographs.

The second council publication produced for the 20th anniversary is a then-and-now report on safety improvements to the Prince William Sound oil transportation system since 1989.

The council also produced a 29-minute film called "Then & Now: The Alaska Oil Spill at 20." It features footage of the Exxon Valdez spill and its effects on the environment, animals and people involved. It also highlights major improvements in the transportation of oil that have come about since the spill as a result of cooperation between citizens, the oil industry, and regulatory agencies. To arrange a presentation from the council, contact either of our offices.



Citizens' council board member Patience Andersen Faulkner visits U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski during a March 2009 trip to Washington by council representatives for the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez spill. Photo by Stan Jones.

STATE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The council monitors state actions, legislation and regulations that relate to terminal or tanker operations, or to oil spill prevention or response. To track developments in the state capital, the council retains a monitor under contract during the legislative session. This area of council activity is coordinated by a Legislative Affairs Committee made up of members of the council board.

During the 2009 legislative session, the committee focused primarily on securing adoption of a legislative resolution supporting continuation of the Prince William Sound dual-tug escort system. As detailed elsewhere in the report, both chambers of the Alaska Legislature passed the resolution unanimously in March 2009, the month of the twentieth anniversary of the Exxon Valdez spill.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The council monitors federal government actions and issues through contract representatives in Washington, D.C. The council's efforts at the federal level during the past year also focused primarily on preservation of the escort system.

RECERTIFICATION

The Coast Guard certifies the council as the federally approved citizens' advisory group for Prince William Sound, pursuant to the Oil Pollution Act. The council has been the certified group since 1991.

Under the annual recertification process, the Coast Guard assesses whether the council fosters the general goals and purposes of the Act and is broadly representative of the communities and interests as envisioned in the Act.

As part of its recertification process, the Coast Guard considers comments from industry, interest groups, and citizens. The council fulfills the requirement for an industry-funded citizens advisory group, but it was established before the law was enacted.