

CDFU TO THE RESCUE

Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU) was probably the first non-oil industry or non-government agency to mobilize to combat the Exxon Valdez oil spill on March 24, 1989. It began at 7:00 a.m. on that first morning with a small staff making calls to determine the extent of the emergency and organizing local fishermen to assist in the clean-up. By the beginning of April, the staff had grown to 32 people working nearly around the clock dispatching and coordinating the work of volunteer fishing boats, acquiring boom, making overflights and dealing with the massive number of media from around the world reporting on the spill. To this date, CDFU continues with a high level of involvement on several fronts, organizing clean-up efforts, helping fishermen and others in the Exxon claims system and providing prompt and accurate information to fishermen, communities, media and others interested in the oil spill.

A CDFU presence was established in Valdez on the first day of the spill with up to ten people working with Exxon, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) and other agencies to facilitate the fishermen's assistance in clean up. The CDFU office was maintained for more than six months until the beginning of October with a full-time office manager and a secretary.

CDFU plans to continue work throughout the winter months with its Executive Director, a secretary and at least 10 part-time assistants devoting their time to the oil spill and related issues in Cordova. In addition, CDFU has representatives in Seattle working on fishermen's claims with attorneys and Exxon's attorneys. CDFU and its experts have developed very effective historical price and catch data for use in this effort. At the same time, CDFU continued its work on long-standing issues such as high sea interception, mariculture and logging.

Working in conjunction with the City of Cordova, CDFU submitted a proposal to ADEC for a winter project. The project consisted of an effort by fishermen to clean up popweed from impacted beaches in Prince William Sound. There were more than 90 boats signed up for the project and over 150 fishermen took a safety class in anticipation of working on the project.

Another issue in which CDFU is making its mark is on the new Alyeska Oil Spill Contingency Plan. Alyeska formed a Citizen's Advisory Committee in July and CDFU held a seat on the Committee since its inception. The Committee is currently working on formation of a permanent committee and making decisions on membership for permanent committee and by-laws affecting its operation. At the same time, the Committee is reviewing the Oil Spill Contingency Plan and providing direct input to Alyeska for suggested revisions. Our Executive Director has attended 15 days of meetings in Anchorage to represent CDFU and Prince William Sound fishermen on the Committee. She also attended a tanker towing exercise in Prince William Sound on October 12. In that practice,

the Escort Response Vessel, the Heritage Service, was able to successfully get a line on the fully laden tanker Keystone Canyon and tow it in a simulation of a tanker which has lost power while outbound in Prince William Sound. In addition, several CDFU Board members have attended many of the Alyeska Citizen's Advisory Committee meetings to provide their input.

CDFU is also working directly with Alyeska to formulate a local response program. It is anticipated that both a winter and summer inventory of boats in Cordova, Valdez, Tatitlek, and Chenega will be developed for immediate call-out in the event of another spill. Alyeska is working with CDFU on their planning for storage of boom and other materials in Cordova. Because CDFU was involved from the beginning, its members and staff have been a valuable resource for Alyeska in its planning. CDFU fully intends to remain an active participant in future oil spill planning.

Since mid-April, CDFU has sent members to Juneau and Washington DC to testify in congressional hearings and has had considerable input into state and federal legislation. CDFU is currently continuing to provide advice in Washington DC on the current oil spill legislation through its on-the-scene lobbyist and by members traveling to the Capitol.

It's obvious that, although CDFU has a history of heavy involvement on oil industry issues, the efforts made during the last seven months have been well beyond the normal level of activity. CDFU has been spending roughly a normal year's budget every month since March 27 with the current expenditures equaling what would normally be about seven years of CDFU's normal budget. CDFU has been able to accomplish this by obtaining funding in the amount of \$250,000 from Exxon early in April for office staff and direct oil spill work. In addition, donations have been received literally from all over the world. Those donations have been used specifically for clean-up, research and legislation. CDFU also has several very successful and ongoing fund raisers. Well-known artist Ray Troll designed a "Tanker From Hell" T-shirt. CDFU is selling the shirts directly and Troll is donating his royalty to CDFU from other sales of the shirts. CDFU has also sold approximately 500 copies of a high-quality videotape entitled "Voices of the Sound." The videotape, which was made in the early days of the spill, has beautiful footage of Prince William Sound before the spill and graphic footage of the effects of a 240,000 barrel oil spill on the beaches. It also portrays the effect the spill has had on the communities and people of Prince William Sound. Both the shirt and the videotape continue to be available by mail order.

CDFU plans to continue its work on oil spill issues for its membership, Prince William Sound fishermen, affected communities and people.

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