

**Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council**  
**Executive Director's Report to the Board of Directors**  
**Donna Schantz – January, 2018**

Happy New Year and welcome to the first Board meeting of 2018. This report is prepared for the Board of Directors to provide highlights of some items of interest since your last meeting.

**Marine Services Transition:** PWSRCAC continues to be involved in, and provide recommendations on, the upcoming changes to the Alyeska/SERVS marine services contractor from Crowley Marine Services to Edison Chouest Offshore. This transition remains a high priority, as it represents the most significant change in oil spill prevention and response equipment and personnel since the system was created.

The transition will bring many positive improvements in equipment and technology. The main focus is now to complete the training programs and certify equipment, with the first two tugs and new barge set to arrive in Prince William Sound next month. With all new equipment and crews, it is important that the highest level of care is taken to verify crew capabilities, their familiarity with the new equipment and procedures, and ensure that they have a good understanding of how the various environmental and other conditions in Prince William Sound can impact their operations. All of this is necessary for the new contractor to have a safe and smooth transition into Prince William Sound.

Industry has questioned the safety of testing crews with the new equipment in the upper end of environmental conditions in which tankers are expected to operate. One item on the agenda for Board consideration is a resolution and corresponding position paper supporting safe tanker transit through Prince William Sound. In light of the safety culture, this resolution includes the position that oil tankers should only be permitted to transit through Prince William Sound in weather conditions which have been determined by industry to be safe for crews to train in. The belief is that it is unsafe to expect crews to respond during an emergency in weather conditions in which they have never trained.

**VMT and Tanker Contingency Plans:** The C-Plan amendments to incorporate the Edison Chouest Offshore equipment are well underway. We have provided comments, and additional information has been requested by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. We will have other opportunities to provide input once the additional information has been submitted and determined complete.

The public comment period on our request for an adjudicatory hearing on the VMT C-Plan Valdez Duck Flats and Solomon Gulch Hatchery protections has ended. We received several letters from PWSRCAC member organizations and other interested parties in support of our request. We are also in receipt of the State's response to our request. We will be working with the City of Valdez and the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation to submit additional information in support of our request by the end of this month. We expect to hear by mid-February if a hearing will be granted.

**September 21, 2017 Berth 5 Spill:** Staff is working to complete our report outlining events and observations from the September 21, 2017 Berth 5 spill at the Valdez Marine Terminal. The spill occurred during a leak test on the berth's four crude oil loading arms. The primary cause of the spill was human error, with a loss of situational awareness and failure to follow safe operating procedures. Overall spill volume estimates are 146 gallons of crude released to Port Valdez, with 129 gallons of this recovered. Council staff, under the recommendation of the Scientific Advisory Committee and Long Term Environmental Monitoring Project Team, obtained mussel samples at the spill site for analysis. Alyeska assisted us in obtaining these samples and took their own samples.

**Director of Programs Position Filled:** CDR Joseph Lally is retiring from the USCG, and returning to Valdez early next year. Joe expressed interest in the vacant position of Director of Programs for the Council, and we are pleased to announce that he was offered and accepted this position. His start date will be March 12, 2018. Many of you know Joe from when he served as Commanding Officer of the Marine Safety Unit Valdez from June 2014 through July 2017. His current position is Compliance and Analysis Division Chief at USCG Headquarters in Washington, DC. Joe has an extensive oil spill/hazardous substance response and prevention background with the USCG, including federal policy writing, conducting marine inspections and investigations, leading emergency responses as the Federal on-scene coordinator, and providing critical data to Coast Guard, agency/industry partners, and non-governmental organizations in support of programs to enhance marine safety, prevention, preparedness and response nationwide. Joe has earned a Bachelor of Science in marketing from Saint Joseph's University and a Master of Science in Environmental and Energy Management from George Washington University. Please join us in welcoming Joseph Lally to the PWSRCAC staff team.

**Other Projects and Work Efforts:** In addition to efforts outlined above, staff have been working on a variety of other projects. Some of the highlights since the September meeting include:

- PWSRCAC submitted our annual recertification application to the U.S Coast Guard. We expect to receive a response in the next month or so.
- Long Range Planning efforts for FY2019-FY2023 have been incorporated into the draft plan for Board consideration at this meeting.
- Staff and the Legislative Affairs Committee are preparing for our annual visits to Juneau and Washington, DC.
- Ongoing research, including the Long Term Environmental Monitoring program and dispersant literature update.
- Efforts to see that the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund (OSLTF) excise tax is reinstated along with promoting the expanded use of the funds for prevention activities.
- Youth Involvement projects throughout the Exxon Valdez oil spill region.

Please keep in mind this is not a complete list of work efforts. Please see Section 5-1 in your notebook for a more complete status update on projects.

In closing, I wish to thank the Board for your support, and the time and effort put into the organization and its mission of promoting environmentally safe operation of the Valdez Marine Terminal and associated tankers. I look forward to a productive meeting.

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