

The Observer

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AK Chamber of Commerce - AK Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Assoc. - Chugach Alaska Corp. - Cordova District Fishermen United - OSREC - PWS Aquaculture Corp.

Is it time to prohibit dispersants in Sound?

Backed up by a recommendation from its Scientific Advisory Committee, the citizens' council board is considering whether to call for a total ban on the use of chemical dispersants on oil spills in Prince William Sound.

Until now, the council position has been that the primary response tactic for oil spills should be mechanical recovery with booms and skimmers, with dispersants to be used only as a last resort.

That would change to outright opposition to all dispersant use under a new position drafted for the board's consideration at its May meeting in Valdez.

In theory, chemical dispersants do as their name implies: they disperse surface oil into the water column, thereby diluting it, preventing it from fouling shorelines, and speeding up the process by which bacterial action renders it harmless.

The reality is quite different, according to the council's Scientific Advisory Committee.

"Chemical dispersants have not been demonstrated to be effective in our region, nor have they been shown to be non-toxic; especially as crude oil/dispersant mixtures," the proposed position states. "Based upon present knowledge, the council believes mechanical recovery, and containment of crude oil spilled at sea should be the primary methodology employed in Prince William Sound and dispersants

should not be considered."

The proposed ban comes after years of council-sponsored research into dispersants, and on the heels of a report called "Stability and Resurfacing of Dispersed Oil," by Dr. Merv Fingas, a Canadian scientist and world-renowned authority on dispersants.

Dispersants require a considerable level of wave activity in order to work. Resurfacing refers to the fact that, if the waves subside, the oil may un-disperse and return to the surface in an oil-dispersant mixture even harder to clean up than untreated oil.

After reviewing and analyzing the Fingas report, the science committee concluded that resurfacing "has not been well-defined or studied. A common argument for the use of chemical dispersants is to keep oil off of environmentally sensitive areas. However, due to the potential of resurfacing, impacts cannot be so well defined. Oil may simply resurface and impact another environmentally sensitive area."

"No experimental or sea-trial evidence exists that indicates the common dispersants stockpiled in Alaska will be very effective in combating Alaska North Slope crude oil spilled in Prince William Sound," the committee said in its summary of the Fingas report.

Fingas's report is available on the council website at www.pwsrcc.org/docs/d0026200.pdf.

Grounding produces new calls for Cook Inlet tugs



BEACHED — February's grounding of the tanker Seabulk Pride at Nikiski has renewed an old debate: Should Cook Inlet have tugs to assist with oil-industry operations, as is the case in Prince William Sound? See story, page 5. Photo courtesy of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

After 14 years, Marilyn Leland is moving on

• REORG: Departure triggers staff changes

One of the citizens' council's best-known and longest-tenured employees has left for a new job.

Marilyn Leland, who had been on the council staff since 1992, started May 1 as executive director of the Anchorage-based Alaska Power Association, an umbrella organization representing the state's electric utilities.

She spent her first three years on the council staff as special projects coordinator. During that time, she was "on loan" to the Coast Guard in Washington, D.C. There, she was instrumental in developing regulations to implement the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, passed in response to the Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989.

Leland was promoted to deputy director of the council in 1994 and served in that post until she accepted the new job.

Before joining the staff in 1992, she had represented Cordova District Fishermen United on the

See page 2, **LELAND**



WAVING GOODBYE — Marilyn Leland, who has been involved with the citizens' council since its earliest days, has taken a new job as executive director of the Alaska Power Association. Photo by Stan Jones, citizens' council.

Winter meeting turns up fishing vessel concerns

Alyeska Pipeline's program for using fishing vessels in oil-spill responses is worth keeping, but could use some changes, such as more training, better communication, and higher pay.

Those are some of the key issues identified in December 2005 during a council-sponsored meeting of captains of vessels that participate in the program. Under the program, Alyeska keeps some 350 vessels under contract for oil-spill response in Prince William Sound, Cook Inlet and the Gulf of Alaska. The program includes training drills to keep the vessels and their crews ready to respond quickly and effectively.

The ten captains participating in the meeting were promised anonymity so they could speak freely.

Among the key issues identified:

- Future of the program: Participants did not want to see the program end but were concerned about the attrition of the fishing vessel fleet. Recruiting new

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Volunteer Profile

Experience and enthusiasm: OSPR's John LeClair

By SUSAN SOMMER

Project Manager

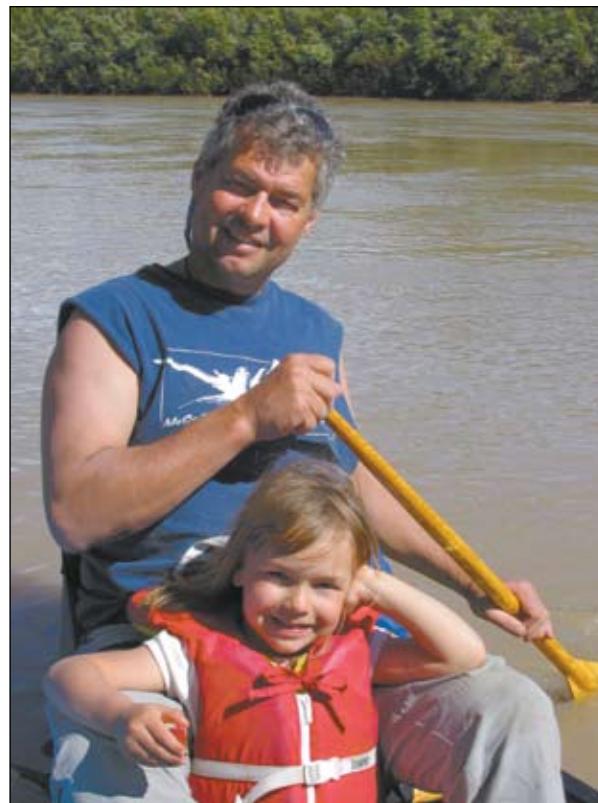
The council's committee volunteers aren't just nice folks who like supporting a good cause—they are real experts in their fields.

John LeClair, who's been volunteering on the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee for about a year, is a prime example.

He is response manager for Alaska Chadux (pronounced *cha'dhoo*) Corp., an Anchorage-based oil spill removal organization. His job: organization, direction and control of the company's operations, logistical support, training and planning, and equipment maintenance. The company has been in business since 1993; John joined in 2001.

He came to Alaska in 1981 from the Pacific Northwest to work as a smokejumper in the Bureau of Land Management's firefighting operations. For several years, he worked in wildfire mitigation around Alaska in various incident command system roles, leading teams of responders. For the last nine years before starting at Chadux, John served as State Fire Management Officer for the Kenai Peninsula and Kodiak Island. He also served as logistics section chief on incident management teams for major floods on the Kenai Peninsula and in northern Alaska and filled that same role during the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. He has a degree from the University of Alaska Anchorage in fire science administration. With so much experience, leadership during a crisis comes naturally to John.

Alaska Chadux Corp. is called out four to five times per year for spills. The staff spends the rest of



Besides serving on the OSPR committee, John LeClair enjoys canoeing with his daughter, Aubrey, shown above during a trip to Utah. Photo courtesy of John LeClair.

the time training and making sure they are prepared to act at a moment's notice. "Chadux" comes from an Aleut word that originally meant "rendered sea mammal oil." The term evolved to describe fuel and today refers to oil.

John brings his years of incident management

experience to each meeting of OSPR, as the committee is known, and is eager to act if asked. He says, "I like to see action items given to committee members" who are willing and able to spend time researching issues, drafting letters, making phone calls, or anything else that would further the committee's goals.

OSPR focuses on reducing the size and frequency of oil spills, as well as reducing the harm they cause. Members review oil spill prevention and response plans; monitor state and federal laws and regulations; monitor and participate in oil spill drills; and investigate developments in prevention, containment, response, and cleanup technology.

Field work associated with the OSPR Committee appeals to John. "I really enjoyed going to Cordova with Roy for a drill," he says.

'Roy' is Roy Robertson, the council's drill monitor. "Because of his experience, John gives good feedback," Roy says. "He has a good relationship with the responders and is well-respected."

John has always liked exploring new territory. He worked summers for BLM during his early years in Alaska, and spent the winters traveling around Southeast Asia and South America. Now, he and his wife and daughter like to see Alaska via cross-country skis. Summertime finds the family setting up their tent along Alaska's trails, and when home in Anchorage, tending their vegetable garden.

It might just be John's friendly, easy-going manner that makes him such a good leader, especially when supported by so much hands-on experience. The council is fortunate to have such a capable volunteer.

LELAND: New job in power industry for council veteran

Continued from Page 1

council board.

"Her years of service will never be forgotten and her expertise will be greatly missed," said John Devens, executive director of the council. "We wish her the best in her new endeavor."

The transition was an emotional event for Leland.

"It will be hard to leave," she said. "I've seen the council go from merely an idea when I was still in Cordova after the oil spill to what it is today, an organization that's making a difference in the safety of oil transportation. I'm grateful for the experiences it has given me and proud of the role I played."

Upon Leland's departure, Devens



Lisa Ka'aihue



Donna Schantz



Stan Jones

reorganized the council staff, eliminating the deputy director position and creating three new director positions.

Donna Schantz, who had been working as program coordinator in the council's Valdez office, was promoted to Director of Programs and will oversee the work of the council's project manag-

ers. She joined the staff in 1999.

Lisa Ka'aihue, who had been working as a project manager in the Anchorage office, was promoted to Director of External Affairs. He will take on federal government relations, which had been handled by Leland, and retain his previous responsibilities for public information, Coast Guard recertification, and state legislative affairs. He joined the staff in 1997.

Former harbormaster will join staff

Bill Abbott, until recently the port director and harbormaster in Homer, has accepted a council position as maritime operations project manager. He is to start June 1.

The job entails oversight of oil tankers and vessel traffic systems at the Alyeska terminal in Valdez and in Prince William Sound. He replaces Rhonda Williams, who resigned the position in January.

Abbott has extensive experience in both marine operations and oil-spill response. He is a licensed master for vessels up to 1600 gross tons. He was a skimmer supervisor and oil spill response technician with an Alyeska

responsibility for the organization's invasive species project. She has been on the staff since 1993.

Ka'aihue's former post as environmental monitoring project manager will be taken by Joe Banta, the council's longtime project manager for Oil Spill Response Planning, and a replacement will be recruited for the post he is vacating.

Stan Jones, who had been working as public information manager in the Anchorage office, was promoted to Director of External Affairs. He will take on federal government relations, which had been handled by Leland, and retain his previous responsibilities for public information, Coast Guard recertification, and state legislative affairs. He joined the staff in 1997.

Working the Halls

Executive Director John Devens, shown here with House Speaker John Harris, R-Valdez, visited Juneau in early March to meet with legislators and discuss council concerns, primarily adequate funding for the state's oil-spill prevention and response programs. The Legislature's regular session adjourns May 9.

Photo by Stan Jones



contractor in Valdez from 1993-1999, and, in the early 1990s, worked for another Alyeska contractor providing maintenance, operation and training for oil spill containment and clean-up equipment.

During the response to the Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989, he was vessel manager and surveyor for Exxon and one of its contractors.

Also in Valdez, Dan Gilson has taken the post of project manager for oil spill response operations. The job became vacant in December with the resignation of Tony Parkin. Previously, Gilson was a project manager assistant in the council's Valdez office.

From the Executive Director

BP spill proves rust and complacency never sleep

BP's recent series of spills and leaks at Prudhoe Bay should throw a good scare into anyone concerned about the integrity of the pipelines that carry millions of barrels of toxic crude oil across our state.

As the Observer went to press, three BP pipeline ruptures had been reported since the beginning of March.

The first, reported to have spilled more than 200,000 gallons of crude oil, was the most serious of the three. It came to light in early March when a worker smelled oil while driving past the site. Like the other incidents, it is still under investigation by BP and its government regulators. Nevertheless, some worrisome facts and troubling questions have already emerged about how one of the world's biggest oil companies has been conducting itself on the North Slope:

- The spill was caused by corrosion in a 34-inch oil transit line and the site of the leak was not the only trouble spot. Other locations tested after the spill showed significant thinning due to corrosion. In one spot, the pipe wall was only 0.04" thick, thinner than a dime. Corrosion is a well-known problem in the oil business, raising the question of how BP and its regulators could have let it go so far in the case of this 30-year-old line.

- It appears BP may have used an emulsion breaker – a chemical to separate oil and water – that actually accelerated corrosion in the line, another mystifying lapse.

- One important measure for preventing pipeline corrosion is 'smart-pigging,' which involves sending a heavily instrumented torpedo-shaped device through the line to check its condition. The line that leaked hadn't been smart-pigged since 1998, although BP's own maintenance and management plan filed with the Alaska Department of Environmental Protection suggested smart-pigging would occur every five years. The long delay in pigging the line that failed has not been explained.

- Another technique for checking pipe condition

is the use of ultrasound, which is conducted from outside the pipe and provides a picture of the inside. Some 139 locations on the pipe had been inspected ultrasonically in recent years, according to BP. The caribou crossing where the spill occurred was not among them, also still unexplained as the Observer went to press.

All of this seems to point up an important lesson: Rust never sleeps, and neither does complacency. Though the matter is still under investigation, what's known so far certainly suggests BP and its regulators were lax in monitoring the condition of this pipeline.

As a result, BP may face serious repercussions, including a criminal investigation by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, an inquiry by members of Congress, a state fine of as much as \$2.1 million, and increased regulation of lines of the type involved in the leak.

In addition, federal officials have asked if the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System to Valdez could be at risk from the same problems that caused the North Slope leak.

And that, to an extent, is where we come in. We don't oversee operations on the North Slope or along the 800 miles of the trans-Alaska pipeline, but we do pay close attention to every facet of operations at Alyeska Pipeline's tanker terminal in Valdez, which has its own system of pipes for moving oil.

As best we can determine, corrosion control is being handled pretty well there. In 2004, we hired our own expert consultant to review the situation at the terminal. His conclusion was that Alyeska was doing a good job of monitoring and responding to corrosion at the facility.

Even in Valdez, however, the council has concerns. Alyeska recently proposed doubling the time between inspections – from 10 years to 20 – of the 14 giant tanks that store oil arriving at the terminal until it can be loaded on tankers. These tanks are 30 years old, and the council doesn't believe relaxing

inspection requirements makes sense. We have opposed the proposal before the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

Which points to what we see as another lesson of the North Slope spill: Citizen oversight is a valuable and powerful tool for making sure that the oil industry and its regulators are careful about everything they do.

Our group is purely advisory, with no power to promulgate a regulation, issue a compliance order, write up a notice of violation, or impose a fine.

But we can do two things.

One is to conduct our own independent reviews of technical issues attendant on operation of the oil terminal in Valdez and the tankers that use it. Our corrosion study at the Valdez terminal is an example.

The other thing we can do is to speak out when we find something worrisome going on, as we just did in Valdez over the tank-inspection issue, and have done on many other issues over the years.

While we would never claim all the credit, it is a fact that strings of mishaps like the BP leaks and spills at Prudhoe Bay are virtually unheard-of at the Alyeska terminal we oversee. Certainly, the terminal has never seen a pipeline spill approaching BP's 200,000-gallon leak on the North Slope. We can't help believing that no BP pipeline would ever have been allowed to rust through and spill so much oil if a vigorous citizens' council had been looking over the company's shoulder at Prudhoe Bay.

• John Devens is executive director of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council.



John Devens

CAPTAINS: Fishing vessel program undergoes review

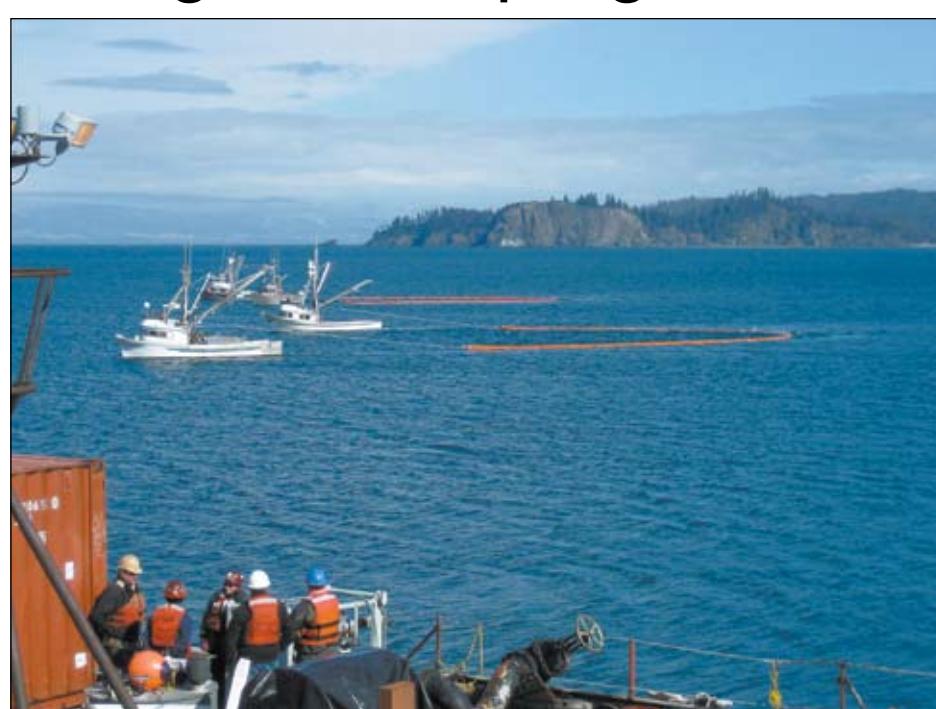
Continued from Page 1

vessels into the program and training additional crews would help strengthen the program, they felt.

- Communication: Participants wanted better communication with Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System (or SERVS), which runs the program. They felt Alyeska's community-based fishing vessel program administrators, who work under contract, were doing an excellent job but the fishermen still wanted more direct communication with SERVS. A newsletter on training opportunities, exercises and other program activities would be helpful, according to participants.

- Compensation: The fishermen wanted more money for their services, citing increased costs for such things as moorage, insurance, maintenance, and crew wages. SERVS contract rates for the fishing vessels have not changed in ten years, according to the fishermen.

- Training: Participants wanted more training opportunities, noting that the number of exercises has decreased over the years. They suggested a video be developed for crews to take refresher training as time permits.



IMPORTANT ROLE: Fishing vessels will play a critical part in the response if there's another major oil spill in Prince William Sound. These vessels are participating in training exercises near Homer in April. Photo by Roy Robertson, citizens' council.

- Mobilization: This refers to how quickly vessels can be brought into action after a spill is reported. Mobilization problems that need to be addressed included out-of-the-area vessel owners and crews; snow; ice; and tides, according to the participants.

- Clear rules: SERVS needs to clarify and enforce requirements for

participation. For example, participants felt that either all vessels should be allowed to have deck houses or reels, or all vessels should be required to have clean decks. Vessel inspections were seen as a good tool for consistent application of the rules.

Participants felt the meeting was beneficial and recommended it be held

annually. They praised the citizens' council and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation for their part in it.

Roy Robertson, the council program manager who helped arrange and conduct the meeting, said a report on the findings will be sent to Alyeska in hopes of resolving some of the captains' concerns. The council has already discussed the meeting with Alyeska and some issues have already been addressed. For example, this year's spring training exercises included the vessel inspections recommended by the captains, Robertson said.

Council Meeting Schedule

The citizens' council board of directors meets three times annually. Here is the tentative schedule for the coming year:

Sept. 18-19, 2006: Homer
Jan. 25-26, 2007: Anchorage
May 3-4, 2007: Valdez

For more information, visit the council's Internet site, www.pwsrcac.org

Alyeska Viewpoint

Terminal storage capacity is sized for pipeline flow

The Valdez Marine Terminal oil storage capacity has been the subject of many questions lately. It is an appropriate subject and we would like to share some information.

In December 2005 the 15 billionth barrel of North Slope oil entered the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. This system accounts for approximately 17 percent of the nation's domestic oil production.

While our facilities were sized to move 2 million barrels of oil per day, we are currently averaging a throughput of less than 900,000 barrels per day. During the height of production – 2.1 million barrels per day – we used 18 tanks at the terminal for crude oil storage. Each tank is capable of storing half a million barrels of oil, for a total capacity of 9 million barrels. This provided approximately 4.5 days of storage if no tankers were loading.

Today we are operating with 14 storage tanks in service. If we assume no tankers loading and a daily throughput of 900,000 barrels, the terminal has almost eight days of storage.

Daily throughput of the oil is managed by Alyeska's Oil Movements Department. This group has a thorough set of management policies and procedures to coordinate the incoming oil at Pump

Station 1, regulate the flow down the line, direct the loading and storage at the terminal, and direct the continuous coordination with North Slope producers and the marine transportation of the oil. Weather is a factor in this system, both on the producers' side on the North Slope and on our side in Prince William Sound. Winds in the Port of Valdez and weather systems at Hinchinbrook Entrance may cause temporary suspension of loading or tanker transits, or both. However, weather has never caused a prolonged shutdown of the system.

Since September 2004 the terminal has been operating with 14 crude oil storage tanks. We had one North Slope production slowdown (called proration) due to weather. North Slope production was slowed for approximately 12 hours with a deferral of about 90,000 barrels. Since September 2004, we have had six crude oil inventory spikes above 75 percent and two above 90 percent. None of these affected supply deliveries to the West Coast, though they did require Alyeska personnel to manage operational adjustments throughout the system.

Since operations began nearly 30 years ago, the longest shutdown of TAPS occurred in November 2002 when a magnitude 7.9 earthquake caused us

to be down for 66 hours.

The Trans-Alaska Pipeline System is a remarkable operation, run by dedicated and professional staff. We are proud of our delivery system and believe right-sizing the footprint commensurate with declining throughput is a responsible way to run the business efficiently.

In the end these efforts help extend the life of the system, thereby preserving Alaskan interests and furthering the economic security of the nation. We will continue to operate with sufficient capacity to manage our commitments to safe, reliable transportation of Alaska North Slope crude oil.

Kevin Hostler

• Kevin Hostler is president and chief executive officer of Alyeska Pipeline Service Company.



Volunteer brought heart and head to work on council

By SUSAN SOMMER

Project Manager

Michelle Hahn O'Leary is proof you don't need a high-level science degree to volunteer on the council's Scientific Advisory Committee.

Being surrounded by Ph.D.s at meetings of SAC, as the committee is known, didn't bother this longtime Alaskan. She knows that her voice, as well as others like her whose authority stems from a love of the natural world and living richly by the earth's offerings, is a valuable piece of the process that helps protect Prince William Sound from oil spills.

But that voice is leaving SAC. Michelle, a Cordova resident since 1974, recently resigned from the committee she first joined in the early 1990s. She was also instrumental in helping form the citizens' council and spent several years on the board of directors.

In her recent farewell to the committee, Michelle wrote, "The SAC members have been a part of that voice and we speak not for ourselves, but for those who speak a language that is seldom heard. As scientists, you are the echo of that language. If you look beneath every project we have worked on you will see that a respect, stewardship and love for life is the motivating force. That is the reason so much has been accomplished; the work has been done not just from the head but from the heart."

"Michelle may not be a science type," says Dr. Peter Armato, fellow volunteer on SAC, "but she gave us a perspective that helped us walk in two worlds. One is humanity, the other science. Sometimes we become bogged down in science and fail to see the human component of our actions. Michelle has always provided that insight, which I believe helped us steer the best course we could."



The simple life appeals to Michelle. Beachcombing is one of her favorite pastimes, and was one reason she moved to coastal Alaska from Oregon. Glass balls, bones, skulls, and shells adorn her office and home.

The chief motivation for her move north, though, was the unshakable feeling that she'd lived here in a past life. Once grown, she perused a map, noted how much coastline Montague Island had, packed her bags, and took off for Cordova, the closest community.

Michelle appreciates what nature offers in Cordova's gemlike coastal setting, whether it's finding treasures along the tide line, ice-skating to the toe of a glacier, bird watching, downhill skiing, or hiking and hunting with husband Michael and dog Pepper in Prince William Sound.

Volunteering for the council, then, was a natural extension of Michelle's belief in safeguarding these natural resources.

When the herring fishery was shut down after the Exxon Valdez oil spill,

Michelle Hahn O'Leary, a council volunteer for well over a decade, "gave us a perspective that helped us walk in two worlds," says a scientist who worked with her on the Scientific Advisory Committee. "One is humanity, the other science." She's shown here with Pepper.

Photo courtesy of Michelle Hahn O'Leary.

she and her husband, like other commercial fishermen and residents of the sound, felt the economic impacts. But more important than that loss to Michelle was the feeling of being left out of the decision-making process. For eight years afterward, she represented the Cordova District Fishermen United on the council's board and served on many committees including the executive committee.

After the spill, "people were completely left out," says Michelle. Working with the committee on the council's community impacts planning guidebook *Coping with Technological Disasters* helped rectify that omission.

"I appreciate that project and what it has the potential to do," she says. "In fact, I'm fascinated by all the projects SAC does. LTEMP (the long-term environmental monitoring program) isn't glamorous, but it's necessary. Dispersants research is invaluable."

"Think with your heart as well as your head," she counsels future committee members. She followed her own

advice. Whenever the going got tough as a board member, she just kept thinking, "I'm doing this for the birds, I'm doing this for the fish." A commercial fisherman for 32 years, Michelle finds the natural world a huge motivator behind her desire to volunteer. Fishing herring "for six weeks, spending every single day out there interacting with the environment—it's about so much more than monetary gain."

Michelle has lots of commercial fishing experience, including gillnetting in Bristol Bay, and herring seining in Prince William Sound and Togiak. She and Michael now focus on salmon gillnetting in Bristol Bay and on the Copper River Flats.

To supplement her fishing income, Michelle works full-time for six months each year in Cordova's Legislative Information Office.

She's also a ski patrol volunteer in Cordova, which meshes nicely with her husband's job as avalanche consultant for the local electric co-op and for the state's highways.

Cordova's strong sense of community suits Michelle. "We voted three times to not get our mail delivered," she says, "because we all get to meet each other at the post office."

The town's outdoor recreation opportunities keep her busy too. "We have beautiful mountains you can climb that fall straight down into the sea. There's boating, hunting, fishing. Cordova is at the end of the northern rain forest with big spruce and hemlock trees. And we have the Copper River Delta, one of the largest shorebird stopovers and waterfowl nesting areas in the northern hemisphere."

She'll keep volunteering, even though her tenure with the council has ended. "We have such an amazing lifestyle here in Alaska. I always end up getting a lot more than I give."

Nikiski grounding proves two hulls better than one

A tanker design improvement mandated after the Exxon Valdez oil spill demonstrated its worth early this year in Cook Inlet.

Just before dawn on Feb. 2, heavy, tide-driven ice floes pushed the tanker Seabulk Pride away from the loading dock at Tesoro's Nikiski refinery and drove it onto a nearby beach. The vessel went through two full tidal cycles before being refloated and pulled clear about 24 hours later.

Despite the impact and the long night on the beach, none of the 116,000 barrels of refined products on board leaked out during the grounding.

Those involved in responding to the incident credit that to the fact that the Seabulk Pride has a double hull, as required by the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990. The act, passed in response to the 1989 Exxon spill, bans single-hull tankers from U.S. waters after 2015. They are already being phased out, and, today, nearly all tankers in Alaska waters have double hulls.

A double-hull tanker has two hulls separated by several feet of space. Only the outer hull is in contact with the sea, and only the inner hull is in contact with the toxic cargo. If such a tanker goes aground and the outer hull is penetrated, the buffer of empty space means that, in most cases, the inner hull is untouched and no oil is spilled.

The Seabulk Pride did sustain some small cracks in its outer hull while on the Nikiski beach, but the inner hull remained intact. An official at the American Bureau of Shipping said the cracks probably would have produced at least some seepage of crude oil if the vessel had had a single hull.

The incident prompted the Coast Guard to stiffen the rules for vessels operating in and out of Nikiski during winter conditions combining heavy ice and fast tidal currents.



TWO HULLS – The Tesoro tanker Seabulk Pride grounded on a Cook Inlet beach near Nikiski early on the morning of Feb. 2. It was pulled off the next morning, without leaking any oil through its double hull. The incident has triggered fresh calls for tugs to assist with oil operations in Cook Inlet. Photo by Tim Robertson.

It also triggered renewed calls for tugs in Cook Inlet by the citizens' councils for Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound, among others. Though a comprehensive escort system was established in Prince William Sound after the Exxon spill, Cook Inlet is still without tugs, despite repeated calls for them over the years.

After the Seabulk Pride was refloated, it was taken

to Kachemak Bay for inspection and temporary repairs before being moved to the West Coast for permanent repairs. That has raised concerns in Homer, where the city council held a panel discussion on the subject in early April.

"Apparently, we are now designated as a port of refuge," James Hornaday, Homer mayor, told the press. "The idea is to try and find out what that means."

Council documents are available free to the public

Single copies of most documents produced or received by the citizens' council are available free to the public. To make a request, contact either council office. Addresses appear on the back page of the Observer.

REPORTS

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Community Corner

Spring sees events in Homer, Kodiak

It's been a busy spring, with the council participating in several conferences and symposiums held in our region. The most recent were the Kachemak Bay Science conference in Homer and Kodiak's Whalfest.

This year the Science Conference focused on "An exchange of scientific and local/traditional ecological knowledge." Themes included Observing the Ocean, Observing Wildlife, Observing Nearshore Habitats, Observing and Detecting Change in the Nearshore, Observing the Watershed, and Long-term Observation, which incorporated contributions from the Seldovia Village Tribe, and residents of Port Graham and Nanwalek.

The council put up its information booth for the event.

Kasitsna Bay Laboratory

The conference culminated with a field trip to the Kasitsna Bay Laboratory, located near Seldovia. This research laboratory is operated by the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It has recently been remodeled and now has a bunkhouse, dormitory, dry laboratories with microscopes, and a 4,000 square-foot wet lab with running seawater. Courses such as Scientific Diving (supported by an active cold water diving facility), Marine Biology and Ecology, and Kelp Forest Ecology are offered. The lab is also available for those wishing to conduct research, or to bring in students to participate in science studies for a small fee. The facility is connected to Seldovia by road and has two boats.

A new dock and pier were built. The flowing sea water system is supplied with water brought up from the bay and stored in two 9,600-gallon tanks. It is fed into the wet lab through a series of pipes in the ceiling and put into tanks as needed for research.

The facility was built in 1959 under the federal Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, now known as the National Marine Fisheries Service. For the past five years it has been undergoing reconstruction to bring the facility up to code and to be available for scientific research for scientists and for students. During the Exxon Valdez Oil spill the site was used to thaw frozen scallops and clams shipped in from Washington State to feed rescued otters. One staff person mentioned that as they were thawing out scallops and clams for the otters, the staff was dining on peanut butter sandwiches.

For more information, visit the

website www.westnurc.uaf.edu/kbay/facilities.html.

At Kodiak's WhaleFest, the council sponsored a poetry contest and received over 150 entries. The winners read their poems at a poetry reading and artist's reception on April 21.

Youth Involvement

A new council project will focus on finding high school and undergraduate college students to sit on some of our committees and project teams. Successful applicants will be placed with mentors who will help orient them and will provide information on the projects being studied. The goal is to recruit a student for each of the council's four

standing technical advisory committees. Besides participating in committee meetings via telephone, each student will be eligible for council-paid travel to attend one committee meeting and one board meeting in person. We hope some of the students will be able to receive credit for this work. For more information on this project and other youth activities, see our new web page, <http://www.pwsrccac.org/outreach/youth.html>. If you are a student, or the teacher of a potential applicant, please contact me at robinson@pwsrccac.org.

Visitors from France

Two members of Vigipol, the French oil-spill-prevention organization that turned 25 last year, are coming to visit Alaska. Jean-Baptiste Henry, Science Director for Vigipol, and Sophie Bahe, a Vigipol intern working on her doctorate in geomorphology, will visit from May 16-June 2. We will take them to Valdez, Cordova, Whittier, Kenai, and Homer so they can meet with various organizations related to oil transportation and science. Accompanying them will be Marion Fourcade, a French sociologist who works at the University of California Berkeley.

On the Road Again

Upcoming activities that we will participate in include the Homer Shorebird festival, May 4-7; the Seaside Expo in Valdez, May 27-29; the Arctic Marine Oilspill Program conference in Vancouver BC, June 6-8; the North American Benthological Society conference in Anchorage, June 4-8; the Alaska Oceans Festival in Anchorage, June 10; and the Copper River Nouveau fundraiser for the Prince William Sound Science Center, June 17.

Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council is an independent, non-profit corporation formed after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill to minimize the environmental impacts of the trans-Alaska pipeline terminal and tanker fleet.

The council has 18 member organizations, including communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill and groups representing Alaska Native, aquaculture, environmental, commercial fishing, recreation and tourism interests in the spill region.

The council is certified under the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990 as the citizen advisory group for Prince William Sound, and operates under a contract with Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. The contract, which is in effect as long as oil flows through the pipeline, guarantees the council's independence, provides annual funding, and ensures the council the same access to terminal facilities as state and federal regulatory agencies.

The council's mission: Citizens promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers.

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