

# THE OBSERVER

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## Industry and council test spill response plans during drill

On June 12 and 13, an oil spill drill conducted by the U.S. Coast Guard and hosted by Alyeska tested oil spill contingency plans for the Valdez Marine Terminal. During the drill, the council put aspects of its own internal spill readiness plan to the test.



A fishing vessel pulls oil spill boom during a recent drill. Photo by Jeremy Robida.

The fictional drill scenario involved a power outage at the Valdez Marine Terminal, a ruptured line leading to one of the loading berths, and a spill of 90,000 barrels of Alaska North Slope crude oil from the rupture into the Port of Valdez. The spill's trajectory, or the direction

of movement of the oil, was deliberately routed towards the city of Valdez so that the city could participate. This allowed drill participants to exercise aspects of the contingency plans related to crude oil vapors and air monitoring, staffing of the city emergency operation center, and a simulated evacuation of the city.

The first day's activities were centered in the command post in Valdez and were entirely tabletop, meaning no equipment was deployed. The second day of the exercise consisted of field deployments with open water and nearshore oil recovery efforts, as well as protection of two nearby "sensitive areas"; the Solomon Gulch Hatchery and Duck Flats area in Valdez. Sensitive areas are locations that have been pre-identified as particularly sensitive to an oil spill due to their biological or cultural importance, or areas that would be difficult to clean up or remediate.

In addition to observing the drill, the council took the opportunity to conduct an internal exercise to test communications between the staff,

See page 4, **DRILL**



Council staffer Joe Banta recently visited Cordova to help train Sarah Hoepfner, a Cordova high school student who has volunteered to monitor the Cordova area for green crabs. Left to right: Sarah Hoepfner, Jonas Banta, and Alan Marquette. Marquette is the previous green crab monitor for Cordova. Read more about the network of citizens that monitor our area for aquatic invasive species on page 4. Photo by Janice Banta.

## Council staffer Linda Robinson retires after 23 years with the council

Linda Robinson retired from the council in June, after 23 years of dedication to the council and its mission. Read more from Linda in her final Community Corner column on page 5.



Linda Robinson

## Council representatives head to Washington

By **STEVE ROTHCHILD**  
Assistant Deputy Director

For two days in May, council board members Dorothy Moore and Patience Andersen Faulkner, accompanied by staff members Mark Swanson and Steve Rothchild, visited our nation's capital in an effort to highlight some of the council's major concerns to the Alaska congressional delegation and several others.

The trip was facilitated by the council's Washington, D.C. based legislative affairs moni-

See page 6, **WEATHER AND ICE**

## Citizens' advisory council for Gulf of Mexico holds first meeting

Representatives from U.S. states bordering the Gulf of Mexico met May 30 in New Orleans to "move forward with the establishment of a Gulf of Mexico Regional Citizens' Advisory Council," according to a press release from the group.

The group says they are modeling themselves after the councils in Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet, formed after the Exxon Valdez oil disaster in 1989.

Similar to the Valdez spill, oil industry and government complacency has been cited as underlying causes of the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010.

See page 7, **CITIZENS' ADVISORY**

AK Chamber of Commerce - AK Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Assoc. - Chenega Bay - Chugach Alaska Corp. - Cordova - CDFU - Homer - Kenai Peninsula Borough - Kodiak - Kodiak Island Borough - Kodiak Village Mayors - OSREC - Port Graham Corp. - PWS Aquaculture Corp. - Seldovia - Seward - Tatitlek - Valdez - Whittier

## INSIDE THE OBSERVER

**Volunteer Spotlight:** Engineering expert motivated by intellectual challenges, p. 2



**Citizen network monitors for aquatic invasive species in council region,** p. 4

**Citizens' council board elects new officers, seats new members,** p. 2

**Swanson: Dispersant use in spill response a concern for many,** p. 3



**Terminal spill contingency plan review extended,** p. 7

**Alyeska: Traveling fair brings health and wellness services to Prince William Sound communities,** p. 3



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**Volunteer Spotlight**

## Engineering expert motivated by intellectual challenges

Orson Smith, the newest member of the council's Port Operations and Vessel Traffic System committee, loves a good mental challenge.

Smith was recruited by council project manager Alan Sorum to the committee a little over a year ago. Working with the committee has given him a chance to understand the terminal and the Coast Guard's Vessel Traffic System better.

"Port operations in the Valdez Arm represent truly challenging port and coastal engineering issues with the extreme weather," Smith said, "The risk of an accident, even at a low probability, has a high cost."

Originally from Kentucky, Smith moved to Alaska in 1973 to work as a mechanical engineer for the Corps of Engineers. In the early days, he rotated through various assignments, settling into a position doing hydrographic surveying and dredging ports.

"That was a time of high adventure," Smith said, "I really remember it fondly, working around the waterfront of Alaska, at all the different harbors. I got to see a lot of Alaska."

That work sparked an interest in civil engineering. The Corps paid for him to attend graduate school in Holland. The Dutch are known for their expertise in coastal engineering. After his studies, Smith came back to Alaska and began planning coastal and harbor projects, mainly working on feasibility studies, evaluating and analyzing proposed projects.

"It involved not just the detailed design but economics and environmental constraints, the full picture," Smith said about the technical and intellectual challenges of the work, "You had to find a solution that would pass muster in the famous benefit-cost balance the federal government applies to projects."

In 1983, the Coastal Engineering Research Center for the Corp of Engineers moved to Vicksburg, Mississippi. The head of the lab offered him a position.

"I could say it was a weak moment," Smith said of the decision to move to the South, "My wife and I had two little kids then, and winters

in Alaska were harder for us. So, under those circumstances we packed up and moved to Mississippi."

Smith said he loved the work. The facility was great and the position gave him the opportunity for assignments all over the world. "But," Smith said, "I missed Alaska every single day I was gone."

By 1991, he was back in Alaska, planning harbor projects for the Corps and teaching part-time at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

"Everything in my field, to me, is more challenging and more interesting in Alaska than it would be in California or another place," Smith says.

In 1998, he went to work for the university full time as a professor in the School of Engineering.

Several of Smith's projects over the years used emerging technologies in new ways. For his Ph.D. dissertation at North Carolina State University, he used an early version of an acoustic Doppler current profiler and fledgling GPS tracking to study currents in the Caribbean.

"It's a very satisfying thing, the experience of taking new technology and using it for practical purpose," Smith said.

Smith worked with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, and the Corps' Cold Regions Research and Engineering Lab to create an atlas of historical ice conditions in Cook Inlet.

During that same period, Smith contracted with NOAA to develop an observer's guide for sea and glacier ice. Smith and the students working on the project took a trip to Columbia Glacier.

"There was something of a mystery at that time surrounding so-called 'black ice,'" Smith said. "There were different theories as to what that actually was." Smith and the group took some samples of the black ice back to a lab in Anchorage.

"It turned out to be a nearly uniform suspension of really small particles," Smith surmised that the particles came from runoff from the mountains, where the particles were

trapped in glacial lakes and later became part of the glacier.

Recently, Smith has been getting back into teaching and research mode after a year on sabbatical and two years in the university's administration as interim dean of the School of Engineering.

While he was dean, he worked on a volunteer project with graduate student Maria Kartezhnikova for the council. They looked at problems with loading oil onto tankers during severe weather, a common occurrence in Port Valdez.

Smith has been working on several educational partnerships between the university and other organizations. For one of those, Smith helped AVTEC, Alaska's Institute of Technology, on their maritime simulator.

"AVTEC has the only U.S. Coast Guard certified ice navigation curriculum in the U.S. right now."

Smith is now working with Seward's SeaLife center on a citizen science program that will collect data about coastlines.

"We are just kicking off a program of volunteer observers of beach processes, called the Alaska Corps of Coastal Observers," Smith said, "Observers will report their observations through a website and long term records and trends will be displayed there."

Smith is excited about his chance to get involved with the council.

"The council is a remarkable effort and a model for the world, getting citizens involved in what is mostly a non-controversial hand in affairs where high risks occur."



Orson Smith

## Citizens' council board elects new officers, seats new members

The council's board of directors elected its seven-member executive committee May 2 and 3 during a meeting in Valdez.

Amanda Bauer, who represents the city of Valdez on the board, was elected president. She succeeds Dorothy Moore, who also represents the city of Valdez.

"I welcome the opportunity to assist in upholding the mission statement of the council," said Bauer. "As a consumer of petroleum products, I feel it is very important to contribute when possible to help keep Prince William Sound and the downstream communities as healthy and safe as possible for all users - industry, regulators and citizens alike."

Besides Bauer, the executive committee, which will serve until the board's May 2014 meeting, is as follows:

Thane Miller, representing the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation, will serve as vice president. Marilyn Heddell, representative of the city of Whittier, was elected as treasurer. Patience Andersen Faulkner, representative of the Cordova District Fishermen United will

serve as secretary. The members at large are: Blake Johnson, Kenai Peninsula Borough; Diane Selanoff, Port Graham Corporation; and Steve Lewis, city of Seldovia.

The council also seated four new board members at the Valdez meeting. Jim Herbert now represents the city of Seward, replacing John French; Nick Garay now represents the city of Homer, replacing John Velsko; Robert Beedle represents the city of Cordova,

replacing James Kasch; and Emil Christiansen represents the Kodiak Village Mayors' Association, replacing Iver Malutin.



The 2013-2014 Executive Committee for the council, left to right: Thane Miller, Diane Selanoff, Patience Andersen Faulkner, Amanda Bauer, Blake Johnson and Marilyn Heddell. Photo by Amanda Johnson.

**From the Executive Director**

## Dispersant use in spill response a concern for many

The council has long been skeptical about the use of dispersants in responding to oil spills in our local waters. Until they can be shown to be effective and environmentally beneficial, the council does not recommend their use and advocates for mechanical clean-up options with booms and skimmers that physically remove the spilled oil from the environment.

### How do dispersants work?

The theory behind dispersants is that in some situations it may be environmentally preferential to chemically disperse spilled oil into the water column rather than allow spilled oil to hit a beach or shoreline. In theory, this would dilute the oil throughout the water column, reducing the acute concentrations and toxic effects of oil on the water's surface. The increased surface area and smaller oil droplet size then helps expedite biodegradation from oil degrading bacteria.

### Why is the council concerned about dispersants?

Council research has shown that dispersant effectiveness is significantly decreased in the cold and low salinity waters of Prince William Sound. Our research indicates that the underwater mixing depth available for dispersion in deep coastal Alaskan waters is reduced, in warmer months, to a shallow freshwater lens of glacial runoff and snow melt water sitting atop the denser saltwater. Council-funded laboratory studies have also shown that chemically dispersed oil is more toxic than naturally dispersed oil. These studies have demonstrated that key local species like herring, salmon and cod are adversely affected when exposed to far lower hydrocarbon concentrations than

previously suspected, in the parts per billion realm rather than parts per million. Actual experience with dispersed oil in Alaskan waters is relatively limited and includes only small dispersant applications trialed during the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989.

The Environmental Protection Agency's listing of dispersants as an approved response product in the National Contingency Plan is currently based on manufacturer-supplied effectiveness and toxicity data. The agency is in the process of updating this part of the plan, but the process has been slow. As of July 2013, the updated rule is with Office of Management and Budget and will next go out for public comment. There are many shortcomings with the current "approved product schedule" that need to be addressed, including:

- The toxicity data provided by the manufacturers is based on short term exposure mortality results for two species that don't even exist in Alaskan waters: mysid shrimp and silverside minnows.
- There is no consideration of human exposures.
- There is no consideration of dispersed oil impacts to other locally important or endangered species, unless local response teams decide to require toxicity testing.

The council is conducting limited research on one whale species but the impacts of chemically dispersed oil on other endangered species present in Alaska is largely unknown.

In summary, due to our cold and highly stratified water column and the lack of research on local species in regards to dispersant impacts, dispersants simply do not seem like the best option for our local waters.

### The BP spill focused public attention on dispersants

Due to the unprecedented extensive application of dispersants both at the surface and at the ocean floor well head during the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, significant additional public attention and research has been focused on dispersants. Whether it was dispersants or other factors, it appears that much of the oil stayed in the water column instead of collecting on the surface and impacting beaches and life on the surface. The short and long term environmental impacts of dispersant use in the Gulf of Mexico are still being studied but initial reports generally appear less than positive.

### Diverse views on dispersants

Following the Deepwater Horizon spill, the scientific community and a wide swath of environmental organizations seem to have increased their anecdotal and research-backed reasons for questioning the use of dispersants. At the same time, some federal oil spill response managers appear to see dispersants as a far more effective oil spill response tool than mechanical recovery.

Continued on page 6, **SWANSON**



Mark Swanson

**From Alyeska Pipeline**

## Traveling fair brings health and wellness services to Prince William Sound communities

On Sunday, April 28, I stood on the deck of the tug/barge combo Krystal Sea/Cordova Provider for the Prince William Sound community of Tatitlek. The sun was shining, the winds calm, and I was surrounded by an enthusiastic group of health and wellness care providers. As we motored out of Port Valdez, everyone was outside taking pictures and laughing; a good start to an important event.

For the last 13 years, Alyeska has sponsored and supported the Prince William Sound Traveling Health and Safety Fair. For eight days, the Krystal Sea brings vital health and wellness services to communities of Cordova, Whittier, Chenega Bay, Tatitlek and Valdez. Our theme this year was "Healing our whole selves," and the trip focused on health and well-being in all aspects of life, from blood pressure to nutrition, exercise, boating safety, music and meditation.

There was a 6:15 a.m. provider meeting each morning to go over the day's schedule and discuss any safety concerns. Then medical professionals set up screening equipment in the schools so that community members could drop by to track their blood pressure, cholesterol levels and other important health information. This year, the group screened over 100 community members - a great success!

We also brought along mobile mammogram

unit. The "Mammo Van" is supplied by long-time partner the Breast Cancer Detection Center of Fairbanks. For women in these small rural communities, getting their annual mammogram means an expensive trip to Anchorage. This year, we were able to save 17 women that cost.

Providers headed into classrooms in Tatitlek, Chenega and Whittier to talk to students about drugs and alcohol, suicide, nutrition and other issues that are brought up by teachers beforehand. These are not easy subjects to discuss, and the volunteers had to be focused and prepared to confront difficult problems that bubble up in such small communities. I was so impressed with the grace, humor and compassion that the care providers wield in these classroom sessions.

Beyond the scheduled activities - there were easily over 50 of them - there were the smaller, quieter moments in the villages that I will remember most: teaching the two preschoolers in Tatitlek why some chords sound "scary" and some "happy," watching the newly-formed Whittier dance team perform Maroon 5's "Moves like Jagger," and holding multiple babies in Chenega so their moms could eat or craft with both hands. When the tug returned Valdez, the weather had turned from spring back to

winter, but the snow couldn't dampen my mood. I was energized and proud that Alyeska sponsors such a special program, and that I have the privilege to tag along.

A big thanks to our partners at Providence Medical Center, Bering Marine, Chugachmiut, Cordova Family Resource Center, Breast Cancer Detection Center, Advocates for Victims of Violence and the State of Alaska.

• Kate Dugan is the Valdez Communications Manager for Alyeska Pipeline Service Company.



Participants gave a thumbs-up to this spring's Prince William Sound Traveling Health and Safety Fair. Photo courtesy of Alyeska Pipeline Service Company.

# Citizen network monitors for aquatic invasive species

With support from the council, a network of citizens monitor our region for invasive species, particularly European green crab and tunicates. This program was initiated by the council in 2000, and has evolved into a self-sustaining grassroots system. Many communities such as Homer and Seward now run their own operations through local science centers. The council supports participation in some of the smaller communities.

The council is particularly concerned about the European green crab. This crab, known to travel in the ballast water of ships at seas, is an efficient and voracious predator that has invaded the West Coast from San Francisco to Vancouver Island. It is feared that the green crab will find its way to Alaska waters. Fortunately, no green crabs were captured in the communities of Chenega, Seward, Homer, Kodiak or Valdez in 2012.



Above: Traps are staked into place. All photos by Janice Banta.



Right: Crab traps are set out at low tide.



Right: Fortunately, the only crabs discovered during this expedition were Oregon crabs, which are a native species in Alaska.

Left: Sarah Hoepfner has volunteered to monitor the Cordova area for invasive green crabs.

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## DRILL: Internal response plan tested

Continued from page 1

the board of directors and committee volunteers. Along with spill response monitoring, communication with local stakeholders and parties of interest would be a key duty for the council during a real event.

Through the years, council has developed an internal response plan which gives staff guidance on what to do in case of a large spill or incident. This plan includes detailed job descriptions and task checklists. By working aspects of this plan, staff was able to practice, document lessons learned, note necessary updates and make changes. The last time the plan was revised was 2010.

The council also simulated launching its science response plan. This science plan, developed by the council's science committee, is a pre-established guide for quickly increasing envi-

ronmental monitoring after a large oil spill.

Council staff contacted volunteers and science contractors by phone and used a blog and email to disseminate information during the drill. Costs for travel, contractor service fees, and other expenses were estimated to help validate how much funding the council needs in reserve to cover initial expenses during a spill.

The council plans to practice this internal response plan on a yearly basis as a training opportunity, and also to further fine tune the plan.



Fishing vessels practice pulling oil spill boom. Nearshore oil recovery tactics were exercised during the second day of the drill. Photo by Jeremy Robida.

### Community Corner - Special Edition

# Looking back at a productive 23 years at the council

By LINDA ROBINSON  
Former Outreach Coordinator

In August of 1990, shortly after moving to Anchorage from Dillingham in the Bristol Bay region of Alaska, I was hired part time to assist the one employee that worked for then Executive Director, Sheila Gottehrer.

My duties were mainly administrative tasks, such as answering the phone, organizing meetings and taking notes. I also ordered furniture and portable computers (called "luggables" at that time), trained volunteers how to use the computers and handled the finances, among other duties.

We started out in the Key Bank building on 5th Avenue in Anchorage but later moved to 2nd Avenue, across from the start of the Coastal Trail. Now, of course, our office is located in beautiful downtown Spenard.

After working as the financial manager for a few years, I became the council's outreach coordinator. This position allowed me to spread the word about citizen oversight not only in our region and at conferences all over the U.S., but also in the form of presentations in Murmansk,



When Linda started working for the council, the first logo was an eye overseeing a tanker.

Russia; at the Arctic Marine Oilspill Program conference in Canada; and for Vigipol, a French citizen oversight organization created after the Amoco Cadiz oil spill, at an event commemorating the 25th anniversary of that spill. Our Vigipol friends have visited Alaska twice and we are still in communication with them.



In 2010, Linda Robinson, standing, helped facilitate meetings between citizens who had been affected by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and Alaskans who were impacted by the Exxon Valdez spill. Photo by Amanda Johnson.

After the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, three groups of citizens from the Gulf of Mexico region visited Alaska to acquire information on forming its own citizen oversight group. I had the pleasure of being their guide while they were in Alaska. In turn, I volunteered to spend time in the Gulf of Mexico talking about citizen oversight. We also hosted a group from Kazakhstan, who had been provided with funding for a citizen

oversight group.

We also produced a film called "Then and Now," which highlights major improvements in oil spill response in Prince William Sound since the Exxon Valdez spill. The DVD has been widely distributed and was shown at the International Oil Spill Conference.

We had an education committee for a time in the early 1990's, which dissolved in 1993. I helped reinstate the Information and Education committee after I became full time outreach coordinator. This committee is comprised of teachers, artists, scientists and a couple of techies - a wonderful assortment of enthusiastic and creative people. It has evolved into a very dynamic and productive group.

One goal of the council for many years was to involve youth in our mission. With the support of the Information and Education committee, we now have a strong program that provides

funding for projects that support our mission and encourage stewardship of the Prince William Sound environment. The funding has enabled students from Exxon Valdez spill-affected communities to participate in expeditions, field trips, chum salmon incubation projects, and other educational activities. Numerous partnerships with other organizations have been formed through this project.

One successful youth involvement project has taken teachers on expeditions into Prince William Sound. Their experiences enabled them to bring back new information to their students. Our first teacher's expedition was taught by our own board member Jane Eismann from Kodiak.

I am very proud of the youth involvement program and am very appreciative to the committee for its support as it has developed.

In 2012, with the help of friends across the U.S., I was honored to nominate Patience Andersen Faulkner who represents Cordova District Fishermen United for the national Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Award.

She was one of five awardees. As a volunteer, I was able to attend this celebration with her.

In 2009, for the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, we organized a video conference that connected five communities to share in panel discussions in Anchorage and presentations

from the other four communities. This event also included an art show titled "Spill: Alaskan Artists Remember" in collaboration with Bunnell Street Gallery in Homer. The theme of the show was the effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. After the opening reception, citizens formed a candlelight vigil.



Linda Robinson

As I leave the council staff, I will take with me many valuable experiences and treasured memories. I have made many great friendships over the years with my coworkers and peers and have been most fortunate to be able to visit and get to know people in all of the communities that are a part of this organization. But what I will perhaps remember and miss most will be the relationships that I have built with volunteers and community members

as I represented the council locally, regionally, nationally, and occasionally even internationally. It has been a remarkable experience. I want



At a 2012 conference, Linda shows a poster about the council's science projects to Sue Saupe, Director of Science and Research at Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council. Photo courtesy of Linda Robinson.

to thank past and present volunteers, administrators, and staff for the opportunities you have given me for growth and service. I can only hope my efforts over the past twenty-three years have matched those opportunities.

*"After spending five days Discovering Prince William Sound and hearing about the events leading up to the Oil Spill, I learned that things may look healthy on the surface but the oil still lingers six inches below gravel on many of the southern [Prince William Sound] beaches. It is my mission to talk to students about what they can do to stay involved to ensure that nothing like that happens again and that all the necessary safeguards remain in place, both there and all over Alaska."*  
- Jacky Graham, teacher from Girdwood, Alaska, on the benefits of the teacher expedition. The expedition received funding through the youth involvement project.

## WEATHER AND ICE: Council representatives talk to Alaska delegation about issues of concern to the council

Continued from page 1

tor, Roy Jones.

The purpose of this trip was to continue the general practice of the council of meeting with, briefing, and obtaining guidance from members of the Alaska delegation and others in the federal government on council activities and stakeholder concerns from throughout the Exxon Valdez oil spill region.

The council group met with senior representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard, the Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Senate and House committees with jurisdiction relevant to the Prince William Sound oil industry, and the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Oil Pollution Research. The group also met with Alyeska representatives Kim Harb, based in Washington, D.C., and Valdez-based Kate Dugan.

The issues raised were positively received and there were productive discussions on what could be done about them, especially in the new era of federal budget

austerity.

### Ice detection radar system to be upgraded

In 2002, the council worked with the U.S. Coast Guard, Alyeska, Prince William Sound tanker operators and other stakeholders to install an ice detection radar system on Reef Island in Prince William Sound to help monitor icebergs in the area. Ice calves from Columbia Glacier and sometimes drifts into the oil tanker lanes, and was a contributing factor in the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. The current Reef Island radar is Coast Guard owned and operated, however the council owns a processor which uses raw Coast Guard radar data to display an ice picture in the Ship Escort Vessel Traffic System's duty office. The council has been interested in upgrading this processor to newer technology for some time.

Shortly after the group's return to Alaska, the U.S. Coast Guard approved a request for proposals drafted by the council for purchase and installation of an upgrade to the council's ice detection signal processor at Reef Island. The council is

working with Alyeska and the U.S. Coast Guard to ensure that the new processor will match the technical specifications of the current system and meets approval requirements for installation.

### Weather buoy system concerns

The council has become increasingly concerned with the operation and deferred maintenance of several weather monitoring buoys in Prince William Sound. Meteorologists depend on the information from these weather buoys for fine tuning satellite marine forecasts with surface wind and wave information.

Prince William Sound and surrounding coastal waters are known for unique and powerful, localized wind events called "barrierjets" and "williwaws." These wind events are strong enough to flip smaller boats and to damage or potentially push larger ones, including tankers, onto shore, rocks and reefs. Weather just outside of Prince William Sound can be quite severe causing sea states that can cause harm to tankers and other vessels entering or leaving the Sound.

The primary concern about the weather buoys is that disruptions in service take a long time to repair due to the lack of availability of both ships and personnel to conduct the repairs. Recent examples include a buoy adrift in the middle of the Sound that took six months to replace, and a buoy at Hinchinbrook Entrance which has been operating sporadically since late August of 2012. The council also mentioned their concerns in Prince William Sound are indicative of the overall



Council representatives visited Washington, D.C. in May. Left to right: Mark Swanson, Dorothy Moore, Steve Rothchild, and Patience Andersen-Faulkner. Photo by Roy Jones.

health of the system throughout Alaska. Currently, only eight of the 20 weather buoys within Alaska are fully operational.

A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, official assigned to the Alaska delegation staff reached out to the council upon our return to Alaska to gather more information about our weather buoy concerns. The council representatives were encouraged by this meaningful dialog following our visit to Washington, D.C. as a great first step in working with NOAA and the delegation towards possible solutions affecting the health of the weather buoy system and the safety of Alaskan maritime transportation in Prince William Sound.

### SWANSON: Dispersant use still a concern

Continued from page 3

ery. These agencies are pushing to ensure that dispersants are pre-approved for use in every state and region. The ongoing update of the Alaska Regional Response Team's Dispersant Usage Guidelines is part of that larger national process, and the council has provided comments. These comments support the idea of basing dispersant use decisions on the clarification of critically important local effectiveness and environmental impact-benefit questions. This can in part be achieved by directing spill response coordinators to appropriate incident specific consultations with resource trustee agencies.

Other groups are becoming galvanized around the issue of dispersants. Dozens of coastal Alaska Native tribal councils have signed resolutions opposing the use of dispersants in their subsistence waters.

In May, three environmental organizations won a lawsuit requiring the federal agencies in charge of oil spill response in the San Francisco area to establish the impact on their local endangered species prior to pre-approval of dispersants. Three other organizations coordinated a national day of action to ban dispersants on June 18th.

The bottom line is that dispersant use is a concern to many. With national public response policy running in apparent opposition to gathering public environmental and human health concerns, the need for stakeholder engagement on this issue is great.

For a summary and links to key council research on this issue please visit our website: [www.pwsrccac.org/programs/environmental-monitoring/dispersants/](http://www.pwsrccac.org/programs/environmental-monitoring/dispersants/)  
 • Mark Swanson is executive director of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council.

## Council Board Meetings

The citizens' council board of directors meets three times annually. The January meeting is held in Anchorage, the May meeting in Valdez, and the September meeting is rotated among the other communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Here is the tentative board meeting schedule for the coming year:

- \*September 19-20, 2013: Seward
- January 16-17, 2014: Anchorage
- May 1-2, 2014: Valdez

Board meetings are open to the public, and an opportunity for public comments is provided at the beginning of each meeting.

Agendas and other meeting materials are available on our website: [www.pwsrccac.org](http://www.pwsrccac.org)

You may contact either council office for a printed copy: Anchorage, 907-277-7222, or Valdez, 907-834-5000.

\*Please note that there has been a change in this schedule. The 2012 meeting in Seward was moved to Anchorage due to a weather-related emergency. The 2013 September meeting will be held in Seward, and the rotation of the September meeting location for all subsequent years will be pushed back one year thereafter.



Members of the council's board and committees at the May 2012 meeting at the Valdez Civic Center. Photo by Amanda Johnson.

## Terminal spill contingency plan review extended

By LINDA SWISS  
Council Project Manager

The current Valdez Marine Terminal Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan, set to expire this past May, has been extended to December 9, 2013.

This plan, created and managed by Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, describes how the company would contain and clean up oil spilled from the terminal in Valdez. The plan is reviewed and updated every five years.

The proposed plan, submitted by Alyeska to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation in October, contained a large number of changes, including being reformatted into four separate volumes. This short-term extension will allow the plan renewal process to continue until the department has conducted a thorough review. The agency has asked Alyeska to provide additional information on several areas of the plan. The council will have an opportunity to provide input to the department during this information-exchange phase.

Once that information is provided, the official public review will proceed. The council expects to submit final comments during the public review.

## CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL: New oversight council forges ahead with industry monitoring efforts in Gulf of Mexico

Continued from page 1

"Our goal is to learn from lessons of the past and prepare for the future," said Drew Landry, a native of Louisiana and one of the coordinators of the meeting.

The National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling endorsed the formation of a regional citizens' advisory council, or RCAC, in the Gulf of Mexico and other regions with the potential to be affected by oil industry activities. Since then, Congress has taken no action to mandate such a council.

The Gulf group said that representatives from all principal Gulf of Mexico oil industry operators and associations were invited to join the meeting, including BP, Shell, ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, Chevron, Marine Well Containment Company, American Petroleum Institute, U.S. Oil & Gas Association, Louisiana Mid - Continent Oil & Gas Association, and the Texas Independent Producers & Royalty Organization. All declined.

"We believe we have strong existing avenues to meet with stakeholders to understand their concerns and incorporate input into our business plans and actions, and participation in a [Gulf of Mexico] RCAC is not a fit for us at this time" said ConocoPhillips' Vice President William Bullock when declining the

invitation, according to the Gulf council.

Representation on the Gulf of Mexico council will include major stakeholders in the region, including fishermen, tourism operators, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, indigenous people, local governments, scientists, and environmental groups.

"A working RCAC benefits everyone - it lowers the risk of future pollution incidents as well as costly future litigation, it improves future spill responses, and it builds trust and communication with local citizens," said Dr. Bonny Schumaker, another coordinator of the meeting. Shumaker, a Gulf Coast resident, is president and founder of On Wings of Care, an organization that provides aerial monitoring in support of offshore and coastal ecology.

Meeting attendees proposed a budget of at least \$10 million per year, to be funded through the existing federal Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund. This fund comes from a nation-wide per-barrel fee on oil, paid by the oil industry.

"The Gulf citizens' meeting yesterday was historic, and it's a real shame the oil industry did not participate," said Rick Steiner, a former University of Alaska professor who

helped form the Alaska councils, "We can't undo the damage from the Deepwater Horizon, but we can and must do everything possible to prevent and better prepare for future such disasters and other oil impacts."

"Ignoring us won't make us give up," said Jackie Antalan of Mobile, Alabama, "the Gulf Coast needs

*"We can't undo the damage from the Deepwater Horizon, but we can and must do everything possible to prevent and better prepare for future such disasters and other oil impacts."*

-Rick Steiner

this citizens' advisory council. We've waited three years for Congress to act on the recommendation from the oil spill commission, and now we've decided to act on it ourselves. We're thinking it through, we'll propose agreements to industry and government representatives, and we'll ask Congress to adopt legislation as they did for Alaska to mandate and support the council's existence."

The group has used resources available from the Prince William Sound council. Some of those resources are available on a website of selected resources created in the aftermath of the spill in 2010. The website spotlights information the council believes could be useful to reporters, citizens, agencies, organizations, companies, and communities dealing with crude oil spills and other technological disasters. Visit: [www.pwsrccac.info](http://www.pwsrccac.info)

## 2013 Marine Firefighting Symposium

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council and

AVTEC - Alaska's Institute of Technology will be presenting the

## 7th Marine Firefighting Symposium for Land-based Firefighters

in Seward, Alaska, October 8-10, 2013.



- Through this program, 50-75 firefighters and responders from Prince William Sound and other Alaska coastal communities will be provided hands-on classroom and field training opportunities that are tailored for the challenges faced in Alaska.
- Topics include: shipboard basics, cruise ship awareness, vessel familiarization, private/public response coordination, politics of a marine incident, and more.
- The symposium will be a mix of classroom lectures, hands-on training and live fire exercises.
- Jeff Johnson of Resolve Marine Group will be returning as an instructor for the event.
- Registration information and forms are on our website: [www.bit.ly/MarineFireSymposium](http://www.bit.ly/MarineFireSymposium). More information on the upcoming symposium, including a complete schedule, will be posted on our website as details are worked out.



Contact Project Manager Alan Sorum if you are interested in participating or helping to sponsor the event: 907.834.5020 or [alan.sorum@pwsrccac.org](mailto:alan.sorum@pwsrccac.org)

## ABOUT THE COUNCIL'S ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Much of the council's work is done through permanent volunteer committees made up of board members, technical experts, and citizens with an interest in making oil transportation safer in Alaska.

These standing committees work with staff on projects, study and deliberate current oil transportation issues, and formulate their own advice and recommendations to the council's full board of directors.

Our committees provide an avenue for public participation in the council's work.

The council has five technical committees:

### Terminal Operations & Environmental Monitoring:

The Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Committee identifies actual and potential sources of episodic and chronic pollution at the Valdez Marine Terminal.

#### Members:

Chair: Bob Benda, Valdez  
Vice-chair: Harold Blehm, Valdez  
Amanda Bauer, City of Valdez\*  
Jo Ann Benda, Valdez  
Stephen Lewis, Seldovia\*  
George Skladal, Anchorage

### Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems:

The Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems (POVTS) Committee monitors port and tanker operations in Prince William Sound. POVTS identifies and recommends improvements in the vessel traffic navigation systems and monitors the vessel escort system.

#### Members:

Chair: Bob Jaynes, Valdez  
Vice-chair: Bill Conley, Valdez  
Kari Anderson, Seward  
Cliff Chambers, Seward  
Pat Duffy, Valdez\*  
Jane Eisemann, Kodiak\*  
Pete Heddell, Whittier  
Orson Smith, Seward

### Scientific Advisory:

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) sponsors independent scientific research and provides scientific assistance and advice to the other council committees on technical reports, scientific methodology, data interpretation, and position papers.

#### Members:

Chair: John Kennish, Anchorage  
Vice-chair: Paula Martin, Soldotna  
Roger Green, Hope  
Dorothy M. Moore, Valdez\*  
Debasmita Misra, Fairbanks  
Dave Musgrave, Palmer  
Walt Parker, Anchorage\*  
Mark Udevitz, Anchorage

### Oil Spill Prevention and Response:

The Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee works to minimize the risks and impacts associated with oil transportation through strong spill prevention and response measures, adequate contingency planning, and effective regulations.

#### Members:

Chair: John LeClair, Anchorage	Jim Herbert, Seward*
Vice-chair: Jerry Brookman, Kenai	Walter Parker, Anchorage*
Robert Beedle, Cordova*	Gordon Scott, Girdwood
David Goldstein, Whittier	John Velsko, Homer*

### Information and Education:

The Information and Education Committee's mission is to support the council's mission by fostering public awareness, responsibility, and participation in the council's activities through information and education.

#### Members:

Chair: Patience Andersen Faulkner, Cordova*	Cathy Hart, Anchorage*
Vice-chair: Savannah Lewis, Seldovia	Ruth E. Knight, Valdez
Jane Eisemann, Kodiak*	Allen Marquette, Cordova
	Kate Morse, Cordova

\*council director

## 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 19 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.*

### Board of Directors

Pres.: Amanda Bauer - City of Valdez  
Vice Pres.: Thane Miller - Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp.  
Secretary: Patience Andersen Faulkner - Cordova District Fishermen United  
Treasurer: Marilyn Heddell - City of Whittier

Robert Beedle - City of Cordova  
Al Burch - Kodiak Island Borough  
Emil Christiansen - Kodiak Village Mayors Association  
Pat Duffy - Alaska State Chamber of Commerce  
Jane Eisemann - City of Kodiak  
Larry Evanoff - Community of Chenega Bay  
Nick Garay - City of Homer  
Cathy Hart - Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association  
Jim Herbert - City of Seward  
Blake Johnson - Kenai Peninsula Borough  
Steve Lewis - City of Seldovia  
Dorothy Moore - City of Valdez  
Walter Parker - Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition  
Diane Selanoff - Port Graham Corporation  
David Totemoff - Chugach Alaska Corporation  
Roy Totemoff - Community of Tatitlek

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Questions or comments about anything in The Observer? Another topic that you want to hear about? We want your feedback. Send your comments to [newsletter@pwsrccac.org](mailto:newsletter@pwsrccac.org)