



Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

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"Citizens promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers."

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For Immediate Release

March 16, 2012

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Citizen oversight group calls for improved effluent monitoring at reconfigured Alyeska ballast water facility in Valdez

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council is recommending that the federal Environmental Protection Agency update the monitoring protocols used to check for pollution from the facility that cleans oily ballast water from tankers, as well as snowmelt and rainwater runoff, at the terminal where the tankers load North Slope crude.

In a March 7 letter to the agency, the oversight group noted that the makeup of the water being treated by the facility has changed over time as tankers bring in less and less oily ballast. For example, the facility averaged 10 million gallons of ballast water a day in 2003; today, the figure is 2 million gallons a day. As a result, runoff makes up a larger percentage of the total. Because tankers use seawater for ballast, the decreasing proportion of ballast processed at the facility means the water passing through it is less salty than in the past.

In addition, the operation of the facility itself has changed as a result of major upgrades over the past few years by Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.

In the letter, Executive Director Mark Swanson wrote that "the makeup of the influent has changed considerably since issuance of the current permit."

The council's comments were in response to Alyeska's application to EPA for a new permit under the agency's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, and to a related Alyeska permit application to the state of Alaska.

While the terminal these days handles much less water and releases much less pollution into Prince William Sound, some pollutants still escape. The purpose of the EPA permitting process is to make sure pollutants are monitored and remain within allowable limits. Alyeska's applications have been in process since early 2009.

The council recommended, among other things, "additional monitoring to better characterize the effluent using updated analytic methods that have become more widely accepted by both industry and the EPA since issuance of the current permits."

The letter was accompanied by a council-contracted review of Alyeska's permit applications by three water-quality consultants.

The council's letter is attached to this news release.

Also, the letter and the council consultants' review of the Alyeska permit applications are available at www.pwsrcac.net/committees/toem/documents/2012NPDES.html along with other related materials.

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, with offices in Anchorage and Valdez, is an independent non-profit corporation whose mission is to promote environmentally safe operation of the Valdez Marine Terminal and the oil tankers that use it. The council's work is guided by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, and its contract with Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. The council's 19 member organizations are communities in the region affected by the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, as well as aquaculture, commercial fishing, environmental, Native, recreation, and tourism groups.