

Long Term Environmental Monitoring

FACT SHEET

Overview

Through this project, we monitor impacts from oil transportation activities and maintain baseline data on hydrocarbon levels, and sources of the hydrocarbons if possible. This project provides us with the best scientific knowledge to help make informed decisions and comments that are scientifically justified.

This data can be used to make recommendations for future spill response and mitigation measures. The information from this project is also used to comment on spill response policy and regulatory and plan reviews by the state and the Regional Response Team.

Long-term environmental monitoring is necessary to identify physical and biological changes taking place in the northern Gulf of Alaska ecosystem. It is essential to distinguish between natural trends and human-caused changes in the environment.



Photo: Samples of mussel tissue and sediments are collected and tested for the presence of petroleum hydrocarbons. The database of information from this project is the largest longitudinal (over time) database of hydrocarbon presence in Prince William Sound.

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990, enacted after the Exxon Valdez oil spill called for “a comprehensive program of monitoring the environmental impact of the operations of terminal facilities and crude oil tankers while operating in Prince William Sound.”

Our Long Term Environmental Monitoring Project was implemented in 1993 to do that work.

The protocol for hydrocarbon monitoring changed in 2009. Originally, sampling occurred at 10 sites in Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska via mussel tissue with most sites being sampled twice a year. Mussels from Port Valdez sites were sampled three times a year, and sediments twice a year, due to the documented increased hydrocarbons in that area.

The sampling changed in July 2009 based on a comprehensive analysis by our Scientific Advisory Committee. Sampling is now done only once per year in the summer season at just two Port Valdez sites and the Knowles Head. All 10 sites are sampled every five years in the summer season.

We are continually trying to improve our monitoring program through identifying, evaluating and integrating new technologies.

Results are summarized in an annual report and are published regularly in peer review journals.

This project is part of the work of the council’s Scientific Advisory Committee. For more information, contact council project manager, Joe Banta, banta@pwsrccac.org.
On the web: www.pwsrccac.org

Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council ~ Citizens promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers.



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