

The Observer

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RCAC wages full-court press on spill prevention, response regs

Capping months of work by the Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee, RCAC took a firm stand on strong regulations to implement HB 567. HB 567 is the state's primary effort to ensure that a crude oil spill the size and impact of the Exxon Valdez is never repeated. It requires industry to improve its ability to prevent and respond to oil spills.

During the public comment period in August, RCAC testified at public hearings, ran newspaper ads statewide to encourage public comment and urged city councils to pass resolutions taking a position on the proposed regulations. Resolutions of support were passed by the cities of Whittier, Seldovia, Cordova and Kodiak, and the Kodiak Island Borough.

To draw further attention to the issues, RCAC

President Chris Gates, working with the OSPR Committee, wrote a guest column that was published in the Anchorage Daily News, Homer News, Juneau Empire, Kodiak Daily Mirror, Valdez Vanguard, (Kenai) Peninsula Clarion and Cordova Times.

"The same level of attention and concern exhibited by Alaskans toward the proposed Exxon settlement should be called upon now to ensure that regulations are not watered down in practice," Gates wrote. "DEC and the Governor need to hear that Alaskans are not willing to forget the lessons we learned from the Exxon Valdez."

OSPR Chairman Tim Robertson, in an interview on the public radio program "Alaska News Nightly," said the timing of the public comment period was unfortunate. "Summer is one of the worst times to get Alaskans to comment on a bureaucratic process. Everybody's out being Alaskans this time of year. Yet it's very critical. These regulations will be the rulebook by which industry, for the first time probably anywhere in this country, will have to plan to respond to oil spills and prevent oil spills," Robertson said.

RCAC's comments to DEC included the following:

1. Baseline prevention to provide minimum level of protection – Issue: Prevention is the first and best defense against another Exxon Valdez. RCAC position: The regulations should retain the specific baseline prevention requirements for oil production, storage and transport.

Transfer of responsibility for c-plan raises questions

Alyeska's announced decision to transfer responsibility for oil spill contingency planning to shippers has raised questions at RCAC.

Council members have asked for a legal analysis of the transfer, to determine whether it could impact either RCAC's contract with Alyeska, or its status as the federally-certified advisory organization, as required under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

2. Prevention credits – Issue: As an incentive to implement prevention measures, industry will be allowed to reduce response standards through prevention "credits." RCAC position: Prevention measures need to be strictly defined; they are too vague as written. Prevention measures that are required should count as credits only if response standards start at 100%.

3. Initial response planning standards – Issue: The Exxon Valdez demonstrated that damage from a spill could have been mitigated by a stronger response capability. Planning for how to respond to an oil spill begins with assumptions about how much oil could be spilled. RCAC position: The oil industry

RCAC: What it is

The Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (RCAC) of Prince William Sound (there is also an RCAC for Cook Inlet (CIRCAC)), is an independent, non-profit organization formed in the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez disaster to ensure the safe operation of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Terminal and the crude oil tankers served by the terminal, so that the environmental impacts associated with the terminal and tanker fleet are minimized.

The RCAC has 16 members who represent municipalities, commercial fishing groups, Alaska Native interests, and environmental and business organizations.

RCAC is certified under the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990 as the citizen advisory organization for Prince William Sound, and operates under a contract with Alyeska. The contract, which is in effect as long as oil flows through the pipeline, guarantees RCAC's independence, provides annual funding at \$2 million, and guarantees RCAC equal access to the terminal as that enjoyed by state and federal regulatory agencies.

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RCAC says MSRC should not assume that Alyeska will handle any major spill in Alaska.

Ballast water to be independently monitored **Page 3**
Whether funded by the state or not, RCAC is proceeding with plans to develop an independent sampling and monitoring program of ballast water treatment in Valdez.

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A long-term project will quantify social and economic impacts of oil spills on communities

RCAC protests omission of Alaska by MSRC

RCAC is protesting a national spill response plan that assumes that Alaska can take care of itself in the event of a catastrophic spill.

In an August 26 letter to Coast Guard Rear Admiral A. E. Henn, RCAC took strong exception to the position of the Marine Spill Response Corporation (MSRC) that it would not need to respond to a spill in Alaska.

The MSRC is a co-operative formed and funded by the country's major oil companies as a mechanism for responding to a catastrophic oil spill anywhere on the United States coastline. Nearly half of that coastline (48 percent) is in Alaska.

Yet MSRC is balking at responding to a spill in Alaska. At first, MSRC cited Alaska's strong liability laws for response action contractors, the RCAC letter said. Once that issue was resolved, MSRC still demurred on grounds it didn't want to "duplicate Alyeska's already superb response capability."

Tom Copeland, a member of RCAC's Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee, said MSRC is plain wrong if they think Alaska has sufficient response capability in case of a catastrophic spill.

"MSRC is saying they don't need to respond here. In fact, we don't have comprehensive coverage. Alyeska will respond *only* to an oil spill in Prince William Sound and *only* for the first 72 hours. They won't respond to other types of spills, spills outside the sound, and any clean-up after three days," Copeland said.

The omission of Alaska by MSRC is particularly serious because in the process of establishing five catastrophic spill response depots on the lower 48 coastline, MSRC is monopolizing all available equipment and personnel. It is those resources that the Coast Guard would employ in cases when the federal government takes over spill response.

"We have to convince the U.S. Coast Guard and the MSRC that they must be able to respond

in Alaska. It's essential they not be allowed to cut us out," he said.

In the event of a catastrophic spill, the Coast Guard would take over management of a spill on behalf of the federal government. Indeed, the federal government considered "federalizing" management of the Exxon Valdez spill. Federal officials decided against federalizing when they realized that Exxon could mobilize resources much faster than the government.

Under OPA 90, the federal government must be prepared to respond and primary responsibility

*"In fact, we don't have comprehensive coverage. Alyeska will respond **only** to an oil spill in Prince William Sound and **only** for the first 72 hours. They won't respond to other types of spills, spills outside the sound, and any clean-up after three days."*

—Tom Copeland

OPA 90 draws Council attention

The closing months of 1991 and 1992 likely will bring increased attention by RCAC to implementation of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, the federal statute that totally revamped the laws pertaining to responsibility, response and preparedness for spills of oil and other hazardous substances. RCAC's OPA 90 priorities were to be identified in September.

"This should be a major issue for RCAC, board member Ann Rothe said. "OPA 90 is the legislation that recognizes us and by doing so, gives us responsibility to provide input. We have to expand our advisory role to include federal agencies involved in implementing OPA 90."

As part of that advisory role, RCAC is putting together a list of products that should be approved for use in spill response. Only products included on the final list may be used, and RCAC members want to make sure the toxicity of a product, in addition to its effectiveness, is considered before a product is approved.

RCAC has also registered a strong complaint with the U.S. Coast Guard over a gap in spill coverage in Alaska. (See related story, this page).

OPA 90, signed by President George Bush in August 1990, took 12 years to pass and many of its provisions were strongly resisted by the oil industry. Some of the most important provisions include:

- A requirement for double-hulls on tankers transporting crude oil;

- More stringent requirements for oil spill contingency plans, including a requirement that the plan-holder demonstrate its ability to clean up spills;

- Restructured oil spill liability and compensation laws, combining all previous funds into one reserve fund to pay for federal response to oil spills. Significantly, the federal law does not preempt a state's ability to set more stringent liability or even unlimited liability.

At a joint meeting of the Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) and Executive Committees in Seldovia July 29, consultant Michele Straube presented an analysis of the status and issues of OPA 90 implementation.

A major problem, she said, is that the executive order telling the agencies to begin developing the regulations to implement OPA 90 has been bottled up in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Under a process started by the Reagan administration, any executive order that sends regulatory packages to the agencies for implementation goes first to the Office of Management and Budget. Since the agencies aren't supposed to develop or enforce regulations without that executive order, OMB can hold on to the order as a stall tactic by administration officials opposed to the law.

The executive order for OPA 90 has been sitting in OMB for months, so the agencies have already fallen behind the schedule set by Congress for moving ahead, Straube said.

for that falls on the Coast Guard. In the event of a catastrophic spill, the Coast Guard would be the federal on-scene coordinator of the response effort. Under the current plans, the MSRC would be at the Coast Guard's disposal anywhere except Alaska.

RCAC has asked the Coast Guard to respond specifically to the following questions:

- How can TAPS tanker owners respond to a spill as required by OPA 90, if the MSRC resources are not available to them?

- With MSRC amassing enormous stockpiles of personnel and equipment, how can the Coast Guard respond to a worst case discharge without calling on MSRC resources?

- In the event of a TAPS spill outside Prince William Sound, will the federal on-scene coordinator require Alyeska to respond? If not, what will the response be?

- In the event of a non-TAPS oil spill — such as the one million gallons of jet fuel nearly lost from an Air Force barge in 1989 — how will the federal on-scene coordinator mount a response effort, if not with MSRC?

Ballast water treatment program underway

A comprehensive program to independently monitor and evaluate Alyeska's ballast water treatment (BWT) plant is underway. RCAC had already begun the initial work, when the Alaska State Legislature last spring appropriated \$175,000 for an independent program, citing insufficient information about the origins and composition of ballast water treated at the plant.

In a letter to John Sandor, Commissioner of Environmental Conservation, legislators said RCAC's independent program is a "first step toward resolving many of the questions surrounding the ballast water treatment facility and effluent discharges into Prince William Sound."

Although ADEC has not released the funds and no contract has been written, RCAC will proceed with its program. The first phase of the project entails research and design of independent testing and monitoring plans, and reviews of procedures currently in use at the Alyeska Marine Terminal ballast water facility in Valdez. The evaluation will address both the accuracy and effectiveness of current sampling and testing procedures, and include recommendations for improvements.

The second phase will be implementation of the independent sampling and testing program to obtain precise data about what goes in to the BWT plant and what the plant discharges into the sea.

Since the mid 1980s, concerns have been building over the nature and toxicity of substances processed as influent at the BWT plant. Ballast water influent from docking tankers is not regulated or monitored under Alyeska's federal permit. Tanker oil record books contain some information about ballast water contaminants, but the information is not usually available to ADEC until long after the ship is de-ballasted,



From left, Staff Assistant Joe Bridgman, Vice Chairman Scott Sterling, Chairman Jason Wells and Kristin Stahl-Johnson at the TOEM Committee meeting in August. Stahl-Johnson is the Scientific Advisory Committee's liaison to TOEM, which developed the program for independent sampling and monitoring of ballast water influent and effluent.

loaded and on its way south.

An EPA official told state legislators that wastes normally treated at the BWT plant are not adequately described or characterized. ADEC began sampling and testing ballast water influent in April 1991. Both EPA and ADEC say the presence or absence of hazardous or toxic substances in the influent can only be determined by a long-term testing and monitoring program.

Under Alyeska's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit, ballast water effluent is monitored by a sampling and testing procedure scheduled in advance. Most of the sampling is done by Alyeska itself, with only infrequent monitoring by ADEC.

In April 1991 the TOEM Committee began work on a step-by-step program to contract with chemists and other experts to:

1) design the best possible comprehensive testing and monitoring plan for ballast water influent and effluent,

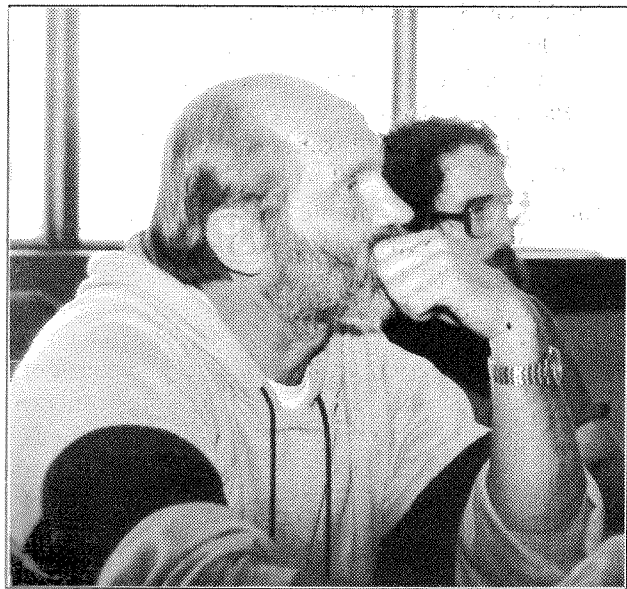
2) analyze existing influent and effluent testing programs by comparing them to the consultants' designs,

3) critically review existing toxicity testing programs, and

4) evaluate the combined results of the above studies and suggest improvements.

If industry and regulatory agencies fail to modify their sampling and testing programs to the satisfaction of the legislature and the public, the TOEM Committee will use the comprehensive sampling and testing plans to initiate an independent sampling and testing program. The independent program could be implemented at any time.

The TOEM Committee will evaluate the accuracy and effectiveness of current sampling and testing programs and recommend changes to those programs. The RCAC program is expected to build a sturdy foundation for monitoring long term-effects of the BWT influent and effluent on the biological system of Prince William Sound.



TOEM Committee members Bob Benda of Valdez, left, and Jim Levine, of Anchorage, at the committee's Aug. 19 meeting in Valdez.

Air quality focus of TOEM work

Alyeska's air monitoring and risk assessment programs in Valdez are being scrutinized by a handful of independent experts commissioned by RCAC's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Committee.

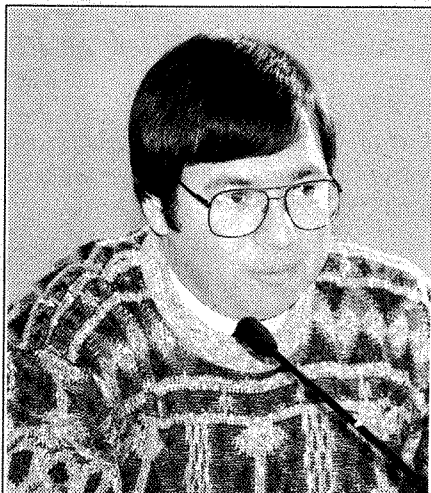
The air monitoring program has two parts: measurement of ambient levels of hydrocarbons and other pollutants, and measurement of human exposure to these pollutants. TOEM wants to determine whether the program is correctly designed and whether it can be expected to yield reliable results. Reviews of the programs are expected to be completed by the end of the year.

In a related project, RCAC commissioned a literature survey as the first step in assessing what happens to the hydrocarbons released into the air when tankers are loaded with oil every day. More than 42,000 tons of air-borne hydrocarbons are released at the Alyeska terminal every year. A small percentage of the hydrocarbons is benzene, a potent carcinogen.

When the literature survey is completed, the TOEM Committee will decide whether to conduct actual field studies on the fate and effects of airborne hydrocarbons.

"So who cares anymore?"

By Christopher H. Gates
President, RCAC



Chris Gates/Photo by Hal Gage

"So who cares about oil spills anymore?"

Those words came from a friend of my 16-year old son. It was a good question and my son could not tell him why it was important for his father to attend yet another meeting to talk about oil spills. The question will be asked by many Alaskans in the coming years. The answer must be clear and unequivocal: Working to prevent oil spills is important and worth the sacrifice of valuable time. If my son is asked again, he will talk about complacency.

Complacency is a terrible word in an industry that can impact thousands of people and destroy

the economy of whole regions of a state. Complacency contributed to both the oil spill and the slow response after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989. Complacency had grown in both industry and regulators, despite their promises of vigilance. Past experience notwithstanding, complacency is avoidable.

This Regional Citizens' Advisory Council is a tool for fighting complacency. The RCAC is a grand experiment with national as well as local implications. For the Prince William Sound/Gulf of Alaska "impact areas" to have a voice in the decisions that will affect them is a first. If the experiment succeeds – if local citizens are able to work as a team, educate themselves, provide local knowledge, encourage high standards and let people know when safety or prevention are threatened – then everybody wins.

If the citizens' group gets wrapped up in self-interests, becomes complacent itself or becomes too influenced by the industry or regulators; if we lose the confidence of the people we represent, then the experiment fails.

* * *

There has been a shift in approach to cleaning up oil that escapes a clean-up effort. Alyeska told the council early on that it would follow spilled oil wherever it went. Alyeska's current plan, however, is to be in charge of spill response for only the first 72 hours. After that, management and clean-up would fall to the shipper responsible for the spill.

The council is concerned that some of those shippers would not be as prepared or as practiced as Alyeska. RCAC is working to convince Alyeska that it should maintain firm control beyond the initial 72 hours.

This issue is separate from but related to another area of concern to RCAC: Alyeska's decision to hand over responsibility for oil spill contingency planning in Prince William Sound to shippers. We'll continue to follow both issues.

The RCAC is undertaking more than 100 issues and projects, all related to preventing oil spills in the future or improving response capabilities if spills do occur. Alyeska has improved the oil spill response situation greatly but there is still much to be done. We invite you to join us in our efforts. We want you to know that complacency is not in our vocabulary.

Port Ops Committee looks at tanker transit

The environmental risks of tanker transit in Prince William Sound and ways to mitigate those risks will be the focus of a major study under development in the Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems (POVTS) Committee.

One of the main charges of the POVTS Committee is to reduce the environmental risks associated with tanker transit to and from the pipeline terminal. Before steps can be taken to reduce those risks, the risks themselves must be identified, and alternative response techniques assessed. One possible method for assessing the alternatives is a computerized simulator that could compare emergency response scenarios based on varying weather conditions and equipment. A portable simulator is available at a cost of \$100,000 per year.

POVTS also needs an evaluation of current equipment and operations, including existing tugs, emergency response vessels, emergency towing equipment and procedures. That study would include recommendations for improvements and an assessment of the potential for catastrophic steering failure on tankers.

The POVTS Committee for months has been grappling with methods for assessing the risk of spills in the sound. An area of particular concern is the Valdez Narrows, where restricted maneuvering room and a tight response window increase the risk of a grounding. Since the Exxon Valdez spill, the law has required that tankers be accompanied by escort vessels, including a tug, as far as

Vessel traffic to be examined

An audit will be conducted of the U.S. Coast Guard's vessel traffic system in Prince William Sound, to answer questions about the adequacy of the current system.

The audit is expected to be done this fall under a contract with RCAC's Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems (POVTS) Committee.

"Some serious questions have been raised regarding the accuracy of plots on the radar and the actual location of the vessel transit corridors," Committee Chairman Stan Stephens said. "We don't know that there are problems out there. That's the purpose of the audit."

The Coast Guard's vessel traffic system has been improved since the Exxon Valdez oil spill. It now has two radars – on S Band and X Band – and improved VHF communications through additional remote sites. However, additional improvements required under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 have been delayed for a year. The differential global

positioning system will dramatically improve the Coast Guard's ability to monitor tanker traffic and assist tanker navigation. It was supposed to come on-line this fall, but the latest estimate is that it won't be operational until fall of 1992.

The GPS system will use a satellite to relay transmission between Valdez and tankers operating in Prince William Sound. Traffic between Valdez and Bligh Reef will continue to be tracked by radar.

The delay in getting the new system on-line stems from delays in satellite launchings by the Department of Defense and problems the Coast Guard had in releasing its request for proposals.

"The whole point is to make sure that vessels receive good navigational information and that there's a system of overview so you know where they are and what they're doing," Stephens said. "In light of the delay, we just want to make sure that there are no significant problems in the interim."

See "Port Ops," Page 8

Skimmer exercise instructive, observers say

Alyeska's Ship Escort Response Vessel System (SERVS) deserves credit for its Aug. 13 skimmer exercise near Hinchinbrook Entrance, according to RCAC representatives who observed the deployment.

Patti Saunders, a member of RCAC's Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee and an active environmentalist, said the exercise represented some small victories for RCAC, which

has urged Alyeska to use fishing vessels, conduct exercises outside the protected waters of Valdez Arm and gather information on dispatch times for response equipment.

"We wanted those and we got them. It was an opportunity to see whether we've got what we think we've got and whether it's enough," she said.

Alyeska's SERVS Manager Larry Shier said SERVS will conduct exercises in the sound as standard operating procedure.

There were some problems. The exercise ended earlier than planned when 25 knot winds came up, because of concern for the safety of the small fishing vessels participating in the exercise. In addition, one of the four TransRec 350 skimmers didn't function properly. Saunders said Alyeska should have the latitude to make mistakes.

"That's what rehearsals are for: to figure out where you have problems or weaknesses. Sorting out problem areas now is an important part of preparing for a spill. If you don't make mistakes, you don't learn anything," she said.

RCAC is recommending Alyeska develop a tiered response system, based on vessel size, so that only vessels capable of handling the prevailing weather conditions go out in those conditions. Although the 25 knot winds shut down operations of the smaller fishing vessels used in the exercise, the barges and the Valdez Star were not affected by the weather and can respond in more severe conditions.

RCAC also would like to see the primary

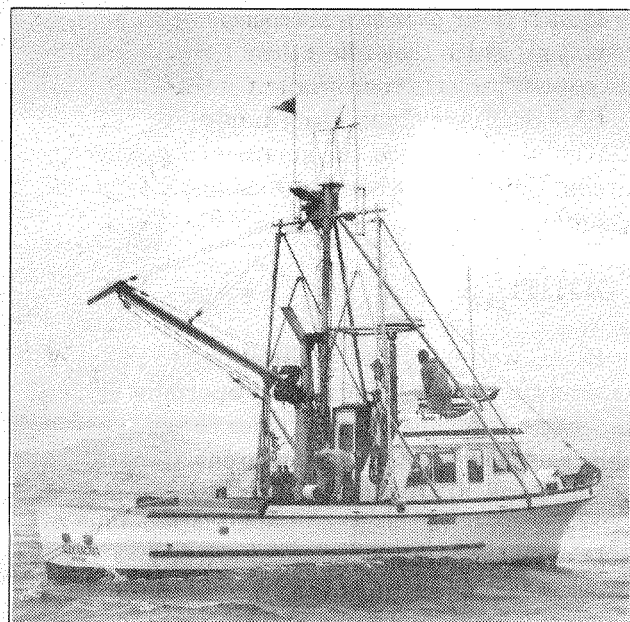
containment boom deployed behind the skimmer barge before deflection boom is off-loaded and towed by fishing vessels. Under this procedure, deflection boom would be dispatched from the opposite side of the SERVS vessels. RCAC is also recommending that the TransRec skimmers be operated while in port on a regular basis, to avoid the type of problem that occurred with the skimmer during the exercise.

The RCAC contingent, in addition to Saunders, consisted of Joe Banta, Staff Assistant to the OSPR Committee, and Patty Ginsburg, Communications/Information Specialist.

Alyeska's objectives were to practice spill containment and recovery tactics on open water; have fishing vessels set out deflection boom to enhance the oil recovery rate of the skimmers; and demonstrate coordinated, offshore spill response communications.

"Sorting out problem areas now is an important part of preparing for a spill. If you don't make mistakes, you don't learn anything."

— Patti Saunders



The "Alexandra" (above) was one of 12 fishing vessels that set boom in the skimmer exercise. Below, the "Valdez Star", a dynamic incline plane skimmer, is the centerpiece of spill response because of its effective skimming capabilities. Photos by Patti Saunders.



The skimmer exercise was based on the following scenario: A fully laden TAPS tanker carrying 1.1 million barrels of crude is returning to the Sound for repair of mechanical problems when it is rammed by another ship. The collision ruptures a tank, releasing 20,000 barrels of crude about three miles north of Johnstone Point on the north side of Hinchinbrook Island.

The three task forces deployed to the "spill" included two barges towed by tugs, two Emergency Response Vessels (ERVs) with TransRec skimmers; 12 fishing vessels to set booms; and the Valdez Star. The Valdez Star is a dynamic incline plane (DIP) skimmer, one of the most effective skimmers ever made. It adds considerably to Alyeska's response capability.

RCAC representatives were also on-scene for a nighttime fishing fleet deployment in October 1990, and a 24-hour Alyeska drill, April 23-24, 1991. Alyeska's goal, according to SERVS chief Larry Shier, is to conduct one multiple-task force equipment deployment every 45 days.

Committee structure essential

by Sheila Gottehrer, Executive Director



Sheila Gottehrer/Photo by Hal Gage

The Regional Citizens' Advisory Council has a functional structure that sometimes causes some confusion in terms of role, responsibility and authority. The council itself is constituency based; our 16 members represent specific constituencies, be they communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill, Native organizations, tourism or environmental groups. Council members represent the interests of those groups.

Although every committee has at least two RCAC members, most of the committee members don't sit on the council. They are members of the general public with either great interest in or

knowledge about the specific technical aspects of RCAC's work.

The committees are the workhorses of RCAC. They contract for and sometimes do the research, decide what work needs to be undertaken, study the issues and formulate recommendations for consideration by the council. They do this work in their spare time, because like the council, they are all volunteers.

The committees contribute three essential elements to RCAC: broader citizen input, practical experience and technical expertise. The former is what RCAC was intended to be about – the opportunity for a "regular" disparate group of people to have a say in matters that affect their lives. But unless that say is built on a foundation of knowledge, it doesn't tend to count for much. That's where technical expertise comes in. Frequently in life, it's very important to know what you don't know. Committee members with practical experience and technical backgrounds provide invaluable perspectives on the myriad issues that bombard the council at every meeting.

Anytime a group of people takes its work seriously, differences of opinion arise and RCAC is no exception. We have our share of disagreements, but thankfully most of them are productive and all our debates stem from the desire to do what's right in Prince William Sound.

RCAC could not function without the sweat equity that volunteer committee and council members provide. Everybody involved in this noble experiment has the same interest at heart: to promote citizen input, through a voice that is heard and heeded, in oil facilities and operations in Prince William Sound.

Comings and Goings

RCAC bids a grateful farewell to council members **Jason Wells** and **John McMullen**. Both have been on the council since 1989.

Wells and his family are leaving Valdez for the Simi Valley north of Los Angeles, where Wells will continue the church work that he did in Valdez.

John McMullen has been promoted to president of the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Association and his new duties force him to turn his council chair over to a successor. Prior to his promotion, which took effect July 1, McMullen was special projects coordinator for the PWSAA.

SAC Staff Assistant **Thea Levkovitz** left RCAC and Alaska over the summer. She moved to Eureka, California, when her husband was offered a position there.

Comings

RCAC welcomes **Patty Ginsburg** to the staff as Communications/Information Specialist. Ginsburg has extensive experience in writing and public relations in public policy areas. Congratulations to **Capt. Stan Stanley**; he's been promoted to Deputy Director. He has been staff assistant to the POVTS Committee since November 1990. His new responsibilities include contracts administration.

Regulations

Continued from Page 1

should plan for the largest foreseeable spill: loss of all cargo (100% RMOD – realistic maximum oil discharge). Proposals to set a response planning standard at less than 100% are unacceptable.

4. Minimum response – Issue: How far prevention credits can be used to reduce response planning standards. RCAC position: Retain 30% of RMOD for tank vessels and barges; increase to 30% for all other facilities, instead of 15% as proposed in draft regulations.

5. Public review – Issue: Opportunity for public participation in review of draft contingency plans. RCAC position: Regulations must provide better notice and opportunity for public participation, including due deference to the comments of the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Fish and Game and affected coastal districts.

7. Fire protection – Issue: Draft regulations make no mention of fire and explosion as either a cause or a consequence of oil spills. RCAC position: Fire control and training plans should be required in every contingency plan.

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Model for socio-economic impacts to be developed

RCAC is accepting proposals for development of a model that will help communities assess the social and economic impacts of oil spills on the people, governments and businesses within their communities.

The request for proposals was drawn up by RCAC's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC).

The model will be an important boon to communities affected by future spills.

"For the first time, we will be able to create a baseline from which to measure the economic and social impacts resulting from an oil spill and the clean-up and response," SAC Chairwoman Lynda Hyce said.

"The clean-up can have just as much impact as the spill, itself. You can get slimed by oil and then over-run by the response. This will provide a good measurement of the true impacts deriving from a spill, whether direct, secondary or tertiary. This model will help communities collect damages for the impact on local businesses and government services – the hotels, the grocery stores, the hospitals and jails," Hyce said.

The project will build on the foundation laid by a study completed in November, 1990, for the Oiled Mayors Subcommittee of the Alaska Conference of Mayors. That study pointed to profound and continuing fall-out from the spill in terms of economic, social and government functioning in the oiled communities.

"...the damage to individuals, families and communities has not received the attention or resources needed to do something about the resulting socioeconomic and psychological damages. Despite the expenditure by Exxon and its contractors of billions of dollars, there were important economic, social and psychological effects from the spill and cleanup that were not

addressed by the monies spent," the report said.

Documented spill effects include increased psychiatric disorders, such as depression, substance abuse and domestic violence. Family and community social relationships changed, some permanently. Native villages were especially hard hit by the disruption of subsistence activities that constitute the cultural backbone of their communities. Local governments struggled under a triple whammy of reduced revenues, a sudden drop in employees as people left their jobs for more lucrative work on the spill, and skyrocketing demand for services.

Private local businesses felt the spill, too, with changes in performance, work conditions and workforce levels, according to the report to the Oiled Mayors Subcommittee.

Building on that report, the RCAC project will produce a socio-economic model to be used as a tool to assess the economic impacts from a future spill in Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska.

The model will identify the key variables affecting the economic and social well-being of residents, communities and business interests; provide a means to segment responses by community, economic sector and area; advance suggestions and schedules for a reasonable course of economic and social mitigation; develop a draft plan for social and economic mitigation; and develop a plan to disseminate information about the model and training in how to use it.

RCAC is specifically authorized, by both its contract with Alyeska and the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, to conduct studies of the social and economic impacts on communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. The project is expected to begin next spring.

Study to examine feasibility of spill school and co-op

A study will be conducted this fall to analyze the feasibility of a regional spill cooperative for the communities and areas affected by the Exxon Valdez spill. The study will also look at the feasibility of a spill prevention and response school as part of the co-op.

One of the big lessons from the Exxon Valdez oil spill was that local people and resources have to be part of a response plan. "An effective response requires that local resources be used to their fullest extent," said Lynda Hyce, Whittier's representative on the RCAC. "If we wait til they get here from Texas, it's too late," she said.

That lesson was taken to heart and now towns and communities in Prince William Sound have been inundated with proposals – from the state, from Alyeska and from other potential spillers – to set up community response centers.

"We end up in a town of 300 people with three volunteer organizations. There aren't enough of us to go around," Hyce said. "We don't need to have three separate systems, all storing boom in our community."

The idea of a regional spill cooperative is to consolidate people and resources into a single response system in each community.

Another aspect of the proposal is to develop one training program endorsed by all the organizations. The spill school would include training in handling hazardous materials, towing and setting boom, working with barges, and storage and transfer of the spilled material.

However, there are some major problems with the idea, foremost among them questions about liability and other legal issues.

The feasibility study is expected to take approximately six months.

Simmering on the burner

Many of RCAC's projects simmer for months before they emerge as a position, recommendation or finished report. Work currently on a slow boil includes:

- Nearshore Response Workgroup – Members of RCAC and the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee are working with oil industry and government representatives to develop a nearshore response plan for inclusion in oil spill contingency plans. The nearshore response concept – what to do when oil escapes the point source, before it hits land – grew out of concerns

voiced by RCAC. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation agreed and now requires that nearshore response be included in the Prince William Sound Tanker Spill Prevention and Response Plan. The working group's plan is due Feb. 1.

- Position papers on bioremediation and dispersants will be ready for RCAC consideration at the council's quarterly meeting in December. They are being prepared by the Scientific Advisory Committee.

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Port Ops

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Seal Rocks. But in Valdez Narrows, the presence of escort vessels doesn't guarantee they could respond quickly enough to avert a spill if, for example, a tanker suffered a catastrophic steering failure.

There are two highly controversial questions involved: what kind of tug – conventional or the new, maneuverable "tractor" tug – should be used, and whether tugs should be attached to the tankers.

Masters and pilots argue that attaching a tug would create a serious hazard. If the tug were to lose power, it could be dragged along by the tanker and capsize. They also argue that the attached tug would hamper the tanker's maneuverability. Others insist that only an attached tug can be in position to avert a spill, especially in tight areas such as Valdez Narrows. The new "tractor tugs" are more maneuverable, and proponents argue that they cannot be capsized as readily as a conventional tug.

While much of the POVTS committee's attention has been on the Valdez Narrows, Committee Chairman Stan Stephens said Hinchinbrook Entrance is also an area of great concern.

"I think we'll have to have some limit through the entrance," Stephens said. "If a tanker loses power there in a gale, there's nothing anybody can do. It could be a total loss of cargo and crew."

The tanker transit risk study is expected to take two years once the contract is awarded. It could easily cost \$300,000.

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Coming Up . . .

September	19-20	RCAC Quarterly Meeting, Cordova
	26	Nearshore Response Working Group
	30-Oct. 3	Petroleum Tankship Operation Workshop, Houston
October	1	Dispersants, Burning and Bioremediation Working Group
	11	Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee, Anchorage
	3-5	Alaska Chamber of Commerce Trade Show, Kenai
	8	NOAA Spill-Tracking Modeling Workshop
	14-18	Oil Spill Management Course
	16	Reg'l Response Team, Response Tech. Workgroup
	17-19	Fish Expo, Seattle
	23	Nearshore Response Working Group
November	4-6	In-situ Burning Workshop (tentative)
	20	Nearshore Response Working Group
December	11	Nearshore Response Working Group
	12-13	RCAC Quarterly Meeting, Anchorage

Conferences and Seminars

- "Natural Resources Damages Claims and Litigation," Oct. 10-11 Wash., D.C.; Nov. 7-8, San Francisco.
- "Oil Spill Prevention and Control for the 90s," Sept. 23-27, and Jan. 6-10, 1992, College Station, Texas.
- "Tanker Legislation '91: Living with OPA and State-Level Tanker Laws," Sept. 24-25, Wash., D.C.
- Society of Petroleum Engineers Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition, Oct. 6-9, Dallas, Texas.
- 14th Session of International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund Assembly, Oct. 7-11, London.
- "Collection, Treatment and Disposal of Liquid Wastes from the Petroleum and Petrochemical Industries," Oct. 29-31, Austin, Texas.
- 1991 Annual Meeting of Spill Control Association of America, Nov. 6-10, Sarasota, Florida.
- "Seventh Annual Haz-Mat West '91 Conference and Exhibition," Nov. 19-21 Long Beach, Calif.
- "Clean Seas '91," Nov. 19-22, Malta.
- "Superfund 91: The 12th Annual National Conference and Exhibition," Dec. 3-5, Washington, D.C.

Annotated bibliography in progress

A bibliography of completed and on-going scientific research related to the Exxon Valdez oil spill is being compiled under a contract let by the Scientific Advisory Committee. The bibliography will include published reports and grey literature from as far back as 1960, but the focus is on

studies related to the impact of oil in the environment and baseline studies. The bibliography will include studies done by federal, state, private and industry organizations. The initial compilation is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

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