

Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

# The Observer

A quarterly publication of the Regional Citizens' Advisory Council of Prince William Sound

Volume 3, No. 1/January 1993

## Observers in Shetlands surprised by spill differences

A combination of the worst weather Scotland had ever seen and a light, dispersible crude oil appears to have left little if any oil to clean up, according to RCAC observers who spent a week in the Shetland Islands after the tanker Braer ran aground, Jan. 5.

The Braer was bearing nearly 25 million gallons of Gullfaks crude from Norway to Canada when it lost power, drifted toward shore and finally broke up Jan. 11 in Quendale Bay at the southern end of the Shetland's main island. Shetlanders braced for a flood of crude, but it never came. The Exxon Valdez spilled less than half what the Braer had, but the 11 million gallons of North Slope crude devastated shorelines and wildlife. RCAC observers were stunned by the difference in impact.

"This was nothing like Prince William Sound," RCAC board member Stan Stephens reported. "I've never seen oil act like this. It doesn't leave tar, just a light film. Sandy beaches are still sandy, not black. When it washes up on the beach, it washes right back out again - it doesn't cling."

Stephens, a Valdez charter boat operator who represents the Alaska Wilderness Tourism and Recreation Association on the RCAC Board of Directors, worked with tourism officials in the Shetlands, offered advice and helped put them in contact with tourism groups in Alaska familiar with the tourism impacts of an oil spill.

The other two members of the RCAC contingent were RCAC Board President Scott Sterling, who represents Cordova on the board, and oil spill veteran Dan Lawn, of Valdez. Lawn went to the Shetlands as a private citizen on leave from his job with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC).

The Cook Inlet RCAC also sent two of its board members to Scotland: commercial fisherman Ken Castner of Homer, and Glen Glenzer, former Anchorage port director.

The Prince William Sound RCAC sent the contingent to observe an anticipated response and cleanup and, in general, learn what they could about the circumstances and causes of the incident.

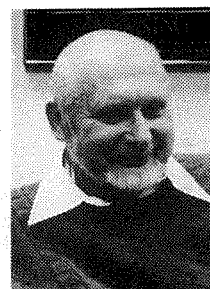
But nine days of hurricane force weather made any response, salvage or lightering impossible. The weather also acted like a huge "mix master," according to Lawn, dispersing the light oil into the water column.

*"This was nothing like Prince William Sound, I've never seen oil act like this."*

**Stan Stephens**

Sterling said the Alaska group was welcomed and well-received. They monitored the tanker, oil sheens and the response efforts of the Shetland Islands Council; walked beaches; talked with local farmers, fishermen and other residents; collected information; and offered opinions and advice when asked. There was considerable media interest in the Alaskans, as well, because of the Exxon Valdez experience.

The ultimate environmental affects of the



Stan Stephens

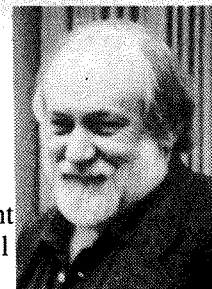


Scott Sterling

Braer incident won't be known for some time. While the weather and the characteristics of Gullfaks crude seem to have made this far less of an environmental catastrophe than it might have been, there are still many questions outstanding about the long term impacts of the oil and the events leading up to it.

The RCAC representatives are expected to issue a report on their observations.

The RCAC contingent was in the Shetlands from Jan. 7-14. RCAC may send additional observers in the future. Independent of RCAC, marine biologist Rick Steiner, of Cordova, left for the Shetlands Jan. 16 and planned to stay for a week or two.



Dan Lawn

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# OSPR tackles response gaps

Protection for communities outside Prince William Sound that lie in the path of an oil spill, and the speed with which cleanup equipment and personnel can be transported from Outside are two issues receiving special attention from RCAC's Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee.

While Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System (SERVS) provides in Prince William Sound what most insiders consider one of the best prevention and response system in the world, it's a different story outside Prince William Sound.

The beaches of Kodiak Island were hard hit by oil from the Exxon Valdez; yet unlike Prince William Sound, Kodiak does not have the pre-positioned response equipment and community response centers that communities in the sound have. According to the Kodiak Daily Mirror, SERVS Manager Jim McHale told Kodiak residents in December that Alyeska won't pre-position response equipment unless the law requires it.

"Our protection is designed to comply with the law, and that law draws a line across the bottom of Prince William Sound," the newspaper quoted McHale as saying. "If they (legislators) impose a requirement to include Kodiak, we're going to be here to pre-position whatever equipment we have to. It's pretty much a matter of economics."

However, Alyeska officials have promised to help Kodiak residents set up a community response center and plans are underway for a Nearshore Response Workshop in Kodiak this winter.

In Kodiak, the lines of responsibility for response planning are complicated by the fact that Kodiak is also vulnerable to oil spills from Cook Inlet tankers and from its own port traffic. Kodiak is also close to the "great circle route," the path taken by all tankers traveling from North America to the Far East.

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90) requires special protections in Prince William Sound - escort vessels, an organization capable of a 300,000-barrel cleanup, a hatchery protection plan, training for local fishermen in spill response and twice yearly drills. But the law is not so clear about the protections required in communities outside Prince William Sound - even though they were directly in the path of the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

RCAC representatives are trying to elicit more specific requirements through state regulations. Those regulations require a certain amount of spill response equipment to be pre-positioned within Prince William Sound. A second tier of equipment and personnel must be on-scene and deployed within 72 hours. The regulations also require that the so-called 'planholders' (potential spillers such as tanker owners and operators that are required to prepare oil spill contingency

plans) maintain sufficient equipment and personnel to prevent discharged oil from entering an area of public concern.

It is that second tier of response equipment that would most likely protect the downstream communities. But the details are sketchy and there's disagreement about how to interpret the regulations.

Tanker owners and operators have prepared nearshore response plans to describe how they would contain oil that has escaped the spill site and threatens shoreline. While the nearshore response plan developed for a consortium of tanker owners and operators, with advice and input from RCAC representatives, appears to provide a strong response within Prince William Sound, the plan for response outside the sound fell far short of RCAC's expectations.

"For the Nearshore Response Plans to be complete, the post 72-hour plan for utilizing local resources throughout the Exxon Valdez oil spill affected area must be developed," RCAC wrote in a letter to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). "These vessels and crews, many with Exxon Valdez oil spill experience, can make a real difference in the next response, but only if the nearshore response plans

organize their callout, plan their training, identify their equipment and demonstrate that they can be activated within the time necessary to prevent the spill from approaching the shorelines in the region."

The tanker owners insist they can deliver the necessary equipment and people to the region within the required 72 hours, but Tom Copeland, a member of RCAC's OSPR Committee, is skeptical.

"They say they can do it. They've shown us airline schedules to show they can get three million pounds of equipment delivered into Southcentral Alaska within 72 hours. An ARCO study shows they have sufficient air freight capability," Copeland said.

"But that was all available during the Exxon Valdez, and it wasn't done. Residents of Kodiak and Seldovia had to cut down trees to make boom. Exxon couldn't get organized to do it. We're being asked to believe that something fundamental has changed, that they would be able to do it now before the oil reaches the beaches of areas at risk. We don't understand why we should believe it now. The answer to us is to stockpile, to pre-position equipment in all the areas at risk from a TAPS oil spill," Copeland said.

## Changes suggested to ballast water treatment monitoring and sampling

Ballast water samples from every tanker calling at the Valdez Marine Terminal should be analyzed to increase the chances of detecting unauthorized ballast and to help deter such discharges, according to an RCAC report to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC).

The more comprehensive effluent testing is one of several key recommendations to emerge from three state-funded studies of current testing practices at Alyeska's ballast water treatment plant.

RCAC's review of ballast water treatment monitoring began in the fall of 1991, to determine the validity of allegations that incoming tankers illegally dump unauthorized and potentially toxic ballast at the ballast water treatment plant.

The most significant finding may be that current testing programs, as required by Alyeska's federal permit, do not provide a conclusive answer. Indeed, it would be next to impossible to devise a monitoring program that could test for every conceivable contaminant. However, changes can be made to increase the reliability of information now being obtained and provide a more complete picture of what is going into the ballast water treatment plant, what is

coming out and levels of toxicity.

The studies reviewed influent, effluent and environmental monitoring programs currently conducted at the terminal. The reviews included assessments of whether the terms of the federal permit were being met and whether the methods and analytical procedures used are adequate and sufficient. The studies also included design of "gold plate" programs and methods.

Other major recommendations are external audits of each laboratory and sampling process to determine the accuracy of lab analyses, and completion of a so-called "materials or mass balance" study to determine the ability of the treatment plant to deal effectively with the variety of contaminants known to be in the wastewater. A materials balance study would also provide a basis for evaluating the risks posed by unknown contaminants. A study currently underway by Alyeska is looking at data, but not actual sampling.

ADEC and Alyeska have received copies of the consultants' reports as they were completed.

The RCAC concurred with additional recommendations of its consultants, calling for:

- Improvements in procedures at the labora-

*Continued on Page 3*

# EPA echoes questions about Valdez Air Health Study

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is asking many of the same questions about Alyeska's Valdez Air Health Study (VAHS) as those posed by independent scientists working for the RCAC. The EPA has asked Alyeska to justify some of the conclusions reached in the study, which was released in June. The EPA released its comments Dec. 16.

Five days after the EPA sent its letter, Alyeska released a revised report indicating slightly higher health risk than reflected in the original study. However, Alyeska said the revisions don't change the basic conclusions that "benzene concentrations in Valdez are small and are of no substantial medical consequence." Alyeska also continues to maintain that personal exposure to benzene comes mainly from indoor sources, not outdoor sources such as tanker loading.

Those basic conclusions were challenged by a panel of scientists hired by RCAC's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring

(TOEM) Committee to review the Alyeska study when it was released in mid-June. While the scientists generally supported Alyeska's findings regarding how much benzene there is in Valdez, they said it significantly underestimated how much benzene can be attributed to sources at the Valdez Marine Terminal.

The share of benzene attributed to the terminal is important because it is expected to be a major factor in whether Alyeska is required to reduce emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including benzene, released during tanker loading. Alyeska estimates that controlling those emissions will cost \$120 million.

The marine terminal in Valdez is the largest single source of VOC emissions in the U.S. Tanker loading at the terminal emits 43,000 tons of VOCs, including 450 tons of benzene, per year.

Based on its letter to Alyeska, the EPA appears to share some of the concerns expressed by RCAC's scientists. EPA's questions deal with, among other things, the tracer study designed to track where benzene goes when it enters the air from the terminal and assumptions about the decline of oil throughput.

Alyeska has been asked to address the limitations and uncertainties of the tracer study; risk characterization based on more than just one mid-range scenario of oil throughput; and uncertainties in the study's apportionment of

ambient benzene from terminal versus other sources. Those issues could significantly affect the bottom line of the Valdez Air Health Study, since they go to the heart of the basic conclusions.

Uncertainties in the tracer study, the EPA said in its letter to Alyeska, indicate that it "may significantly underestimate the terminal's contribution to ambient benzene."

The EPA also asked for estimates of high-end risk from ambient benzene associated with terminal operations. "The cancer risk of the highly exposed individual is an important consideration in any risk management decision. The VAHS should characterize the range of possible individual risks, including both a central tendency as well as a high-end," it said.

Alyeska officials have said they will respond to EPA's questions and comments.

The TOEM Committee has asked its panel of scientists to review both Alyeska's addendum and its forthcoming response to EPA.

In a related matter, Alyeska President James Hermiller reaffirmed Alyeska's position that it will not voluntarily put in a vapor control system to reduce emissions from tanker loading unless either required to do so by regulations, or a significant health risk is established. Hermiller's letter to RCAC came in response to a resolution urging Alyeska to voluntarily put in a vapor control system.

## Changes recommended in ballast water monitoring

*Continued from Page 2*

tories used to analyze the samples. While the study praised Alyeska's own laboratory, there were significant problems at its main contract laboratory. Alyeska has already taken steps to correct some of the deficiencies.

- Continued testing of acute and chronic toxicity of two test species four times a year.
- Expanded sediment sampling and analysis to more accurately monitor the effect on marine life of accumulated polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) in the sediments of Port Valdez, and the effects of high silt and clay fractions on sediment test animals.

- More frequent monitoring of zinc and specification of a discharge limit for zinc.

- Continued testing of chronic toxicity to more clearly define the lowest chronic level.

The studies were conducted for RCAC's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Committee by Beak Consultants Inc., and AJBL Consultants LTD (Sampling and Analysis of Influent to the Alyeska Ballast Water Treatment Plan); Investigation Science Inc. (Design of a Sampling and Testing Plan for Ballast Water Effluent); and Northwestern Aquatic Sciences (Toxicity Study Review for Alyeska Marine Ballast Water Treatment Plant).

TOEM Committee member Julie Howe said the studies were not exhaustive and do not necessarily identify all areas in need of improvement. If the suggested improvements are not implemented, the TOEM Committee will consider doing its independent monitoring.

## Alyeska compares air in Seward and Valdez

by Dick Mikkelsen  
Environmental Permits Manager  
Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.

Alyeska has completed a 14-day air sampling program in the communities of Valdez and Seward. The study was conducted to further validate the Valdez Air Health Study by sampling the air quality in another Alaskan community with similar geographical and demographic characteristics. Seward met that comparison. The sampling was done between Nov. 21 and Dec. 4, 1992, at comparable sites in each community. The Seward sites were at the Harbor Master's building and the hospital. The Valdez sites were at the hospital and a building directly behind the harbor.

The average benzene concentrations over the 14-day period in Valdez was 2.0 parts per billion (PPB), and 1.1 PPB in Seward. Because the sampling period was only 14 days in the winter, these numbers cannot be con-

sidered as an annual average concentration. (One year of continuous monitoring at the Valdez High School indicated an annual average of 1.3 PPB.)

These measurements indicate that both Seward and Valdez fall between the categories EPA refers to as rural and suburban and are consistent with what would be expected to be found in cities of comparable size in the rest of the country.

In addition, an analysis of the samples taken for both communities indicates that the dominant source of the aromatic compounds (benzene, toluene, xylene and ethylbenzene) are most likely from mobile sources such as automobiles and are consistent with measurements taken in other communities of comparable size in the U.S.

A full report of the sampling program is available at the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company headquarters in Anchorage and can be reviewed by contacting me at 265-8437.



# October drill presents opportunity for lessons

Despite the intrusion of a real life incident, three of Alyeska's four goals were achieved in the course of a major spill drill last October. The drill, one of the two all-systems exercises Alyeska is required to conduct each year, was complicated by an actual tanker incident in the Valdez Narrows, a few hours before the drill was to begin on October 20, 1992. The tanker Kenai had trouble with its steering indicator and came dangerously close to Middle Rock in Valdez Narrows.

Although the Kenai was not thought to be in any danger when the drill began, it diverted escort vessels that otherwise would have been available for the drill. Because of the Kenai and other real-time tanker traffic, only two of five emergency response vessels (ERVs) and three of six tugboats were able to participate in the drill. In addition, an earlier decision to use the skimming vessel Valdez Star to simulate the drill's stricken tanker obviated its use as a response vessel.

Spill drills are valuable tests of equipment, personnel, and plans. They help to identify areas in need of work and provide an opportunity to learn from mistakes.

The scenario for the October drill had the tanker Denali being rammed by a harbor tug, holing the tanker and causing an explosion, fire and large spill in Port Valdez. There were four casualties, including two men overboard, and 40,100 barrels of oil spilled.

Alyeska's goals for the drill included testing some aspects of its spill response plan that had not yet been demonstrated, such as its firefighting capability and its ability to lighten the cargo of a stricken tanker. In addition, the drill provided the first opportunity to implement a part of the newly-developed Nearshore Response Plan.

Each of these three goals was achieved with some success, although additional work needs to be done to fully develop firefighting, lightering and nearshore capabilities. For instance, the city's container dock was used to simulate the deck of the stricken tanker for the lightering operations. While this proved valuable, the next step is to conduct a lightering exercise aboard an actual TAPS tanker. There was also some question about the accuracy of the estimated rate of lightering - RCAC observers believe the report of 55,000 gallons of heavy crude in 70 minutes was too optimistic.

The simulated explosion and fire provided a valuable opportunity to demonstrate marine firefighting equipment and capabilities. The equipment performed well, but the evaluation team recommended regular meetings of all parties involved in response to marine emergencies to overcome the confusion about roles and expectations that occurred during the drill.

A fourth goal - testing the speed and efficiency of setting up the command center - was not completely accomplished. In previous drills,

## RCAC role needs clarifying

RCAC monitors spill drills in Prince William Sound to assess the oil industry's readiness to respond to an actual spill, and offers its observations and suggestions to participants afterward. RCAC also has a participatory role in drills: it keeps its member organizations informed about the incident and represents the interests of its members in meetings with industry and agencies, just as it would during an actual event.

RCAC has also been a member of the evaluation team for the two drills in Prince William Sound in which evaluation teams have been used. This team, comprised of representatives from Alyeska, the U.S. Coast

Guard, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, City of Valdez, ARCO, and BP, as well as RCAC, worked together to create the drill and to develop recommendations for future drills.

RCAC used the October 1992 drill as an opportunity to test its own response plan, and identified several areas for improvement. The evaluation team said RCAC's role in spill response is unclear to government and industry officials, and perhaps to its members and staff as well. RCAC's role needs to be clarified, defined and described in relevant contingency plans.

See related story, page 6.

equipment and personnel have been set up in advance at the Valdez Civic Center. Since advance work would not be possible in a real incident, the "no pre-staging" rule was to test the company's ability to set up a temporary command center at the terminal and then move it to the civic center. No pre-staging would also determine how long it takes to set up the civic center in emergency situations.

Despite the "no pre-staging" goal, RCAC observers reported that computer, copier and communications equipment was packed and ready for shipment the week before and technicians at the Valdez Civic Center told observers that they had been working for four days before the drill on the communications system. Evaluators agreed that set up at the civic center will have to be re-tested in a future drill.

The drill scenario included throwing two stuffed survival suits overboard when the "explosion" occurred. High on the list of recommendations from both RCAC observers and the evaluation team was the need for "man-overboard" training and re-evaluation of the equipment needed to recover unconscious or injured crew from the water.

Hatchery protection measures also need improvement. It took more than four hours to begin deploying protective booms at Solomon Gulch Hatchery, and more than nine hours to complete the booming. The vessels assigned to set the booms did not have shallow enough draft and had to wait until the tide came in. The booms at the Duck Flats, Allison Creek and the hatchery were not tended regularly, resulting in

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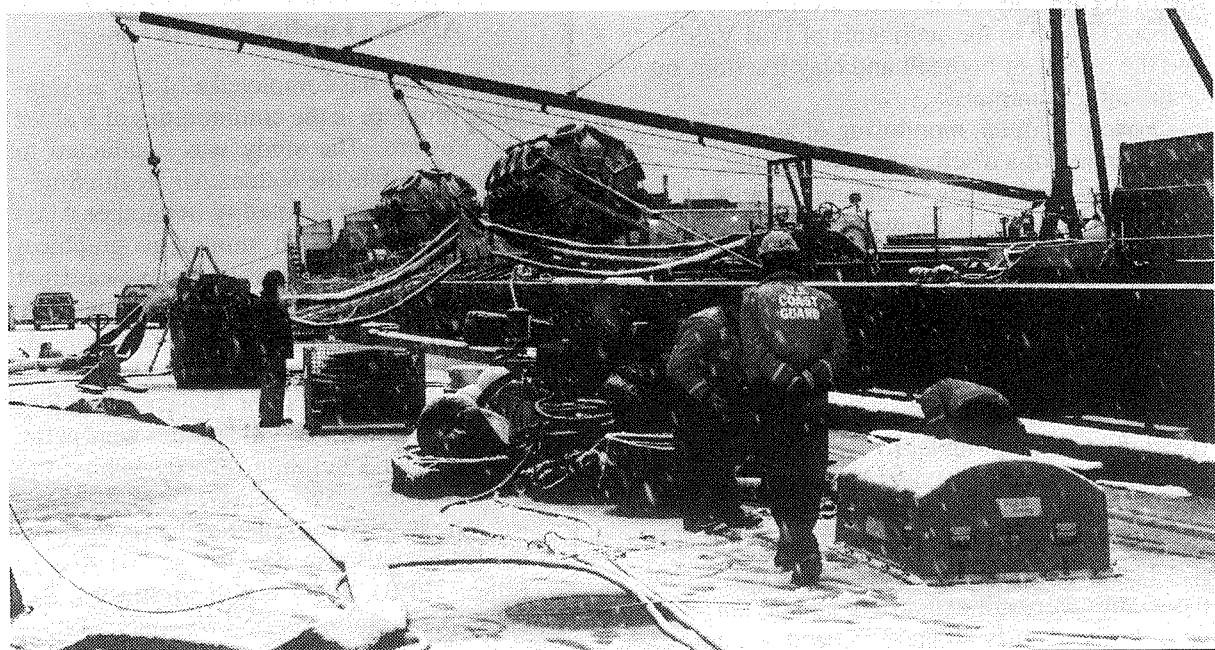


Photo © Sean Reid

Coast Guard workers inspect some of the emergency equipment assembled on the Valdez city dock during the spill exercise. The long dock and an Alyeska barge outfitted with spill response equipment moored alongside was set up to simulate oil lightering conditions from a loaded tanker.

# Drill tests Alyeska response systems

Continued from Page 4

breaches. Incident Command issued conflicting reports about whether boom was on the way and when it was in place. There was also some question whether the booms and vessels allocated to hatchery protection would be sufficient to keep oil out of the fish pens and surrounding waters.

Alyeska has already begun to solve the hatchery protection problems. SERVS conducted an exercise at Solomon Gulch in November to determine why some of the problems occurred and to identify the equipment, personnel, procedures and training needed to overcome them.

The Duck Flats, an important wildlife habitat area, are difficult to protect; and the evaluation team recommended that protection methods for the area be evaluated and implemented.

Observers commented that medium and heavy ocean boom was used in shallow water areas where shoreline or nearshore boom would have been more appropriate.

A frequent problem in drills, as in actual spills, is communications. In this case, there was difficulty finding a working channel that would link all participants. This problem needs to be overcome, especially since it has occurred before.

Alyeska used recommendations from prior drills to make improvements during the October drill. This was especially notable in the operation of the incident command system. Once the real-world Kenai incident was under control, decision-making and response operations were facilitated by appointment of designated alternates for key personnel. Upgraded information displays in the Civic Center EOC improved

conveyance of up-to-date information. Drill participants did a better job of using ICS format for meeting schedules and agendas, resulting in less confusion and more consistent information. The decision-making process about where to berth the tanker was thorough and effectively communicated to the public. The unified commanders responded to local concerns and included the City of Valdez in the decision.

## Tug "rescue" of 'Kenai' incident disputed

Conclusions that a tug saved the tanker vessel Kenai from hitting Middle Rock aren't justified, according to an assessment by RCAC staff. An article in the Anchorage Daily News ("Near Miss in the Narrows," Nov. 22, 1992) credits the tug Sea Voyager with averting a catastrophe October 20, 1992.

RCAC's Scott Thompson, program coordinator for the Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems Committee, said crucial questions would have to be answered before such conclusions can be drawn. However, from the information available, Thompson said "it appears everyone involved in the incident responded quickly, coolly and correctly."

As the Kenai moved through the Valdez Narrows toward Knowles Head anchorage, the pilot reported steering trouble. He thought steering had been lost because of what turned out to be a malfunction in the rudder angle indicator on the bridge, caused by two loose set screws.

Since the crew thought the rudder wasn't moving, the engineer controlled the rudder from the steering flat until clear of the Narrows. The escort tug Sea Voyager came to its aid, but Thompson concluded that it's not clear that the Sea Voyager was responsible for getting the tanker back on course.

After studying the transcripts, charts and other information available, Thompson said it appears the tug stopped pushing before the tanker cleared Middle Rock.

"There is no firm evidence that convinces me the tug saved the tanker from hitting Middle Rock," Thompson said. "Based on the lack of a few critical items of information, it is impossible to know if the tug or the tanker's own rudder swung the ship back on course."

Thompson also took issue with the Daily News article's assertion that the tanker was 100 yards from Middle Rock when the tug came alongside. Comparing transcripts and plots, he concluded that the tanker was about 900 yards from Middle Rock when the tug started pushing.

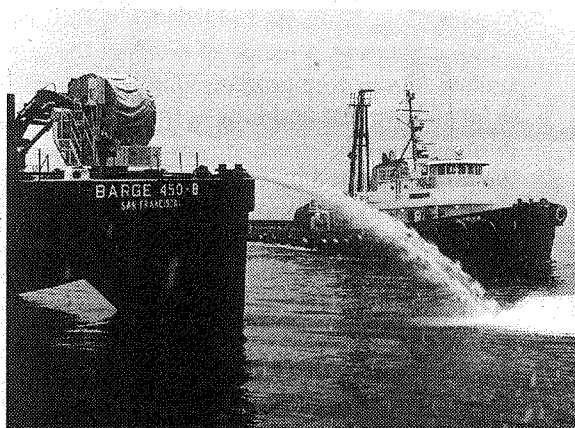


Photo © Sean Reid  
As a tug maneuvers alongside, an Alyeska barge pumps sea water overboard in a test of its powerful transfer pumps.

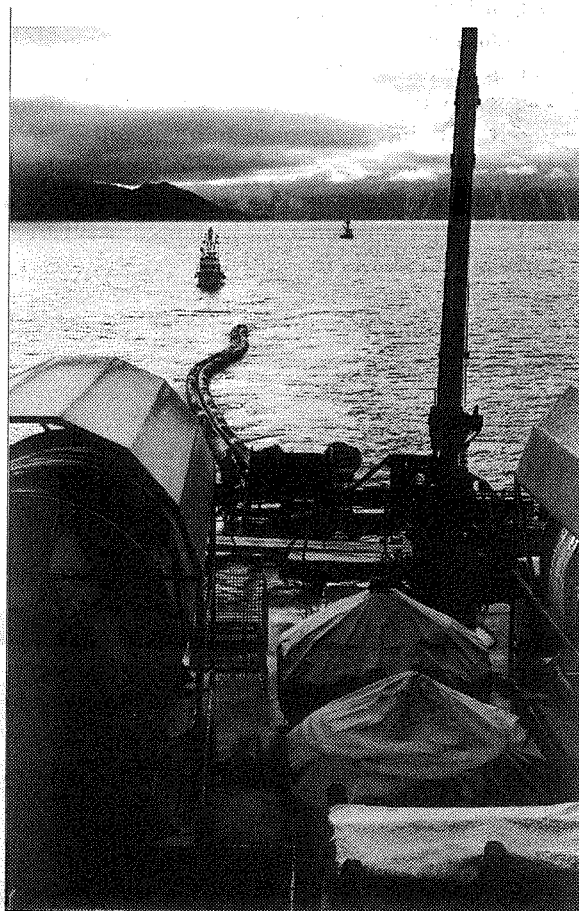


Photo © Sean Reid  
With a commercial fishing boat off her stern, an escort response vessel (ERV) deploys boom. The fishing boat will secure a line to one end of the long boom to form a "U" shaped containment and collection trap.

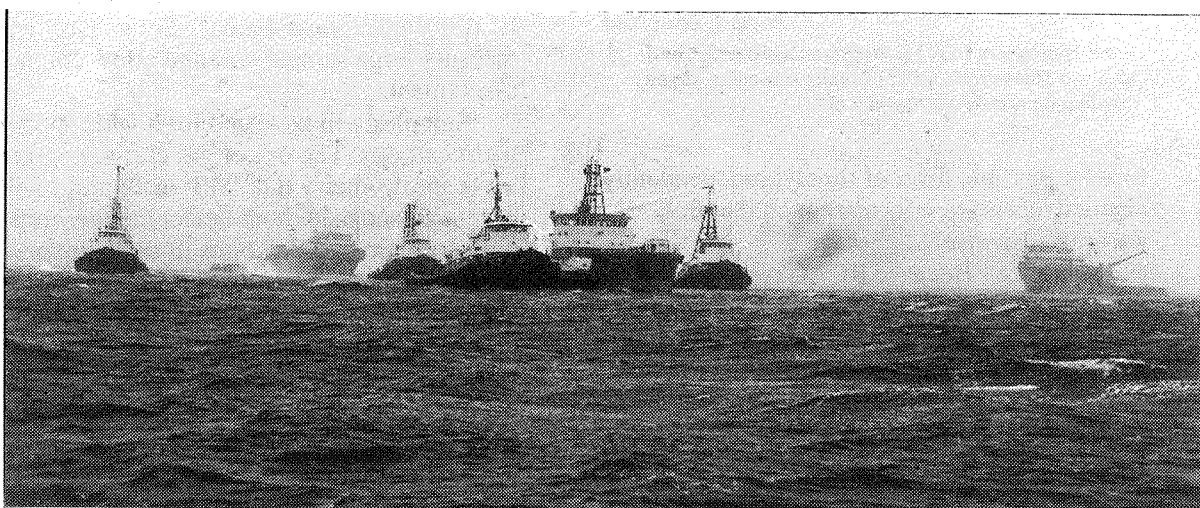


Photo © Sean Reid  
Tugboats equipped with fire fighting water cannon spray sea water on a barge towed by the Valdez Star. The barge was used to simulate a burning, laden tanker. In the background are two escort response vessels (ERVs).

# Residents tapped for ideas to mitigate spill impacts

Strategies for reducing the impacts of a major oil spill are being brainstormed in a series of focus groups in six communities to be completed by February. The focus groups are part of a two-year project funded by RCAC to help communities mitigate the kind of social, cultural and economic fallout that followed the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Although 18 communities in Prince William Sound, Lower Cook Inlet, Kodiak Island and the Kenai Peninsula will be involved in the overall study, six representative communities were selected for the first phase, conducted by Stephen Braund and Associates. Braund is subcontractor to the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

"We're getting some very common sense, down to earth solutions to specific problems," Braund said. "There are a lot of good suggestions coming from the communities. People are interested in sharing ideas, in hearing about what has worked elsewhere and why."

As of mid-January, focus groups had been conducted in Kodiak, Ouzinkie, Port Graham, Seward and Cordova. A focus group was to be held in Chenega Bay in February.

People in communities impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill are burned out on research and researchers, Braund said. They've been interviewed over and over again, and feel the only result is something that sits on a shelf.

"People want to see something concrete and tangible; not just another study," Braund said. "The goal is to come up with mitigation strategies, in the form of guidelines or a handbook, for various spill scenarios. They need a plan they can pull out in case another spill does happen."

Communities impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill suffered higher alcoholism and drug use, family dysfunction and community conflict, employment disruption, labor shortages and a resulting strain on services and facilities.

The study was conceived more than two

years ago by RCAC's Scientific Advisory Committee and is referenced in both RCAC's contract with Alyeska and the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90).

The study is focusing on five types of impact: subsistence; local government; recreation, tourism and local business; community mental health and well-being; and commercial fishing.

The next phase of the two-year project will include identification of data and procedures to develop mitigation strategies and a literature review.

## Environmental monitoring project to start

A two-year study of the impacts of oil transportation on the marine environment is scheduled to begin in March with the first round of sampling. Kinnetic Laboratories, Inc., of Anchorage, was selected to conduct the environmental monitoring project, which is designed to determine recent and long-term effects and potential future impacts of oil transportation in the area impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

The study will monitor hydrocarbon concentrations and characteristics in nearshore subtidal sediments and bioaccumulations of hydrocarbons in the tissue of blue mussels collected intertidally. Field surveys will be done twice a year, in March and July or August. Initially samples will be taken at nine sites in Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska.

Blue mussels were selected as the indicator species because they are low on the food chain, non-migratory, sensitive to low levels of hydrocarbon exposure, broadly distributed in the Exxon Valdez impact area, offer an easy way to measure large sample size and allow continuous assessment.

Samples will be tested for a wide spectrum of hydrocarbons. The use of gas chromatograph/mass spectrometry (GC/MS) techniques will permit scientists to both detect the presence of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in sediment and tissue samples, and "fingerprint" the oil source. Oil from different geographic locations has different "fingerprints;" GC/MS identifies the fingerprint, permitting determination of whether the hydrocarbons came from North Slope or California crude.

The ecological monitoring program is sponsored by RCAC's Scientific Advisory Committee.

## RCAC role in drills, spills defined

A preliminary draft of the RCAC Emergency Response Plan (ERP) has been completed and given a test run. The plan defines RCAC's role in the event of a crude oil spill, assigns responsibility and describes procedures to be used. The Board of Directors is reviewing the plan.

RCAC staff and volunteers used the plan at the Alyeska drill in October. As with most first draft response plans, the ERP will be revised as experience provides lessons about procedures that work and ones in need of revision.

The RCAC has four primary tasks to perform during an oil spill: to observe, verify, inform and advise:

- **Observe** - RCAC's response team is expected to attend briefings and become thoroughly knowledgeable about spill response progress, planning and effectiveness. Understanding of what is being done and why enables RCAC representatives to ensure that citizens in the affected region are fully informed of actions undertaken to respond to the spill.

- **Verify** - RCAC can lend credibility to the spill response process by independently verifying information disseminated about progress of response operations. Independent verification ensures the information is factual and supportable, which should lead to a higher level of comfort with and support for the operational decisions made by the incident commanders.

- **Inform** - RCAC forwards to its member organizations official incident updates as they are received, as well as information derived from direct observation. The ERP charges RCAC with providing "to the citizens of the region the

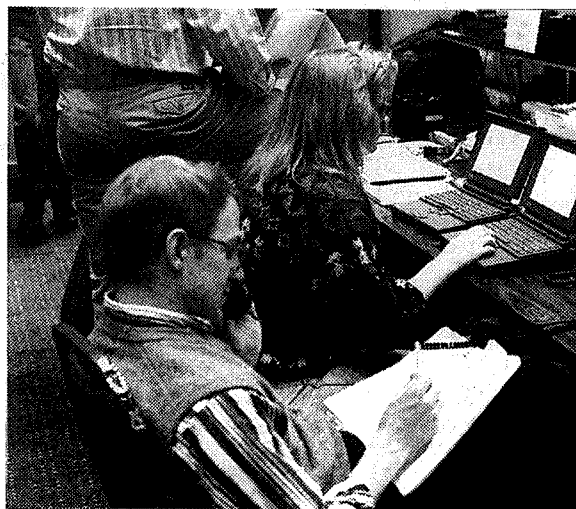


Photo © Sean Reid

Scott Thompson, POVTS Program Coordinator, and Michelle Meckstroth, OSPR Project Assistant, juggle information during the Alyeska drill.

highest possible level of timely, independently verified, accurate information on the progress of the spill response."

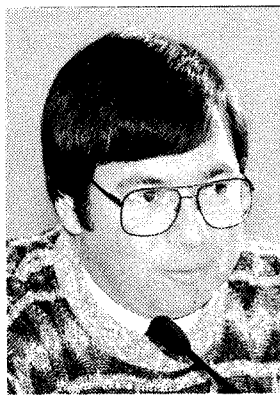
- **Advice** - Because RCAC represents diverse interests and communities, it can tap generations of local knowledge about the geography and resources of areas in the path of tanker traffic. This wealth of knowledge can be a valuable asset to incident commanders. RCAC functions as a voice for these citizens able to convey the knowledge, recommendations and concerns of local citizens to those in charge of the spill response.



# RCAC Board loses four directors

Four members of the RCAC Board of Directors, including a founding director and one of the council's most active volunteers, resigned in December and January. Two-term board president Chris Gates had represented the City of Seward on the RCAC Board since its inception in the summer of 1989. Lynda Hyce was Whittier's representative from December 1990 to December 1992. Andy Mack joined the board in May 1991 representing the Kenai Peninsula Borough. Jim La Belle, of Chugach Alaska Corporation, served on the board from July to December 1992.

Gates was RCAC's first president, from July 1989 to March 1990. He was elected to a one year term in March 1991. In the early days of the organization, Gates was one of the most committed and enthusiastic proponents. Gates was instrumental in putting together RCAC's contract conditions — adequate funding, independence, access and a long term commitment. He also was on the negotiating team that won those provisions. As chairman of the Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems (POVTS) Committee, Gates was instrumental in early planning for a disabled tanker towing study. He was also a strong and vocal proponent of improvements in



Chris Gates



Lynda Hyce

the vessel traffic system.

Gates left Seward, where he was port director, to head up the state Division of Economic Development.

In her two years as the Whittier representative on the RCAC board, Lynda Hyce devoted thousands of hours to RCAC business.

Hyce was a driving force behind industry development of nearshore response plans to protect shoreline from encroaching oil spills. As chair of the Nearshore Working Group, she

worked cooperatively with government and industry representatives. As a member of the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee, Hyce traveled to communities in the region to talk about the strengths of nearshore response plans and gaps in coverage.

She also chaired the Scientific Advisory Committee during a formative period, as plans were developed for the study of social and economic impacts and environmental monitoring program.

Hyce kept in close touch with the community she was charged to represent. She was responsive to Whittier's interests and concerns and kept the community informed of RCAC activities and developments.

Hyce moved to Idaho to be closer to family and pursue new employment opportunities.

Despite his short time at RCAC, Jim La Belle made important contributions, especially in his work on the budget subcommittee and long range planning. His perspective and knowledge have been invaluable.

During his 18 months on the RCAC board, Andy Mack helped to develop what is now the Community Information and Education Committee.

## Directors appointed

Three new members have been seated on the RCAC Board of Directors to complete the terms of directors who resigned recently. Michael Brown replaces Jim La Belle as the representative for Chugach Alaska Corporation. Carol Till replaces Lynda Hyce from the City of Whittier. Floyd Heimbuch was appointed to represent the Kenai Peninsula Borough, replacing Andy Mack.

Brown, of Anchorage, is President and CEO of Chugach Alaska Corporation. Before joining Chugach in March 1992, he was Executive Vice President and CEO of Piquini Management Corporation, a subsidiary of Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. Brown was one of the founders of PMC, which is one of the largest minority owned contractors in the U.S. Brown spent 22 years with the U.S. Navy as a commander and pilot.

Heimbuch, of Soldotna, currently serves as chairman of RCAC's Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee. He has been a member of OSPR since early 1991. A retired teacher and elementary school principal, Heimbuch has been active in community, state and resource issues since he came to Alaska in 1951. He was the first executive director of Cook Inlet Aquaculture Corporation, 1978 to 1982, and served on the second advisory council to the Kenai River Advisory Board. He also has fished commercially for 15 years.

Carol Till is a recent emigre to Alaska; after frequent hunting and fishing trips here over the course of 20 years, she moved to Whittier in 1991 from northern Minnesota. Till has a varied background. She was a police officer for 13 years in Cass Lake, Minnesota, and worked on her father's mink ranch at the same time. She was educated as a medical lab technician. Till is employed as the kitchen manager at the Sportsman's Lodge in Whittier.

## Major conferences last week of March

Conferences on the marine environment and oil spill prevention, preparedness and response will take place the last week of March.

The 1993 International Oil Spill Conference, sponsored by the U.S. Coast Guard, the American Petroleum Institute and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, will be held March 29 to April 1 in Tampa, Fla. The focus of this year's conference is prevention, preparedness and response.

As of mid-January, the Shetland Islands Council planned to proceed with a three-day world conference, "Managing the Marine Environment: The Shetland Standard," March 30 to April 1, in Lerwick, Shetland Islands, Scotland.

The International Oil Spill Conference will feature technical sessions on bioremediation, case histories, cleanup; contingency planning, economic, fate and effects, in-situ burning, legal, research and development, response and training.

RCAC will present a paper on "The Citizen Oversight Council as a Means of Mitigating the Environmental Impacts of Terminal and Tanker Operations."

"Managing the Marine Environment" will use an interactive format. Delegates will be expected to debate issues with a view to formulating an agenda for action. The issues to be addressed are control of pollution of the sea, sea fisheries management, decommissioning of offshore installation and submarine pipelines, and port and shipping management and control standards.

Marine biologist Rick Steiner, of Cordova, and RCAC President Scott Sterling plan to give a presentation on the regulatory environment as it pertains to oil shipment in Prince William Sound. Their talk will include discussion of the relationship between industry and the agencies that regulate it, and how citizens groups can affect that relationship.

## People notes

Marge Fowler has been promoted to Program Coordinator for the Scientific Advisory Committee. Fowler moved to Anchorage from Valdez in December. She had been Project Assistant with the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Committee.

Replacing Fowler at the TOEM Committee is Leann Ferry.

Ferry comes to RCAC from the law firm of Preston Thorgrimson Shidler Gates and Ellis, where she was a paralegal working on Exxon Valdez litigation. She worked extensively on collecting, organizing and distributing information about natural resource damage assessment

reports. Ferry is a 1990 graduate of the University of California Davis with a degree in biological science. She is from Sacramento, California.

Tex Edwards is temporarily doing double-duty, as chairman of the Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems (POVTS) Committee and vice president of the RCAC Board. He replaces Stan Stephens at the helm of POVTS, and Lynda Hyce as vice president. Dave Dengel has been named chairman of the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Committee, replacing Greg Winter, who is going to school Outside.

## Long range plan, revised mission statement adopted

A constructive and effective relationship with the oil industry, strong laws and regulations that are strictly enforced, effective spill response capability and public pride in a safe, clean terminal are among the visions driving a long range plan approved by the RCAC Board of Directors at its December 10-11 quarterly meeting in Anchorage.

The plan emerged from a series of retreats conducted to help RCAC focus its efforts, make the best use of staff and volunteer resources, and identify ways to be as effective as possible.

The council also approved a new statement of purpose: "Citizens promoting environmentally safe operations of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers."

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

Elements of the plan include more support for volunteers, including the Board of Directors; generating better public understanding of and support for RCAC's work; monitoring implementation and enforcement of federal and state laws and regulations; more overt appreciation for efforts by Alyeska and the industry to increase safety and protect the environment; and improvements in RCAC's internal operations.

### RCAC: What it is

The Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (RCAC) of Prince William Sound is an independent, non-profit organization formed after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill to minimize the environmental impacts associated with the terminal and tanker fleet.

The RCAC has 18 member organizations, including 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, and ensures RCAC the same access to terminal facilities as state and federal regulatory agencies.

## RCAC Board of Directors

Charles Christiansen  
Wayne Coleman  
Tex Edwards (Vice President)  
Larry Evanoff  
Mike Gallagher  
Chris Gates  
John Herschleb  
Carol Till  
Michael Brown  
Floyd Heimbuch  
Carl Marrs  
Michelle O'Leary (Secretary)  
Darrel Olsen  
Ann Rothe  
Kristin Stahl-Johnson  
Stan Stephens  
Scott Sterling (President)  
Bill Walker (Treasurer)  
Ivan Widom (At-large member,  
Exec. Comm.)

Kodiak Village Mayors Association  
Kodiak Island Borough  
City of Homer  
Community of Chenega  
City of Valdez  
City of Seward  
Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp.  
City of Whittier  
Chugach Alaska Corporation  
Kenai Peninsula Borough  
Alaska State Chamber of Commerce  
Cordova District Fishermen's United  
Community of Tatitlek  
National Wildlife Federation  
City of Kodiak  
Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism  
City of Cordova  
City of Valdez  
City of Seldovia

## Funding negotiations continue

Contract negotiations have been underway since October 1992 to determine Alyeska's level of funding for RCAC for the next three years. The contract between Alyeska and RCAC provides for a minimum or base funding of \$2 million per year, adjusted upward for inflation. However, under the terms of the contract, RCAC and Alyeska are to review the funding level every three years and determine whether the level of base funding should be changed.

Factors to be considered include the council's past expenditures, plans for the next three years and benefits anticipated from projected expenditures. If RCAC and Alyeska do not agree on a base funding level, the issue can be submitted to arbitration or litigation. The arbitrator or court can increase or decrease the base funding level up to 50 percent of the current level.

RCAC's negotiating team consists of Board President Scott Sterling, Executive Director Sheila Gottehrer and RCAC's attorney Av Gross. Alyeska's team consists of Gary Bader, Citizen

Group Liaison Manager, and attorneys Hal Brown and Susan Murto.

The negotiations are expected to be completed by February.

## '93 meetings set

RCAC's quarterly meetings for 1993 will be held:

- March 18-19 in Valdez
- May 20-21 in Kodiak
- Sept. 23-24 in Kenai/Soldotna
- Dec. 9-10 in Anchorage

The annual meeting in March is always held in Valdez and the December meeting is always in Anchorage. The other two quarterly meetings are rotated among communities in the Exxon Valdez impact area. The RCAC Board of Directors may hold additional in-person or teleconference meetings as needed.

## Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

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