

# The Observer

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

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## State backsliding on gains made since '89

Legislation that threatened to dismantle many of the gains made by the State of Alaska since the Exxon Valdez oil spill failed to pass in the 1993 legislative session, but the forces behind it are fully expected to try again in 1994.

HB 238, as well as a companion bill from the senate, SB 215, will be waiting in the wings when the legislature reconvenes next January.

The last incarnation of HB 238 would severely restrict uses of the Oil and Hazardous Substance Release Response

Fund, nicknamed the "470 Fund" for the bill that created it in 1986.

According to testimony given April 17 by RCAC President Stan Stephens, HB 238 would eliminate most of the purposes of the 470 Fund, and seriously hamper the ability of the State Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) to prepare for and respond to oil spills, and oversee industry compliance with state regulations. It would also reduce the ability of communities to assess impacts, respond to hazardous substance releases, recover

response and cleanup costs and participate in litigation over spills.

"This bill threatens to roll back virtually every progressive step the state has taken since the Exxon Valdez oil spill to protect the citizens of our state," Stephens said. With this bill you don't just forget the lessons of the Exxon Valdez, he said, "you rip them right from the pages of the history book and act as if it never happened."

*•This bill threatens to roll back virtually every progressive step the state has taken since the Exxon Valdez oil spill to protect the citizens of our state •*

—Stan Stephens

The surcharge is supposed to be in effect only until the fund reaches \$50 million, but continuous draws from the fund have kept it from reaching that level, requiring the industry to keep paying into it. Proponents of HB 238 argued that the fund has been abused, citing legislative appropriation for a state ferry as a prime example.

In testimony and letters to legislators

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## Stringent air quality regs difficult under new law

A bill awaiting the governor's signature will make it more difficult for state agencies and local governments to require controls on air pollution stricter than those required by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). If signed by the governor as expected, the new law will place the burden of proof on public agencies to prove control of such pollution is necessary.

Governor Walter Hickel had until June 23 to sign HB 167 into law.

The state was required to pass a law relating to air quality in order to comply with amendments to the federal Clean Air Act. The Clean Air Act establishes minimum federal standards but allows each state to decide how to handle more stringent regulations. Alaska's action makes it very difficult to enact regulations any stricter than the minimum, by putting the burden of proof on the agency or local government to prove a health risk.

Before a state agency can make air quality regulations more stringent than corresponding federal standards, or establish a standard for an air contaminant for which there is no corresponding federal

standard, it must clear some formidable hurdles:

- (1) hold a public hearing;
- (2) find in writing that exposure profiles and either meteorological conditions or source characteristics in the area reasonably require the standard to protect human health or the environment, and are significantly different in the area from those upon which the corresponding federal regulation is based;
- (3) find in writing that the standard or

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# Update: RCAC projects in progress

## Disabled tanker towing study

A report on Phase I of this study – review and evaluation of existing and alternative towing equipment and practices – is being revised. Part II, computer modeling and simulation scenarios, is in progress. The study is evaluating the capability of existing emergency towing equipment and practices and examining alternatives to enhance escort and assist capabilities for disabled tankers. The study is a joint effort of RCAC, the Prince William Sound Tanker Association, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and Alyeska. Funding is provided by RCAC and the tanker association.

## Safety of navigation survey

Prince William Sound mariners are being surveyed to determine attitudes and opinions about suitability of current navigation aids and escort procedures. The results will be used to develop recommendations for improvements. A final report is expected in September.

## Socioeconomic impact mitigation

The consultant has drafted proposed mitigation initiatives, which are now under review. This project is a multi-year study of the social, cultural and economic impacts of oil spills for the purpose of developing future mitigation strategies for communities in the region.

## Shippers seek exemption in Gulf of Alaska requirements

Shippers of North Slope crude have appealed to the U.S. Coast Guard for an exemption to certain requirements for response plans 50 miles off-shore in the Gulf of Alaska. The shippers have proposed to reduce mechanical response requirements by 25 percent, substituting a detailed strategy for dispersants use.

The request has been referred to the commander, Coast Guard District 17 (Alaska) for input. Federal law requires that such a proposed alternative be approved by the Regional Response Team, a group of

## Weather reporting upgrades

RCAC is working with federal agencies to have additional weather stations installed in Prince William Sound. Currently, there aren't enough reporting stations to determine from Port Valdez what weather conditions are in Hinchinbrook Entrance and the middle of Prince William Sound.

## Nearshore strike team demonstration project

As of mid-June, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation was poised to issue an RFP (request for proposals) for the nearshore demonstration project. The demonstration project, funded by the Alaska Legislature in 1992, will develop a model for nearshore response using local personnel and resources. The concept stems from the successful efforts of fishermen and local volunteers to protect hatcheries and other critical resources during the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Two projects will be conducted, one along the north coast of the Gulf of Alaska and the other in Southeast.

## Ballast water treatment

RCAC is working with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation on tentative plans for a joint study of influent into the ballast water treatment plant. The study would be funded by money left over from a state appropriation to RCAC for three

studies conducted in 1992. The new study would follow up on some of the recommendations of the earlier studies. RCAC continues to advocate for a thorough chemical analysis, called a mass balance study, of the ballast water treatment plant.

## Air quality in Valdez

RCAC's panel of scientists and Alyeska's scientists remain apart on a couple of fundamental issues about Alyeska's findings regarding how much of the benzene to which Valdez residents are exposed can be attributed to sources at the marine terminal. RCAC is developing a final position paper on the issue.

## Occupational Exposure

The Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Committee is gathering information to determine whether workers at the terminal are protected from unhealthy exposure to benzene and other pollutants. A consultant may be retained to assess current levels of safety and develop mitigation measures if necessary.

## Council approves policy on dispersants use

Dispersants should be used only in non-sensitive areas and only after all other methods of mechanical recovery, such as booms and skimmers, have been deemed inadequate, according to an interim position adopted by the RCAC Board of Directors at its board meeting May 20 in Kodiak.

"After methods of mechanical recovery have been deemed unable to contain and recover a spill and oil has escaped on-scene containment efforts, dispersants use in Zone 1 may be justified," the position says.

Zone 1 areas are generally defined as off-shore areas with deeper water – usually 50 miles off-shore – where presumably oil can be dispersed with minimal impact on nearshore and shorelines. However, the middle of Prince William Sound and a path alongside the tanker traffic lanes in the sound are also classified as Zone 1.

The RCAC position is "interim" because more information is needed about the effects of dispersants on marine life, sensitive habitats and resources; the effectiveness of dispersants on North Slope crude oil in cold water; and the comparative advantages and disadvantages of using dispersants.

The use of dispersants in oil spill response has been an ongoing concern of RCAC, which has consistently argued against routine use of dispersants and against regulations that could result in

pressure on regulatory officials to prematurely approve dispersant use.

Dispersants act like soap, by emulsifying the oil and dispersing it through the water column. Dispersants remove oil from human view, but not from the environment. In addition, dispersants inhibit the mechanical recovery of oil.

Decisions about dispersant use are made by the federal on-scene coordinator (FOSC). The approval process depends in part on zone designation. The least sensitive areas are designated Zone 1. When considering an application to use dispersants in Zone 1, the federal on-scene coordinator must take certain considerations into account, but need not consult with others on the decision. However, when considering dispersant use in Zone 2 or 3, the FOSC must consult with a group of state and federal technical experts, called the Regional Response Team.

Zone 2 designation applies to areas that might be appropriate for dispersant use, by virtue of distance from sensitive resources and water conditions that would promote rapid dilution of dispersed oil. Dispersant use is not recommended at all in Zone 3 areas, except on a case-by-case basis. Zone 3 refers to areas in and around sensitive resources, including the resources themselves. ■



# Environmental sampling underway in Sound, Gulf of Alaska

Field sampling began in March on a long-term environmental monitoring program (LTEMP) designed to identify present impacts, baseline conditions and potential impacts of oil transportation on the ecosystem affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. The monitoring program is sponsored by the RCAC, under the direction of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). RCAC's intention is to continue the monitoring for as long as oil flows through the pipeline.

RCAC's program is one of very few continuous long-term studies of hydrocarbon pollution in the region affected by the Exxon Valdez spill. The lack of continuous monitoring in the past made it very difficult for scientists to assess the impacts on the ecosystem from the 1989 oil spill.

The study measures hydrocarbon pollution by analyzing hydrocarbon concentrations and characteristics in the tissue of blue mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) and subtidal sediments. Samples are being taken twice a year from nine sites in Prince William Sound, the Kenai Peninsula and Kodiak Island.

The monitoring is done by Kinnetic Laboratories, Inc.

RCAC's work in long-term environmental monitoring is required by both its 1990 contract with Alyeska and the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

The first two years of the program are expected to cost \$510,190. Much of the cost stems from extensive laboratory work. Samples will be tested for a wide spectrum of hydrocarbons. The use of gas chromatograph/mass spectrometry (GC/MS) techniques will permit scientists to detect the presence of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in sediment and tissue samples, and "fingerprint" the oil source. Oil has distinct fingerprints; markers that tell for example whether hydrocarbons are from crude oil or diesel; from North Slope crude or Cook Inlet.

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 a large sample size and allow continuous



Janet Kennedy and Paul Barter, of Kinnetic Laboratories, Inc., measure the size of mussels collected during the March field survey.

Photos by Shelli Vacca

assessment.

Samples were collected from the Gulf of Alaska (Aialik Bay, Windy Bay and Perevalnie Passage), the Valdez Marine Terminal (Saw Island), and Prince William Sound (Disk Island, Gold Creek, Knowles Head, Sheep Bay and Sleepy Bay). One hundred twenty five samples were collected, including 27 mussel samples for polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH), aliphatic hydrocarbons with the Unresolved Complex Mixture (AHC), and lipid content analyses. Nine additional mussel samples were collected, one at each station, for measurement of the gonadal index.

Forty-one subtidal sediment samples were collected for the analysis of PAH, AHC and total organic carbon. An addi-

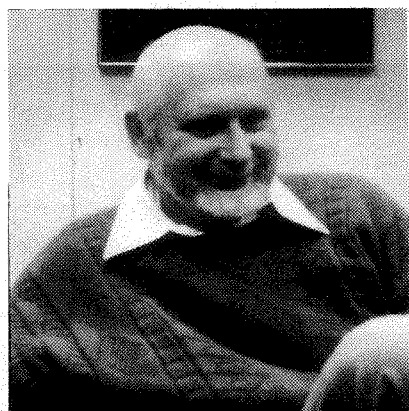
tional 41 samples were collected for analysis of particle grain size. Each set of 41 samples included collection of 10 replicates at two stations (Disk Island and Aialik Bay) and three replicates at each of the remaining seven stations. The replicates were analyzed to determine, for subsequent collections, the number of samples needed for statistical validity.

One sample of mousse-like materials for PAH/AHC/TOC analysis was collected at Disk Island where large quantities of this material was visible in the intertidal area. In addition, three equipment and three field blank samples were collected. Samples were analyzed at Texas A & M University's Geochemical and Environmental Research Group (GERG). ■



Paul Barter (left) and Eric Nigg, of Kinnetic Laboratories, Inc. survey a sampling area at Gold Creek in Valdez Arm.

## Stephens heads RCAC



Stan Stephens

Valdez charter boat operator Stan Stephens was elected to a one-year term as President of the RCAC Board of Directors. Stephens was elected March 19, during the RCAC's annual meeting in Valdez.

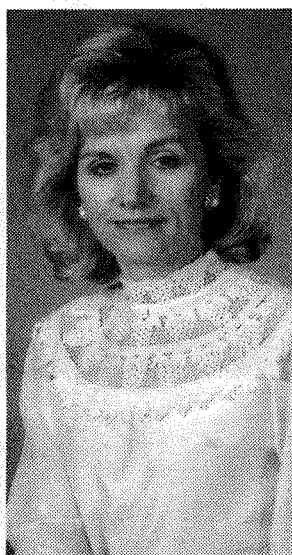
Stephens sits on the board as the representative of the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association. From 1990 to 1992, he served as the Alaska Chamber of Commerce representative.

Stephens divides his time between Valdez and Fairbanks; he owns and operates Stan Stephens Charters and Cruises out of Valdez. An Alaska resident since 1961, he has been active as a citizen in oil issues since 1984.

"The thing I think is so important is that we — industry and people concerned with the environment — work together," Stephens said. "I want to see us develop a program the rest of the world can look up to. We support the oil industry but we also need to protect other interests. We want to make sure there's a balance."

Also elected to the Executive Committee were Michelle O'Leary of Cordova, Vice President, Ivan Widom of Seldovia, Secretary; Bill Walker of Anchorage, Treasurer, and Ann Rothe of Anchorage, Member at large.

Margy Johnson, City of Cordova, and



Margy Johnson

Dennis Lodge, City of Seward, were seated on the board as new members, replacing Scott Sterling and Chris Gates, respectively. Johnson owns a hotel and restaurant in Cordova. Lodge heads the Fisheries and Maritime Training Division at the Alaska Vocational Technical Center in Seward.

Reappointed to two-year terms were Kristin Stahl-Johnson (City of Kodiak), Darrel Olsen (Community of Tatitlek), Stan Stephens (Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association), Mike Gallagher (City of Valdez), Ivan Widom (City of Seldovia), Tex Edwards (City of Homer), John Herschleb (Prince William Sound Aquaculture Association) and Michael E. Brown (Chugach Alaska Corporation). Floyd Heimbuch (Kenai Peninsula Borough) was also reappointed, but he has since resigned his seat. His alternate is Blake Johnson. ■



Dennis Lodge

## Headquarters office to move

RCAC's headquarters office in Anchorage will move to a new location in July. The new address, effective July 12, is 750 W. 2nd Ave. Suite 100, Anchorage 99501-2168. The phone and fax numbers will remain the same: (907) 277-7222 and 277-4523, respectively.

The new offices will provide more space for staff and volunteers, small and large conference rooms, and easier parking. The actual physical move will begin Friday, July 9. Marge Fowler, Program Coordinator for the Scientific Advisory Committee, is coordinating the move. ■

## RCAC, Alyeska reach agreement on funding

Alyeska Pipeline Service Company will continue to pay \$2.224 million a year to the Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (RCAC) under an agreement approved March 22, by Alyeska. The RCAC Board of Directors approved the agreement on a unanimous vote March 19, at its annual meeting in Valdez.

RCAC and Alyeska had been negotiating since September on the level of funding to be provided RCAC for the three years beginning 1993. RCAC received \$2.224 million in 1992, up from \$2.108 million in 1991 and \$2 million in 1990.

The agreement allows RCAC to keep unexpended funds from prior years. Taking into account unexpended and unencumbered funds, RCAC will actually have nearly \$2.5 million to budget annually through 1995.

The agreement imposes guidelines on RCAC's lobbying activities, outlines more formal procedures for development and conveyance of advice and comments, and lays a foundation for a more cooperative working relationship

between RCAC and Alyeska.

"We're very pleased with the agreement," RCAC President Stan Stephens said. "It maintains an adequate level of funding, paves the way for a better working relationship and clears up conflicts we've had in the past, without impinging on our independence or effectiveness."

Under provisions of the agreement, RCAC will continue to do grassroots lobbying with the general public. RCAC may testify at public proceedings on legislation and regulations pertaining to the environmental impacts of terminal and tanker operations. RCAC will also provide technical advice to lawmakers and public officials, when appropriate. RCAC will keep Alyeska apprised of public testimony and copy Alyeska on technical advice to public officials.

Alyeska and RCAC will work together more and take better advantage of the technical working group process to develop consensus wherever possible. The new protocols in no way preclude RCAC from disagreeing with Alyeska. ■

## NWF pulls out of RCAC

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF), a charter member of the RCAC, is withdrawing its membership in RCAC. Since 1989, the NWF has held the seat designated for an environmental or conservation group. Ann Rothe, the NWF representative on the RCAC Board of Directors, has been one of RCAC's most active directors.

In its letter of withdrawal, the NWF cited its focus on wetlands issues, and the inability of its staff to devote time to RCAC work, as the reasons for withdrawing its membership.

"We think the council (RCAC) deserves the best efforts of its members to continue its success. We regret to say that we can no longer provide this level of effort," the letter said. "We believe that there are other environmental groups whose focus is primarily directed toward oil and gas development, transportation and associated impacts that will better the council as the environmental organization member."

RCAC will solicit applications for membership from other environmental or conservation organizations. ■



## Staff notes

### Biologist Shelli

**Vacca** has joined the RCAC staff as coordinator of the environmental monitoring program under the Scientific Advisory Committee.



Shelli Vacca

Vacca holds a bachelor of arts in biology from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Before joining RCAC in February, she was a biological database manager with America North. Previously Vacca worked as a research biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She also spent two austral summers in Antarctica as a biologist with the National Science Foundation.

**Marilyn Leland** is spending a second

year with the U.S. Coast Guard in Washington, D.C. Leland has been on assignment with the Coast Guard's OPA 90 staff



Marilyn Leland

through a government exchange program since April 1992. Her duties with the OPA 90 staff include supervising the editing of a monthly publication on implementation of OPA 90 regulations; research and speech writing; and coordinating public hearings. Leland is special projects coordinator at RCAC, a position she'll resume when her stint with the Coast Guard ends in April 1994. Leland is a former executive director of Cordova District Fishermen United and a founding member of RCAC. ■

## Air quality regulations

*Continued from Page 1*

limitation is technologically feasible; and (4) prepare a written analysis of the economic feasibility of the proposal.

In addition, if the proposed regulations are more stringent than existing federal rules, the agency must also submit its written findings to peer review by at least three separate parties.

Local governments may establish a more stringent requirement than existing regulations by meeting the above requirements and obtaining agreement from the appropriate state agency that a more stringent regulation is warranted.

The good news, from an environmental standpoint, is that the new law does allow the Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) to regulate emissions from tank vessels. That at least opens the door to state regulation of vapors emitted during loading of crude oil at the Valdez Marine Terminal. However, to actually regulate the vapor emissions would require all of the steps detailed above.

The terminal emits more volatile organic compounds into the air than any other facility in North America. On average, a

quarter million pounds of such compounds, which include toxics such as benzene and hexane, are released from the terminal every day. The terminal is the third largest source of benzene air pollution in the nation. There currently are no federal standards regulating these emissions. ■

## State backsliding

*Continued from Page 1*

and state officials, RCAC agreed that the 470 Fund has been used for some dubious projects; but the cure as envisioned under HB 238 would be worse than the disease.

While the bill didn't pass, the message was not lost on the legislature. Most of the Fiscal Year 1994 budget cuts made in ADEC's Spill Prevention and Response Division (SPAR) are projects and programs paid for out of the 470 Fund. The result is expected to be significant delays in programs designed to mitigate environmental impacts of terminal operations, prevent another major spill and improve response should oil spills occur. By reducing those programs, the \$50 million cap will be reached sooner, thus decreasing industry taxes. ■

## Publications and reports...

### RCAC annual report

The RCAC's 1992 "Year in Review," an overview of work and activities undertaken last year, is available to the general public. The 24-page booklet also includes history and background information about the RCAC. The report may be obtained at either the Anchorage or Valdez office of RCAC. Reports will be mailed out by request.

### "Then & Now"

Changes in oil spill prevention and response since 1989 are the focus of a new publication by RCAC. "Then and Now" examines terminal and tanker operations, procedures and practices as a gauge of whether Prince William Sound and other areas at risk from TAPS trade tanker traffic are better protected. The booklet is designed for general audiences. "Then and Now" is expected to be available late June or early July. Copies will be available from both the Anchorage and Valdez offices of RCAC.

### Advice & Comments (1993)

RCAC's advice and comments to Alyeska, industry groups and regulatory agencies are available to the public on request, as are reports prepared for RCAC by consultants. To obtain a complete list of these documents from prior years, contact RCAC's Anchorage office.

- Comments to EPA regarding interim

final rule on response plans for non-transportation related facilities (4/16/93).

- Comments to U.S. Coast Guard on interim final rules for vessel response plans and marine-transportation related facilities (4/9/93).

- Recommendation to Alyeska that it pursue development of a coastal community cooperative for oil spill response (2/8/93).

- TOEM Committee comments to EPA on Alyeska's Proposed Effluent and Sediment Toxicity Testing (1/14/93).

- TOEM Committee comments to ADEC on draft air quality control permit at Alyeska Marine Terminal (1/19/93).

- Comments to EPA on Draft Regulation for Marine Tank Vessels and Proposed Language for Modeling Demonstration under Section 183(f) of Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (3/23/93).

- TOEM Committee Comments to ADEC on Ballast Water Treatment Plant Monitoring (4/26/93).

### Consultants' reports (1993)

- "Initial Field Survey Report," Long Term Environmental Monitoring Project.

- "Analysis of Subtidal Sediment - Initial Field Survey," Long Term Environmental Monitoring Project.

- "Focus group notes on mitigation strategies," Socioeconomic Impact Mitigation Project.

- "Proposed Mitigation Initiatives," Socioeconomic Impact Mitigation Project. ■

## RCAC recertified

The RCAC has been recertified by the U.S. Coast Guard as the alternative voluntary advisory group for Prince William Sound. RCAC's recertification, approved June 9 by Rear Admiral A. E. Henn, is in effect July 1, 1993, through June 30, 1994.

Recertification means that RCAC fulfills the requirement of the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90) for a citizens advisory group to work with industry and regulatory agencies in environmental oversight of terminal and tanker operations in Prince William Sound.

OPA 90 requires industry-funded citizen advisory councils to be established in Prince

William Sound and Cook Inlet as a demonstration project for citizen participation. A provision of the law allows existing voluntary citizens groups to substitute for the council as prescribed, so long as certain conditions are met. Both the Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet RCACs are certified, for their respective areas, as the alternative voluntary advisory group in lieu of council.

The RCAC incorporated as a non-profit in December 1989 and entered into the contract with Alyeska in February 1990. In March 1991, former President George Bush certified RCAC as the oversight council for Prince William Sound, pursuant to OPA 90. ■

# Tesoro, Alyeska perform well in big spill drill

RCAC observers at a major spill drill had mainly praise for the operation, conducted April 7 and 8, by Tesoro and Alyeska.

"If that had been a real spill, they would have set a new record for oil spill recovery," Tim Robertson said. Robertson, of Seldovia, was one of five observers from RCAC, which monitors and participates in all major spill drills in Prince William Sound.

"The lightering operation was perfect or nearly so and the deployment of response equipment was excellent. They would have recovered well over 50 percent of

the oil and set a new standard that would be the envy of the world," Robertson said. The weather was a big factor – wind and

*"The lightering operation was perfect or nearly so and the deployment of response equipment was excellent. They would have recovered well over 50 percent of the oil and set a new standard that would be the envy of the world"*

—Tim Robertson

waves were non-existent, providing ideal conditions – but personnel also deserved

credit, RCAC observers said. The experience gained through constant drilling by SERVS personnel shows during a major operation

such as this one. In addition, SERVS Manager Jim McHale now has been in that position for about a year and is able to manage the initial portions of the call-out efficiently. Alyeska terminal manager Rick Collins, in his first run as incident commander, and the captain of the tug Dauntless also were cited for their performances.

The drill scenario had an outbound tanker colliding with a herring processor near Bligh Reef and spilling 50,000 barrels of North Slope crude into Prince William Sound. The primary goals of the drill were to test hand-off of the response management from Alyeska to Tesoro, and test lightering of the cargo remaining on the "stricken" tanker. It was the first drill of on-

water lightering – the transfer of oil to a barge or other vessel – and the first to use an actual tanker.

"The lightering operation proceeded at almost textbook levels," RCAC's official report of the drill noted. "The captain of the tug Dauntless was impressive in his directions bringing the barge alongside the ship. Each stage proceeded as planned, despite the fact that this was the first time the lightering equipment had been deployed on a ship's deck."

Crews also deployed nearshore oil recovery equipment including a new inflatable collection barge. As this was only the second nearshore deployment in a major drill, there still were some rough edges, however each time out the operation improves.

RCAC's formal report on the drill also suggests specific improvements, among them:

- better or clarified command structure for hatchery protection boom deployment,
- more realistic estimates of reported oil recovery totals,
- more efficient use of vessels for lightering and holding, and
- better efforts in weather reporting and forecasting for the specific location of the drill. ■

## What's new at Alyeska

by Gary Bader  
Citizen Group Liaison Manager  
Alyeska Pipeline Service Company

Since our last opportunity to communicate with you, there have been several items of interest that I'd like to share with you.

First, there have been a number of organizational changes at the company. President and CEO Jim Hermiller has retired, and David Pritchard, a long-time Alaskan from BP, has assumed the presidency.

Mr. Pritchard has already met with RCAC Board President Stan Stephens and Executive Director Sheila Gottehrer and will participate in an executive meeting between the RCAC and Alyeska in late July. He plans to attend the quarterly meeting of the RCAC in Kenai in September, as well.

We have two new vice presidents from ARCO. John Dayton is Vice President of Operations and Engineering, and Rick Abel is Vice President of Environment, Health and Safety.

The SERVS group now reports to Rick Abel, reinforcing the link between the SERVS group and the prevention, contingency planning and response functions. The long term organizational arrangement for Prince William Sound spill prevention and response is currently the subject of a separate study led by the TAPS owners and shippers.

Second, at the request of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Alyeska will participate in a

working group to address issues associated with our ballast water treatment plant in Valdez, including tanker discharged materials. A goal of the working group is to allow for coordination and cooperation among regulating agencies, Alyeska and citizens of the region to effect implementation of agreed-upon monitoring activities.

We look forward to a candid discussion of any issue participants wish to raise. Participants will be ADEC, EPA, Alyeska, the RCAC and representatives from the Ballast Water Treatment Technical Advisory Group and the Prince William Sound Tanker Association.

Third, Alyeska scientists met with RCAC scientists in an effort to resolve differences between the groups so that we might bring the Valdez Air Health Study to a close. The discussions were candid and productive but did not result in substantive progress toward consensus. Alyeska understands that the RCAC will be issuing a final report from its perspective in the near future which we will review.

Fourth, Alyeska has begun the process of presenting the Nearshore Response Plan to communities in the 1989 spill impact area. This plan was developed by the Response Plan Group of the tanker operators and was provided to Alyeska to incorporate into the Prince William Sound Prevention and Response Plan.

We hope to receive valuable and constructive input for incorporation into the Nearshore Plan. We are also exercising the plan when opportunities arise, such as the recent successful trial during the Tesoro drill in April. ■

## VEOC contract out to bid soon

A contract for design and construction of a permanent Valdez Emergency Operations Center (VEOC) is expected to go out to bid by the end of June, according to Jim McHale, manager of Alyeska's Ship Escort Response Vessel System (SERVS).

The new facility, approximately 20,000 square feet, will house Alyeska's Valdez operations, including SERVS offices, a repair and maintenance shop and an emergency operations center for drills and real incidents. The building will include space for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Coast Guard, and provide room for oil spill training. A new dock will also be built.

McHale said groundbreaking is expected no later than June 1994 and Alyeska hopes to move in by the end of

1994. The facility will be located on the spit, seaward of the small boat harbor, between Hotei Hill and Sea Hawk Seafoods. On-shore and off-shore site surveys have been completed to make sure the land is suitable for construction.

A new response facility has been on the drawing board since 1989. Construction of the new building, and some of the provisions such as space for ADEC and the Coast Guard, are required under Alyeska's settlement with the State of Alaska.

"For the first time, all of our operations – except the warehouse – will be under one roof," McHale said. "It'll be good for morale. We've been working out of temporary structures all this time. This will give us a sense of permanency, and contribute to convenience and efficiency." ■



Gordon Scott of Girdwood, who fishes commercially in Prince William Sound, testifies on vessel escort requirements at the Coast Guard's public hearing in Anchorage, June 3. Scott is a member of RCAC's Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee. He was among several people associated with RCAC who spoke on their own behalf.

## USCG takes more comment on escort rules

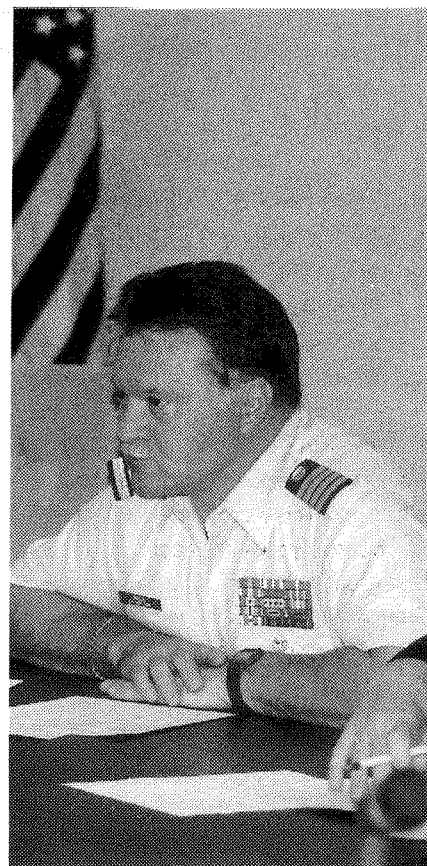
### *RCAC says wait for study findings*

Federal requirements for escort vessels in areas, including Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet, were the subject of public hearings conducted by the U.S. Coast Guard June 3 in Anchorage and June 5 in Valdez. The public comment period closed June 23, but the Coast Guard is being urged by RCAC and others to hold off final rulemaking until a major study of towing capabilities in Prince William Sound is completed later this year.

The Disabled Tanker Towing Study, co-sponsored by RCAC, is evaluating the capability of existing emergency towing equipment and practices and examining alternatives to enhance escort and assist capabilities for disabled tankers.

The RCAC submitted comments on escort requirements when the Coast Guard originally opened it for public comment last year. It has notified the Coast Guard that it may submit additional or revised comments, depending on the findings of the disabled tanker towing study.

There is considerable debate within RCAC about the need for escorts in the middle of Prince William Sound, once the Coast Guard's new surveillance system and pre-positioned escorts are in place. Prince William Sound fishermen have been waging a grassroots effort urging RCAC to support continued escorts throughout the sound, even after the new surveillance system is operating. ■



Capt. Gerald Willis, of the U.S. Coast Guard, took public comment on vessel escort requirements at hearings in Anchorage and Valdez.

## Industry looking at best response

An industry task force has been formed to identify the most effective and efficient organization for oil spill prevention and response in Prince William Sound. The study will also look at spill prevention and response outside Prince William Sound and in open ocean off Southeast Alaska.

The task force, a joint effort of major shippers in the TAPS trade and pipeline owner companies, is composed of Chairman Ed Robinson, Arco Transportation, Alan Duggins, BP Exploration, George Murray, Exxon and Tim Plummer, Alyeska. The study is expected to be completed by late summer or early fall.

Currently, Alyeska provides initial spill response to tanker spills in Prince William Sound, through its Ship Escort and Response Vessel System (SERVS).

Although task force members declined to elaborate on details, it is assumed that one of the options under study would be an independent SERVS, separate from Alyeska, perhaps as a cooperative. RCAC is also analyzing the potential advantages and drawbacks of an independent SERVS. One concern is whether a new organizational structure would change or affect the shipper's or owner's liability in the event of a tanker spill. ■

## Alyeska requests research assistance

Tests conducted recently for Alyeska indicated high concentrations of certain hydrocarbon byproducts in the bile of two of 15 flatfish collected in Port Valdez.

The significance of the findings is unclear, and Alyeska has asked state and federal agencies for assistance in analyzing the flatfish data because very little research of this type has been done.

The bile of the fish were analyzed to detect the byproducts of hydrocarbon metabolism. Fish are able to metabolize hydrocarbons rapidly; the hydrocarbons do not accumulate in muscle tissue.

The bile analysis process was developed by scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA is reviewing Alyeska's findings. The studies were required under Alyeska's federal water quality permit for the marine terminal. ■



# Response capability, storage capacity emphasized in comments to feds

Vessel response plans should ensure sufficient storage and transfer capability for recovery of spilled oil and maintain the level of response capability that currently exists in Prince William Sound. Those are among the major recommendations by RCAC in its latest round of comments to the U.S. Coast Guard on federal requirements for vessel response plans.

"One of the single most important inadequacies in the response to the Exxon Valdez oil spill was lack of intermediate storage and transfer equipment," the RCAC said. "We need a requirement that ensures more effective response planning and better containment and cleanup of oil discharge."

The Coast Guard is writing the interim final rule detailing the federal requirements

*"We need a requirement that ensures more effective response planning and better containment and cleanup of oil discharge."*

—RCAC

for vessels that carry oil. Such vessels must be prepared to respond to a spill of their cargo.

"It is important that Alaskans have a strong say in the federal rules that affect our communities and livelihoods; the rules should reflect the lessons we have learned since the Exxon Valdez oil spill. RCAC's primary constituents - the residents of Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska - have a unique stake in these regulations. At some point in the future

there most likely will be another catastrophic oil spill in U.S. waters.

The response to that oil spill will have major implications for the people and ecosystems in its path. The success of the response will

very much depend on these regulations," the RCAC said.

The RCAC also protested that under the Coast Guard's interim final rule, Alyeska would have to have only half of the response capability currently listed in the Prince

William Sound Tanker Spill Plan. The major shippers of North Slope crude contract with Alyeska to provide the initial response to a tanker spill in Prince William Sound.

In other comments on the interim final rule, RCAC urged that certified citizens' councils be included in the process of reviewing vessel response plans. The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 requires RCAC review of terminal contingency plans as a condition for approval of those plans.

RCAC also opposed a provision that would let vessel operators use dispersants as "credits," to reduce the amount of mechanical recovery equipment required to be available by contract.

"Dispersants do not remove oil from the environment and mechanical recovery is designated as the primary means for on-water spill response in the National Contingency Plan. The response capability caps have already severely restricted the amount of mechanical equipment that must be contracted for prior to a spill. To further reduce mechanical recovery will fail to insure that adequate response resources are available," the RCAC said. ■

## 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. ■

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