

Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

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Pending legislation threatens spill prevention, oversight and response

The state's ability to help prevent oil spills, oversee industry and respond to spills would be seriously jeopardized under legislation that appears to be on a fast track in Juneau.

HB 238 and SB 215 would change the funding mechanism and restrict the uses of the Oil and Hazardous Substances Release Response Fund, known as the "470 Fund." The changes would amount to a tax break for the oil industry by changing the 5-cent surcharge now collected on each barrel of oil. The legislation is expected to move quickly unless legislators hear objections from their constituents.

RCAC is monitoring the progress of the bills and testifying against them at every opportunity. Background information about the specific issues and a report on the

history of the surcharge are available from RCAC.

"These bills constitute a dangerous step backward in efforts to make oil transportation safer," RCAC President Stan Stephens said. "Enactment of either bill is likely to cripple the ability of the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to prevent oil spills, monitor oil spill contingency plans and participate in spill drills." Those functions are funded by the nickel-per-barrel surcharge that feeds the 470 Fund.

Proponents argue that the 470 Fund shouldn't be used to pay for day to day agency operations, but this is simply not true. A review of the legislative history provides proof that the nickel surcharge and the 470 Fund were intended to fund prevention and

"These bills constitute a dangerous step backward in efforts to make oil transportation safer."

—Stan Stephens

response programs for all types of oil and hazardous substances. The only way to ensure the state fulfills its proper oversight function – a critical component in preventing oil spills and ensuring adequate response capabilities – is through the day to day operations of DEC. The legislation that developed Alaska's prevention programs specifically and deliberately called for those programs to be paid for out of the 470 Fund.

Proponents argue that the change is needed to ensure money is available in case of a catastrophic spill. In fact, the federal government has already established a \$1 billion reserve fund and the state has put aside about \$37 million so far. Ironically, SB 215 would make it harder for the state to respond to the much more common smaller spills of less than 4.2 million gallons, about one-third the size of the Exxon Valdez.

Alaska's surcharge is in line with other states, both in terms of the amount of surcharge and how the funds are used. Of the nine states that are major producers, refiners or transporters of petroleum products, the mean rate is 5.8 cents per barrel. In fact, California collects a total of 29 cents per barrel – 25 cents for its response fund and 4 cents for prevention and oversight programs.

Since the surcharge is based on production, the amount of money flowing into the 470 fund will drop even without SB 215 and HB 238, because of declining throughput. Yet there is no parallel reduction in risk. Indeed, the risk of oil spills is likely to rise as throughput declines because tighter profit margins will put pressure on industry to reduce costs. Past experience has demonstrated that cost-cutting pressures tend to increase risk.

'Ice scouts' instituted after Overseas Ohio incident

Major shippers of North Slope crude have voluntarily implemented a new system of "ice scout vessels" to alert tankers to glacial ice in the shipping lanes approaching Valdez. The ice scouts, equipped with operational radar and a searchlight, accompany tankers during periods of darkness or reduced visibility when any ice is reported or observed within one mile of the tanker lanes. Alyeska's Ship Escort Response Vessel System (SERVS) has instituted the ice scouts on behalf of the shippers.

The new voluntary policy is more conservative, and thus provides a greater margin of safety, than procedures in place since the *Exxon Valdez* grounding. The *Exxon Valdez* moved out of the tanker lanes to avoid ice.

ARCO Marine, BP Oil Shipping, Chevron Shipping and SeaRiver Maritime announced the new system Jan. 14, in response to the Jan. 2 incident in which the BP-chartered tanker *Overseas Ohio* hit a submerged iceberg 25 miles south of Valdez. The ice gouged a 20-foot long hole in the tanker's bow. The tanker was inbound and carrying only clean ballast. It was in the proper traffic lane, no ice had been reported and the iceberg was apparently not seen on the ship's radar.

Two escort vessels already accompany laden outbound tankers and one of them acts as ice scout when conditions warrant. For inbound tankers, an ice scout - a SERV'S escort vessel equipped with the radar and searchlight - hooks up with inbound tankers at the pilot station or at the southern limit of ice observed or reported. The biggest change is for inbound tankers, since they have not had escorts in the past. The ice scout vessel runs one-half nautical mile forward of the tanker and radios back any ice sightings.



Workers in Valdez make temporary repairs to the damaged bow of the *Overseas Ohio*.

The oil shippers consulted with the U.S. Coast Guard on the new policy. They are also reviewing the practicality and effectiveness of other means of detecting the presence of ice, including electronic technology.

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People

Volunteer profile: Tom Copeland

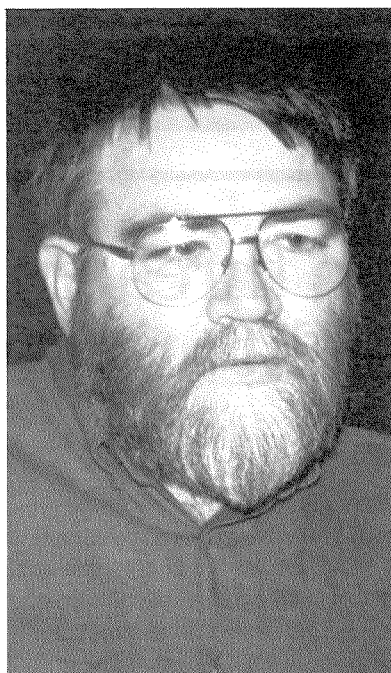
RCAC relies heavily on the energy, expertise and resources of volunteers. Those volunteers share some core values, such as the importance of citizen involvement and concern for environmental protection. But their interests, politics and perspectives are wide-ranging and diverse.

Volunteers like Tom Copeland don't come around very often. He is tenacious, passionate, smart and puts in outrageous hours. He can also be controversial.

Copeland is serving a temporary stint on the RCAC Board of Directors, representing the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation, but his work and his passion have been with RCAC's Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee.

Copeland splits his time between Cordova and Everson, Washington, where his wife, Merrie, has a commercial apple orchard. A member of the OSPR Committee since its inception in October 1990, Copeland is also a past board member of Cordova District Fishermen United. He helped start the Copper River Fishermen's Cooperative and is currently active in the Prince William Sound Seiners' Association.

With 30 years of commercial fishing in Prince William Sound under his belt, Copeland knows the Sound and he knows fishermen. And therein lies his special cause: ensuring that commercial fishermen have a major role to play in the spill response plans



Tom Copeland

prepared by Alyeska and oil shippers.

"Local people are the most affected and therefore the most motivated to carry out a response. I want to see a large portion of the response plan based on local response.

Fishermen are the best trained people in the world for oil response. We routinely collect massive quantities of widely dispersed product – fish – from the ocean and return it to port. That's what we do for a living.

Collecting oil after a spill is very analogous to

"Fishermen are the best trained people in the world for oil response. We routinely collect massive quantities of widely dispersed product – fish – from the ocean and return it to port. That's what we do for a living."

- Tom Copeland

what we do day in and day out," he said.

Copeland sees some progress since 1989, but only some.

"I think we have a foot in the door, but we have a long way to go to convincing industry that fishermen are a cost-effective resource. It's going to take a lot more work to convince them to use us to full capacity," he said.

Copeland was a major force behind nearshore response, the now-accepted strategy of attacking spilled oil that has escaped the spill site, before it hits shore.

Nearshore response relies heavily on local fishermen and has been incorporated into industry's Prince William Sound Tanker Spill Plan.

Copeland has proved to be a quick study, able to understand laws and regulations and analyze their impact. Despite a professed distrust of industry, he manages to work effectively with both industry and agency representatives in technical working groups. "I think they appreciate my no-nonsense approach," he said.

Copeland does not pull punches in stating his opinions, and in the process he sometimes lands in the center of controversy. His views on oil spill prevention are an example.

"Except for the escorts, what we have now in prevention is largely lip service. It's difficult and very expensive to prevent oil spills because they happen so rarely. Sooner or later another one is inevitable. You can't prevent them, especially in the North Pacific," he said.

Copeland believes meaningful prevention will come only when the U.S. Coast Guard and the state "get serious" about restricting tanker traffic in adverse weather conditions.

"Tanker traffic should be shut down maybe 30 percent of the time in winter. It's possible to do that, but expensive. Maximum operating conditions should be 40 knots and 10 foot seas. That's the upper limit of our ability to respond. Past that, we should not be transporting oil."

RCAC seats two directors

The chairman of a Native regional corporation and a commercial fisherman have been seated on the Board of Directors of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (RCAC).

Chugach Alaska Board Chairman Jim La Belle of Anchorage has returned to the RCAC Board after a year-long absence, replacing Michael Brown as the Chugach representative on RCAC.

Chugach Alaska is the Native regional corporation for the Prince William Sound area. La Belle has been employed with Chugach off and on since 1973. He also served three years as president of Port Graham Corporation. La Belle has also worked as a local government specialist with the State of Alaska and in employee relations with ARCO Alaska.

Tom Copeland was appointed on a temporary basis to represent Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation, a non-profit organization that operates five salmon hatcheries. Copeland is filling in for John Herschleb of Girdwood, who took an extended road trip with his family this winter.

Copeland has fished commercially in Prince William Sound since 1963. He is a past board member of CDFU and Copper River Fishermen's Cooperative and is currently active in Prince William Sound Seiners' Association. Copeland maintains homes in Cordova and Everson, Washington. He has been a member of RCAC's Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee since its inception in October 1990.

La Belle and Copeland were seated at the RCAC's quarterly board meeting, Dec. 9, in Anchorage



Jim La Belle

Staff addition

The newest addition to the RCAC staff is **Rica Salvador**, administrative assistant in the Valdez office. Salvador was hired in November, after six weeks as a temp. Salvador moved to Valdez from

Portland, Oregon, in December 1991. She spent 10 years in advertising, as a graphic designer and production manager, in Portland and Los Angeles.



Rica Salvador

Committee recruitment process revamped

Recruitment of volunteers to serve on RCAC committees has been revised to fill vacancies faster and reduce frustration of applicants. The changes are part of an overall fine tuning of how committee volunteers are recruited, selected and reappointed. The conceptual changes were approved by the Board of Directors at its quarterly meeting in December.

Committee members' appointments are for two years instead of one, but unlike the past, reappointment to subsequent terms will not be virtually automatic. Under the old system, committees were appointed every year. However, since sitting committee members were usually reappointed automatically, many new applicants were applying for non-existent seats. Now, the recruiting ads state up front which committees have how many vacancies.

Once the new system is fully implemented, open seats will not be advertised until the council has acted on any sitting committee members seeking reappointment.

Another problem has been mid-year resignations. With committee selections only once a year, some committees were left short-handed for months at a time. To solve that problem, vacant seats will be advertised and new members ap-

pointed up to four times a year. In addition, application forms have been standardized and prospective committee members are now informed about the criteria the board uses to select committee members.

The council also articulated those criteria: experience or background in a technical field; strong personal interest in and commitment to safe transportation of oil and terminal operations; and place of residency. Residents of the region impacted by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill are given preference, though others are not excluded.

Committee applications are reviewed by committee staff, the committee chair and the executive director or deputy director. Their recommendation goes to the Executive Committee, which may make the appointment itself or refer it to the full board. RCAC directors may review applications from their communities.

Applications for reappointment of sitting members are considered in consultation with the committee he or she has served on, and the executive director.

At its annual meeting in Valdez, March 10-11, the Board is expected to address performance standards for committees, including standardized procedures for addressing attendance and disciplinary problems.

Response and planning

Replacement barge eases concern over oil spill readiness

Concerns about spill response capability in Prince William Sound were eased when Alyeska put a replacement barge into service Dec. 30, to provide storage capacity and house skimmers.

The RCAC Board of Directors protested Dec. 10, that Prince William Sound was left without adequate response capabilities when the Barge 450-8 was sent Outside Dec. 6, for six weeks to undergo modifications. The 450-8 is a major component of Alyeska's spill response arsenal. It provides one-third of the storage capacity required to be on-hand in case of a major spill from a large tanker and houses two Transrec skimmers used to pick up spilled oil. It is normally stationed at Naked Island.

Although Alyeska insisted that its response capabilities never fell below the minimum required by law, Alyeska responded to protests from RCAC – and direction from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) – and brought up a substitute barge.

The RCAC Board lashed out at both Alyeska and ADEC over the barge issue.

RCAC, Alyeska seek ways to head off conflicts

Alyeska and RCAC have identified steps each organization can take to head off conflicts over Alyeska decisions related to oil spill preparedness and response capabilities.

In a Dec. 21 meeting with RCAC representatives, Alyeska officials promised to do a better job of notifying and briefing RCAC on oil spill response issues. As part of that notification, Alyeska will automatically copy RCAC on correspondence to regulatory agencies pertaining to spill response permits.

As Alyeska improves its communications, RCAC agreed to address weaknesses in its

own internal communications, which have contributed to the conflicts.

Alyeska also asked RCAC to consider relocating the Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee to Valdez, in order to improve communications with the Ship Escort Response Vessel System (SERVS). OSPR Committee staff work in Anchorage. RCAC maintains a Valdez office for the staff of two of its committees.

While most of the issues discussed at the meeting involved gaps in communication, Alyeska also agreed at RCAC's request to attempt to sensitize Alyeska owners to RCAC concerns.

Two incidents prompted the Dec. 21 meeting. The first was a decision by Alyeska announced in October to consolidate response personnel at the terminal with SERVS. RCAC was notified in passing, but was not given the opportunity to review the issue or comment on it.

The second incident occurred in early December, when Alyeska sent a barge out of state for six weeks to undergo modification. The barge is a critical component of Alyeska's spill response arsenal and RCAC felt its absence left the region inadequately covered in case of a spill.

Alyeska was criticized for what RCAC directors saw as an inadequate back-up and failing to provide the required 10 days advance notice to ADEC. RCAC criticized ADEC for allowing the barge to leave before the back-up storage and skimming plan had been fully reviewed and approved. ADEC

ultimately determined that the original back-up plan was not adequate and ordered Alyeska to obtain a replacement barge.

Under state law, storage capacity of 450,000 barrels must be available at all times, to hold oil and water recovered in case of a spill, when tankers of 500,000

GWT or larger are transiting Prince William Sound.

Barge 450-8 returned to Valdez Jan. 19. Another response barge, the Z-B-1 left the same day for modifications. The substitute barge will remain in service until the Z-B-1 returns around the end of February.

Roadmap completed for reviewing contingency plans

Navigating the maze of oil spill response ("contingency") plans has become a little easier with the completion of a sophisticated checklist, or protocol, developed to aid in public review of such plans.

The "Oil Spill Contingency Plan Review Protocol" will help RCAC and other interested citizens as 27 oil spill contingency plans come up for public review this winter and spring.

State and federal law require Alyeska Pipeline Service Company and tankers carrying crude oil to submit detailed plans describing how they will respond in case of a major oil spill. As part of a three-year review

process, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation is asking for public comment on the oil spill contingency plans for Prince William Sound. The protocol was developed to provide consistency in the review process and provide reviewers with a framework for gauging the adequacy of response plans.

The protocol was developed by consultants Michelle Straube and Randolph Bayliss for RCAC's Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee.

Subjects covered in the protocol include planning assumptions such as planning volume, response scenarios and documentation; deployment and response strategies; analysis

of spills, drills and training; and pollution prevention, inspection and maintenance programs.

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Since November, RCAC has reviewed and commented on three oil spill contingency plans:

- Valdez Marine Terminal Spill Prevention and Response Plan

- State/Federal Unified Plan - This plan combines state and federal requirements in providing guidance for spill response plans anywhere in Alaska.

- National Contingency Plan - This plan sets policy and guidelines for all federally-required contingency plans. It also is the government's

plan for managing a federalized spill.

RCAC also reviewed and commented on a document prepared by shippers describing how they are complying with state standards for response planning. If approved by the state, the document will become part of the Prince William Sound Tanker Plan, the chief industry plan for tanker spills in Prince William Sound.

Review of the Prince William Sound Area Plan is expected to begin in February. The area plan describes specific requirements that apply only to spill response in Prince William Sound.

Project would focus on human impacts of oil spills

Development of community response plans to reduce the human impacts of a major oil spill will be formally considered by the RCAC Board of Directors in March. The proposed project, sponsored by RCAC's Scientific Advisory Committee, is the reincarnation of a study stopped by the Board in September.

As tentatively redesigned, the project would fund the preparation of community response plans in nine communities within the region impacted by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. The community response plans would include strategies for protecting community well-being and subsistence resources, as well as the community's own response to an oil spill.

The plans would be written by community members, using information gleaned from the earlier study. Although tailored to the needs of each community, the plans would

be developed using a standard format and guidelines.

The concept of the original socio-economic study was to develop mitigation strategies to help communities prepare for and eliminate or reduce the impacts of a major environmental catastrophe such as an oil spill. Communities impacted by the 1989 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 project was roughly half completed when it was halted in September, after board members questioned whether the resulting document would be the practical tool that communities need. Most of the first year of work dealt with soliciting specific concerns through a series of focus groups in six of the 18 communities affected by the 1989 oil spill,

and developing a work plan for community involvement.

A study of social, cultural and economic

impacts is referenced in, though not required by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and RCAC's contract with Alyeska.

Conference scheduled on spill response in dynamic broken ice

A two-day conference on "Oil Spill Response in Dynamic Broken Ice" will be held March 7 and 8, at the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel.

The conference will focus on identifying specific research priorities for improving oil-in-ice response capabilities in the Cook Inlet winter environment.

Topics will include Cook Inlet oil production and transportation systems, behavior of oil in ice, in-situ burning, dispersants, mechanical recovery systems and case

studies of response strategies.

The conference is sponsored by Cook Inlet Spill Prevention & Response Inc., the Hazardous Substance Spill Technology Review Council, Alaska Clean Seas, ARCO Alaska and Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council.

Registration is \$125. For additional information, contact DF Dickens Associates Ltd., Suite 210, 1290 Hornby Street, Vancouver, BC V6Z 1W2, Canada. Tel: 604-684-0516. Fax: 604-684-2357.

Air and water issues

Tracer study on hold; Alyeska evaluates vapor recovery systems

The decision to do a second tracer study of hydrocarbon vapors emitted during tanker loading will be revisited in March and perhaps delayed until summer. The question will be taken up by the RCAC Board of Directors at its annual meeting, March 10-11, in Valdez. A final decision will be made jointly with Alyeska.

RCAC and Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. agreed in concept last September to conduct a second, jointly-managed tracer study to help resolve questions about how much of the benzene in Valdez comes from vapors

emitted when crude is loaded onto tankers at the Valdez Marine Terminal.

Since then Alyeska has announced it will install a vapor control or recovery system to reduce emissions. Vapor controls are likely to be required by long-awaited draft federal regulations expected in April from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The regulations will spell out specific requirements for vapor controls, including how much of the vapors must be captured and how quickly the control system must be in place.

Alyeska hopes to develop a recovery

system that will reuse the vapors, instead of merely capturing and incinerating them. While these options are being investigated, further work on another tracer study has been deferred at least until the end of the first quarter. The deferment was proposed by Norm Ingram, Manager of Alyeska's Valdez Vapor Control Program, with the concurrence of RCAC President Stan Stephens. RCAC's Executive Committee agreed Jan. 12 to put the question to the full board.

In a related status update, Ingram told the RCAC Executive Committee that the big questions currently being addressed are

cost-effectiveness of recovery relative to incineration and whether recovery technologies will work effectively in the unique conditions in Valdez. He said Alyeska will install vapor controls consistent with the schedule required by the yet-to-be-released federal regulations.

In late January, Ingram traveled to Europe to investigate vapor recovery systems in Copenhagen, Hamburg and Frankfurt. Among those who accompanied him was E.A. Jim Levine, chairman of RCAC's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee.

EPA expected to approve disposal of oily waste

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is expected to reaffirm its decision to permit disposal of 22,000 gallons of oily waste water into the ballast water treatment plant at the Valdez Marine Terminal.

The waste water, awaiting disposal for more than two years, is sitting in the Crowley Barge UT-10, at the Valdez Marine Terminal. The waste water consists of bilge contaminated with 400 to 500 gallons of residue from raw vacuum gas oil (RVGO). RVGO is a petroleum product that is an intermediary product in the refining process.

In November, the EPA approved a request from Alyeska and Crowley to discharge the waste water.

On Dec. 17, RCAC's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM)

Committee protested the decision and raised questions about the origin and chemical makeup of the raw vacuum gas oil, the ability of the ballast water treatment plant to handle the waste water and the process EPA used to make its decision. The RVGO was subsequently identified as coming from North Slope crude oil.

RCAC also objected to EPA's failure to notify RCAC about the issue until after officials had already decided to approve the discharge request. The federal Oil Pollution Act requires federal agencies to consult with RCAC on such issues, but EPA did not notify RCAC until after it had decided to grant the request.

After receiving RCAC's letter, the EPA

agreed to suspend its decision pending a review by RCAC.

In a Jan. 19 response back to RCAC, the EPA explained its decision and provided additional information about the oily waste water. Based on that letter, it appeared that EPA would reaffirm its earlier decision to permit the discharge.

While the Barge UT-10 controversy is apparently being laid to rest, it raises questions that contribute to long-standing concerns about the actual content of discharges into the ballast water treatment plan. To better identify what goes in and comes out of the treatment plant, RCAC has been pushing for a major chemical analysis, called a materials balance study, of the treatment plant.

New discharge permit application under review

Alyeska has submitted its application for renewal of the federal permit governing discharge of treated ballast and treated sewage into Port Valdez.

Alyeska's current National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit expires June 6, 1994. The renewal application was submitted Dec. 3 to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

RCAC's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Committee has begun reviewing the application, although the EPA has not announced the timeframe for taking public comments. The formal review could take a year or two.

Oil spill prevention

Deck officers identify safety improvements in navigation aids

A survey of TAPS tanker deck officers indicates room for improvement in weather reporting, and ice monitoring and reporting procedures in Prince William Sound. Most deck officers feel the present vessel traffic system is adequate, and most of those who have had simulator training found it beneficial.

Those are among the conclusions that emerged from a survey conducted last year by RCAC to determine attitudes about the suitability of current navigation aids and escort procedures in Prince William Sound. Of nearly 500 deck officers who received the survey, 23 percent responded. That is a respectable response rate by conventional survey standards.

The confidential survey was conducted by RCAC's Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems (POVTS) Committee, with the assistance of the Prince William Sound Tanker Association, which distributed questionnaires to deck officers. To ensure confidentiality, the completed questionnaires were returned to RCAC.

While the survey is not necessarily statistically valid, it didn't need to be, since it

was designed to elicit candid attitudes, opinions and ideas that deck officers might be reluctant to voice publicly.

The POVTS Committee is making recommendations based on the survey responses. It continues to push for new weather reporting stations, especially at Hinchinbrook Entrance, Valdez Arm and Valdez Narrows, areas of particular need noted by the survey respondents.

Questions about the adequacy of nautical charts evoked satisfactory assessments except for the chart covering the approach to Hinchinbrook Entrance. The scale of that chart is too small. RCAC has recommended that NOAA (the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration, which is responsible for nautical charts) break that chart into two larger-scale charts.

Some of the information gleaned from the survey – especially regarding work hour restrictions, simulator training and ice monitoring and reporting requirements – will be considered in a study of human factors in tanker accidents. That study will begin later this year, also under the auspices of the POVTS Committee.

Plans underway to study human factors in accidents

The Regional Citizens' Advisory Councils for Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet are putting together plans for a "scoping study" of human factors in maritime accidents. If approved as planned, the scoping study, or needs assessment, will lay the foundation for a much larger study of human factors.

Human error is involved in more than 80 percent of hazardous substance spills and it played a front and center role in the 1989 grounding of the Exxon Valdez.

The scoping study would take 60 to 90 days. Interviews would be conducted with key players in marine transportation in Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet: tanker crews, management, pilots, escort crews and Coast Guard personnel. The results of the interviews would be used to frame the parameters of a more expensive and longer-term study to develop solutions to human factors problems. The results of the scoping study would be presented to the state's Hazardous Substance Spill Technology Review Council, which has expressed interest in funding the larger study.

Human factors issues expected to be

addressed include manning levels; mandatory rest periods; rotation of bridge watch officers; use of dedicated loading mates; improved licensing, training and drug and alcohol regulations; and comparison with cockpit safety practices.

Some human factor issues have been addressed in Prince William Sound since the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Under alcohol screening procedures instituted by Alyeska, all tanker captains taken breath tests an hour before sailing. Crew members suspected of consuming alcohol are also tested and any with blood alcohol content of .04 percent or greater are denied access to the terminal and their vessel.

A state-certified ship's pilot must be on board all tankers transiting between Bligh Reef and the Valdez Marine Terminal. A federally-licensed pilot or two licensed deck officers must be on watch on the bridge while the vessel is under way between Bligh Reef and Seal Rocks. Federal law also now limits the number of hours crew members may work on U.S. flag vessels, to reduce the risk of fatigue-induced accidents.

Alyeska

Merger of spill prevention and response teams makes sense for Port Valdez and Prince William Sound

by Jim McHale, Manager
Ship Escort /Response Vessel System

Just about everyone agrees that having as many trained emergency personnel as possible at the site of a train wreck or a wildfire makes good sense. Prevention of such disasters is



Jim McHale

key, but in the case of an accident, or an event like the recent San Fernando Valley earthquake, being able to quickly respond with trained, experienced personnel is the only way to save lives and protect the environment.

In November 1993, the Valdez Marine Terminal On-water Oil Spill Response Group merged with Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.'s Ship Escort /Response Vessel System (SERVS). Some parties saw the merger as an attempt to downsize the oil spill prevention and response force in Port Valdez and Prince William Sound.

It's important to note at the outset that no layoffs of oil spill prevention and response personnel have occurred, or are planned. Alyeska has added personnel dedicated solely to oil spill prevention and response each year since 1989, and will continue to support dedicated staffing to ensure the company has the right number of fully trained personnel to meet the state and federal requirements throughout its operations. This commitment keeps the company in almost daily contact with the U.S. Coast Guard, Alaska Department of Environmental

“...no layoffs of oil spill prevention and response personnel have occurred, or are planned. Alyeska ... will continue to support dedicated staffing to ensure the company has the right number of fully trained personnel...”

— Jim McHale

Conservation (ADEC) and the citizens of the region.

Alyeska's concern for providing enough resources, both human and material, for spill prevention and response in Port Valdez and the Sound is one of the reasons this merger decision was made. It makes sense to cross-train personnel so they feel equally at home working on either side of the bay, and thereby increase the number of men and women qualified to prevent and respond to spills anywhere in Port Valdez and the Sound.

Before the merger, terminal crews were assigned to boom tankers and respond only to spills close to the terminal. Since the consolidation they are gaining valuable experience while they undergo SERVS

mandatory training, which includes learning the operation and response strategy of the large off-shore skimmers, emergency response vessels and other equipment at SERVS.

Terminal oil spill workers can now be called to respond to an incident in the Port or the Sound, whether it's the mobilization of the Solomon Gulch Hatchery Protection Plan, operation of major spill recovery equipment aboard the barges, or working with local fishing vessels for nearshore response.

It also makes good business sense to consolidate Alyeska's oil spill prevention and response personnel under one department rather than two. SERVS and the terminal oil spill crews now report to a senior level manager in Alyeska's Environment, Health and Safety Division who is fully responsible and accountable for on-water spill prevention

and response.

All on-water spill response inventory, training, warehousing of materials and maintenance of equipment are now conducted within a single division. Such efficiency only enhances the oil spill prevention and response effort in the Sound.

The manager of ADEC's Prince William Sound District Office said in a November 1993 letter to the Valdez Vanguard newspaper that his department “views this as a positive step ... instead of two spill response organizations there is now one group that will handle any marine spills at the terminal or in the Sound.” The merger has also won approval from the U.S. Coast Guard.

Change can be hard to get used to, but consolidating oil spill prevention and response crews in Port Valdez and the Sound is a change for the better. It just makes good sense.

Surprise drill called in Sound

The first major unannounced spill drill in Prince William Sound was called Jan. 19 by the U.S. Coast Guard and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). The purpose of the drill was to test the response capabilities of Alyeska, its Ship Escort Response Vessel System (SERVS) and the unified incident command in the event of a major oil spill from a tanker in Prince William Sound.

The drill began at 4:30 am with the announcement to SERVS that an outbound laden tanker had struck an unknown submerged object and was spilling oil about four miles northeast of Naked Island. During the response, Alyeska and SERVS deployed

more than 18,500 feet of boom with the assistance of 43 fishing vessels and trained response crews from Valdez, Cordova, Chenega, Tatitlek and Whittier.

In a press release issued two days after the drill, Coast Guard Commander Bill Hutmacher gave Alyeska high marks on the exercise.

“Alyeska's timely and efficient response operation during this major unannounced drill, called in the middle of winter, vividly demonstrates the high level of oil spill response preparedness they have achieved,” he said. “Especially noteworthy was the on-water operations by SERVS personnel and the 43 fishing vessels working with them.”

RCAC praises McHale

The chief of Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System (SERVS) has received high praise from RCAC. In a late January letter to Alyeska President David Pritchard, RCAC complimented Jim McHale for his efforts to foster a better working relationship between SERVS and RCAC.

McHale was credited with improving communications with RCAC's Oil Spill

Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee, in part by spear-heading a team building session in November for the OSPR Committee and SERVS managers.

McHale was also praised for his “commitment and efforts towards continual improvement” in ship escorts and response capabilities and his responsiveness to citizen concerns.

RCAC recertification application to be available for public review

RCAC's application to the U.S. Coast Guard for recertification as the advisory council for Prince William Sound will be available for public review by the end of April.

The RCACs for both Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet are certified as the advisory groups to represent the communities and interests in the vicinity of the oil terminal facilities in their respective areas. Such regional advisory groups are required

by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, in order to “to foster a long-term partnership among industry, government and local communities in overseeing compliance with environmental concerns in the operation of crude oil terminal and oil tankers.”

RCAC's current certification expires June 30, 1994. The application for recertification is due April 29. Copies will be available to the public as soon as the application has been submitted.

Potpourri

Conference to mark five-year anniversary of Exxon Valdez

An international conference on prevention, response and oversight will be held March 23-25, at the Regal Alaskan Hotel in Anchorage, to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Conference participants will examine changes since 1989 at the local, state and federal levels and look ahead 20 years to determine whether oil development and shipping are headed in the right direction.

Each day of the conference will focus on one topic: Prevention (Wednesday), response (Thursday) and oversight (Friday). Each day's program will include presentations by researchers, scientists, environmentalists, regulators and citizens. Discussions at the end of each day will focus on

where we are, how we got there and where we go from here.

RCAC will present papers on citizen oversight, changes in oil spill prevention and response since 1989, and the citizens' perspective of spill response. RCAC Executive Director Stan Stanley will moderate the discussion on oversight.

The conference is sponsored by the Alaska Sea Grant College Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Cost of the conference is \$50 per day, \$75 for two days, or \$100 for all three days. Additional information is available from the Alaska Sea Grant College Program, P.O. Box 755040, Fairbanks, AK 99775-5040. Phone: (907) 474-7086.

RCAC



Intent

A presentation at the RCAC Board of Directors' meeting in December captures the attention of board members (from left) Mike Gallagher (City of Valdez), Dennis Lodge (City of Seward), Jim La Belle (Chugach Alaska Corp), Wayne Coleman (Kodiak Island Borough), Darrel Olsen (Community of Tatitlek) and Bill Walker (City of Valdez).

Publications, reports available

Publications

- 1993 "Year in Review," an overview of work and activities undertaken in 1993. Available in mid-March. (Ref: #5.9.511.93)
- "Then & Now: Changes since the Exxon Valdez oil spill" examines improvements in oil spill prevention and response, and areas of concern. (Ref: #5.9.517)

**Consultants' Reports
(Oct. 93-Jan. 94)**

- "Contingency Plan Program Protocols," standardized guidelines for reviewing oil spill contingency plans. Authors: Michelle Straube, Randy Bayliss and Theresa Svancara (Ref #2046)
- "Historical Analysis of Oil Spills from Tankers 1960 and 1965-1993," analysis of 63 oil spills. Author: Walt Parker. (Ref. #2058).
- "The Nickel-Per-Barrel Conservation Surcharge: A Review of Legislative History and Intent," review and analysis of the 470 Fund. Author: Eco-Systems (Ref. #2057).

**Advice & Comments
(Oct. 93-Jan. 94)**

- Comments to Alyeska and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) on the third edition of the 1993 Valdez Terminal Oil Spill Prevention and Response Plan. (Ref. #A/C 6522 and 6521) 1/21/94.

- Comments to ADEC on Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Control Regulations (Ref #A/C 6519) 1/18/94.
- Comments to the U.S. Coast Guard and ADEC on the State/Federal Unified Contingency Plan (Ref #A/C 6518) 12/30/93.
- Comments to Alyeska and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on the National Contingency Plan proposed rule (Ref: #A/C 6516 and 6517) 12/16/93.
- Comments to ADEC and Alyeska regarding removal of Barge 450-8 (Ref #A/C 6515 and 6514)
- Comments to the state Division of Governmental Coordination regarding Alaska Coastal Management Program review of area contingency plans (Ref: #A/C 6512) 11/17/93.
- Comments to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration regarding modification in the navigation chart of approach to Hinchinbrook Entrance. (Ref: #3504) 12/15/93.
- Recommendation to U.S. Coast Guard that its activity tracking system be updated more frequently. (Ref: #A/C 3503) 12/15/93.
- Comments to the U.S. Coast Guard on measures to reduce oil spills on single hull tankers (Ref: #A/C 3502) 12/2/93.
- Comments to ADEC on Alyeska's ballast water treatment facility splitter box sampling plan (Ref: #I/C 9521) 10/4/93.
- Comments to ADEC on proposed revisions to Alaska water quality standards (Ref: #A/C 9522) 11/11/93.
- Comments to EPA and Alyeska on proposed discharge of wastewater (Ref: #A/C 9523 and 9027) 11/22/93.

Stalemate over selection of environmental group

The RCAC Board of Directors continues to be deadlocked over which of two environmental groups should be designated to fill an empty seat on the board. The two groups – Chugachmiut Environmental Protection Consortium and Oil Spill Regional Environmental Coalition – are vying to fill the vacancy left when the National Wildlife Federation resigned from RCAC last summer.

Chugachmiut Environmental Protection Consortium is a coalition of four villages in Prince William Sound - Tatitlek, Chenega Bay, Port Graham and Nanwalek - organized primarily to address environmental problems in the Chugach region. The consortium is funded by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Oil Spill Region Environmental

Coalition consists of five environmental groups: the Prince William Sound Conservation Alliance, Alaska Marine Conservation Council, Alaska Center for the Environment, Kodiak Conservation Network and Kodiak Audubon Society. The coalition was organized initially for the purpose of seeking the RCAC appointment.

Since its inception in 1989, RCAC has designated a seat on the board for an environmental group. The National Wildlife Federation held the seat until it withdrew last summer, citing a shift in priorities from oil issues to wetlands preservation.

The appointment of a new environmental group requires 12 votes to obtain the 2/3 majority required for a bylaw amendment. Neither group has pulled more than 8 votes in ballots taken in September and December.

What we are

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (RCAC) 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 currently has 17 member organizations, including communities impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill, a Native regional corporation and groups representing fishing, aquaculture, tourism and recreation interests in the impact area.

RCAC is certified under the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990 as the citizen advisory group 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.

Mission

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

Board of Directors

Carl Marrs	Alaska State Chamber of Commerce
Stan Stephens	AK Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Assoc.
Larry Evanoff	Community of Chenega Bay
Jim La Belle	Chugach Alaska Corporation
Margy Johnson	City of Cordova
Michelle O'Leary	Cordova District Fishermen United
Tex Edwards	City of Homer
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Wayne Coleman	Kodiak Island Borough
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Tom Copeland	Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp.
Ivan Widom	City of Seldovia
Dennis Lodge	City of Seward
Darrel Olsen	Community of Tatitlek
Mike Gallagher	City of Valdez
Bill Walker	City of Valdez
Carol Till	City of Whittier

Executive Committee

Stan Stephens - President
Michelle O'Leary - Vice president
Ivan Widom - Secretary
Bill Walker - Treasurer
Wayne Coleman - Member at-large

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