Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

# The Observer

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

VOLUME 5, NO. 4/DECEMBER 1995

## Inside this issue



# Interim escorts still in question

More than a month after a November 15 deadline for improvements in escort capabilities, it was still not clear whether operational changes instituted by oil shippers would be enough to satisfy state concerns.

On Nov. 1, the shippers presented their proposal for meeting the requirement for enhanced escort capabilities. The shippers cited changes instituted in 1994, additional communications procedures, training programs and drills.

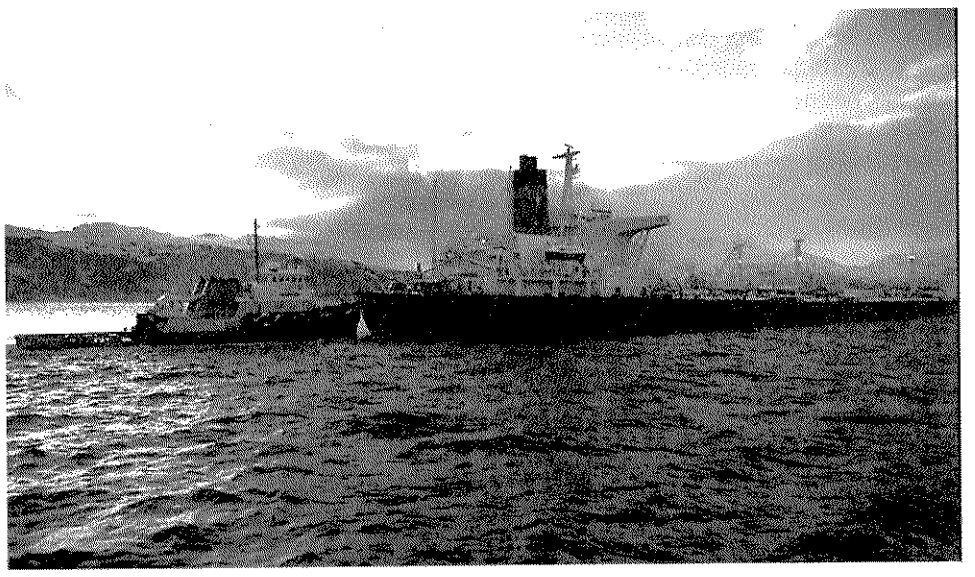
At press time, the ball rested squarely in the court of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). The agency could decide that shippers are doing enough – through various training and exercise programs, and new operational procedures – to make winter transits of laden tankers safer.

The question comes down to whether sufficient escort improvements can be realized short of bringing in a different type of tug, called a tractor tug. In Alaska, shippers use only conventional tugs, along with Escort Response Vessels (ERVs) to escort laden tankers through Prince William Sound. The shippers have consistently maintained that tractor tugs are not needed in Alaska, even though they are used in other Pacific Coast ports.

Tractor tugs are more maneuverable than conventional tugs of comparable power and can bring a disabled tanker under control more quickly under certain circumstances. While tractor tugs do not outperform conventional tugs of comparable power in all situations, computer simulations indicate that tractor tugs would provide a greater margin of safety in the TAPS trade.

The shippers don't agree. They maintain that the same margin of safety can be achieved through other means and they have presented that case to ADEC as their answer to escort enhancements. Their case rests in large part on some important assumptions about how long it takes the tanker crew to recognize a steering or propulsion failure and relay a call for assistance to the escorting tug. RCAC believes those assumptions are overly optimistic.

*Continued on Page 6*



A laden tanker is accompanied by a tethered tug and an Emergency Response Vessel (ERV) as it departs Port Valdez. Tethering of escort tugs to the stern of the tanker was one of the changes instituted in 1994, to make tanker traffic safer. A tethered tug is in position to respond more quickly if the tanker becomes disabled. (Photo courtesy SERVS)

# RCAC meets with Governor Knowles

Governor Tony Knowles, together with top members of his cabinet and staff, met with RCAC's Executive Committee, Dec. 6, in Anchorage.

Topics discussed included interim measures to enhance escort capabilities through Valdez Narrows, recent vapor leaks and maintenance problems at the Valdez Marine Terminal, and the potential for increased risk of oil spills from exports of North Slope crude.

"It was a wonderful opportunity to discuss some important issues," Board President Bill Walker said. "The Governor and his people know what and who RCAC is and they seemed to appreciate what we do. We took it as a good sign that the Governor gave us nearly an hour, which was more than they had scheduled."

In addition to Knowles, the group consisted of Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer; Commissioner Gene Burden, Department of Environmental Conservation; Deputy Commissioner Martha Rutherford, Department of Natural Resources; Jim Ayers, Governor's Chief of Staff; and Marilyn Heiman, Special Assistant to the Governor.

The RCAC contingent consisted of Board President Bill Walker, Michelle Hahn O'Leary, C. Kelley Weaverling, Tex Edwards, Wayne Coleman, Stan Stephens, Executive Director Stan Stanley and Deputy Director Marilyn Leland.

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# People

## Volunteer Profile: James Steward

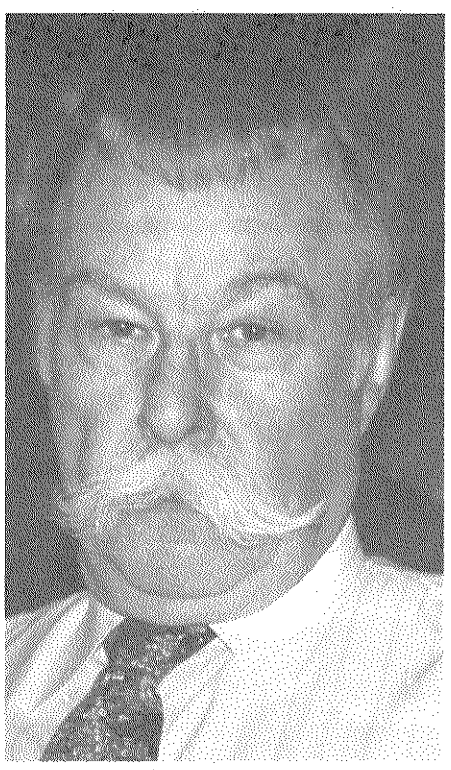
The walrus mustache should be taken as a hint. This guy is no staid academician. Indeed, Jim Steward is something of an anomaly on RCAC's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) because his curriculum vitae is sprinkled not with degrees and scientific papers, but with field experience.

"I do have a different perspective from others on the committee," Steward says. "I try to lend the practicality of my experience to the committee and its work." Steward has no shortage of practical experience.

Besides spending the summer of 1989 on spill-related projects for Veco, building bird and sea otter rehabilitation centers, Steward spent five months supervising a multi-national spill response crew in Saudi Arabia after Desert Storm. He has studied bioremediation and worked with a group of Russians to translate and edit their work in biological treatment of contaminated soil. Steward is now employed as a senior estimator for Veco Construction.

Yet when it comes to his work on SAC, Steward's interest has been captured by the Long Term Environmental Monitoring Program (LTEMP), which collects and analyzes baseline data on the presence of hydrocarbons in the spill impacted area.

"I'd like to see the monitoring program continue as long as oil flows," Steward said. "It's important to have baseline measurements – not just to measure potential damage – but more important, it allows us to monitor on-going changes in our environment. In the lower 48, we're starting to see a backlash against environmental protection. In part, I feel this is due to so many situations where it is difficult or impossible to measure environmental impacts. This is one place where we can. I firmly believe we need sane and responsible monitoring of our environment; RCAC is helping to provide that."



James Steward

Steward has high praise for RCAC's LTEMP contractor, Kinnetic Laboratories. "We've worked very closely with them and I'm very impressed with the work they've done for us. That's why the SAC keeps recommending that their contract be continued," Steward said.

> "I try to lend the practicality of my experience to the committee and its work." – Jim Steward

Although he has spent some extended periods outside the state on various work projects, Steward has been on SAC since March 1992.

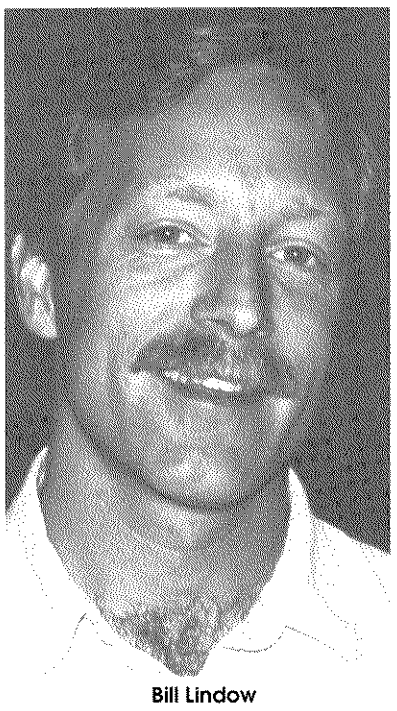
"Sooner or later, you have to give back to the community," he said. "That's what volunteering at RCAC is for me; it's trying to give back something. I think RCAC is well-founded and it is contributing to the overall responsiveness of industry. Just like I, as an individual, need to give something back, so does industry. I think that we're seeing more of that attitude within the oil industry."

## Lindow represents PSWAC on board

Commercial gillnetter Bill Lindow has been appointed to the RCAC Board of Directors to represent Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC).

Lindow, 36, was formally seated Sept. 28, at the RCAC board meeting in Cordova. He replaced Tom Copeland. Lindow has gillnetted out of Cordova for 18 years. Before that, he crewed for his father in the Cook Inlet drift gillnet fishery. When he is not fishing, Lindow lives in Anchorage, where he was born and raised.

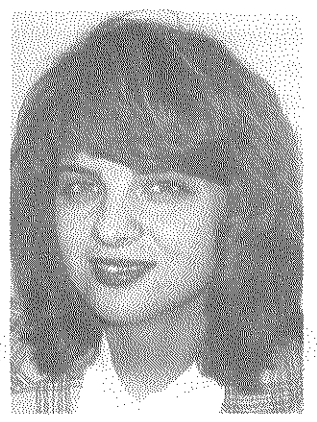
Lindow is currently serving his second three-year term on the PSWAC Board of Directors. In the 1980s and early '90s, he was also active on the board of the Copper River Fishermen's Cooperative.



Bill Lindow

## Staff, committee changes

Lisa (Tomrdle) Ka'aihue has been promoted to Program Coordinator for the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). She began her new position December 14.



Lisa Ka'aihue

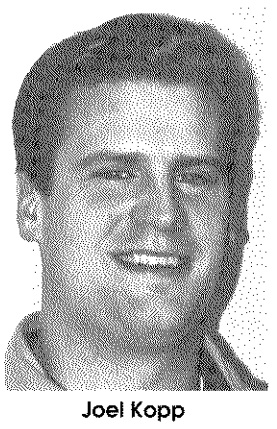
Ka'aihue has been project assistant with the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee since October 1993. Before joining RCAC, Ka'aihue was a subsistence resource specialist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

She graduated cum laude from the University of Oregon in 1989 with a bachelor's degree in political science. She has also done graduate work in oceanography, marine affairs, economics and ocean politics at the School of Marine Affairs, University of Washington.

Ka'aihue was raised in Kenai. She crewed aboard the F/V Enterprise out of Cordova every summer from 1987 through 1990.

* * *

Joel Kopp has been named Project Assistant at RCAC's Valdez office. Kopp comes to RCAC from the Kenai Peninsula, where he coordinated the Green Star Program for the Kenai, Nikiski and Soldotna Chambers of Commerce. As project assistant, Kopp works with other Valdez staff on a wide range of projects and issues. He started October 23. Kopp was born in Soldotna and went to Anchorage schools. He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration, with a minor in journalism, from the University of Alaska Anchorage.



Joel Kopp

Prior to his work with the Green Star Program, Kopp was employed as development director at a private school in Soldotna.

Kopp is married and has one son. He has commercial fished for many years, including two years as skipper of a 32-foot Bristol Bay gillnetter. Kopp's interests include writing, song writing and music composition.

* * *

**Suzie Kendrick** has been elected chair of the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Committee. Kendrick, of Soldotna, has been on the TOEM Committee since March 1994.

* * *

The Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee has three new members: **Jerry Brookman** of Kenai, **Jon Dahlman** of Seward and **Lee Majors** of Valdez.

Brookman is a retired electronics technician. He has spent many years as a volunteer on environmental and resource issues.

Dahlman is a fisherman and is employed by Alyeska's SERVS (Ship Escort Response Vessel System, an arm of Alyeska Pipeline) as Fishing Vessel Administrator for Seward.

Majors is director of the training department at Prince William Sound Community College. In 1995, he retired from the U.S. Coast Guard, where his last assignment was chief of port operations at MSO Valdez.

# JPO to Alyeska: 'Speed up pipe replacement'

Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. has been "requested" to replace all the carbon piping in its vapor recovery system by the end of October 1996, or provide engineering justification for not doing so.

The directive came in a Dec. 4 letter from the Joint Pipeline Office, which is composed of state and federal agencies with pipeline oversight responsibilities. The JPO also told Alyeska to develop and implement a better corrosion monitoring program to more accurately gauge corrosion rates, and develop a better temporary patch to use when leaks do occur.

Alyeska had until Dec. 29 to respond to the JPO about its schedule for pipe replacement. Alyeska requested a 30-day extension. Jim Luchini, Power/Vapor Business Team Leader at the terminal, told RCAC Dec. 7, that Alyeska was evaluating the feasibility of replacing all the carbon steel piping in 1996. Luchini said there could be some safety and environmental implications because it would require a longer shut-down of the vapor recovery system.

Alyeska had taken a more aggressive approach and accelerated its three-year pipe replacement schedule, in response to a rash of corrosion-caused leaks over the past 18 months. The JPO concluded on the basis of its own investigation that because of inadequate monitoring there isn't enough information to determine whether Alyeska's schedule would prevent further leaks before all of the carbon steel piping is replaced.

The JPO report noted that the ultrasonic examination program used to detect thinning and weakened sections of the piping has declined significantly. In 1993, 165 grids or locations were examined, compared to six grids in 1995.

Alyeska has said it will use a combination of inspection methods to better predict weak sections of pipe before they sprout leaks. It is not clear whether the new inspection program will satisfy JPO's concerns.

The problem is corrosion of the carbon steel piping used to transport vapors to "blanket" the head space in the huge tanks where crude oil is stored at the terminal. Pipe corrosion in the vapor recovery system is not new. According to Luchini, it has been a problem in the piping almost from the start.

Alyeska has been warned of thinning pipe walls due to corrosion at least since 1986, but the leaks have continued and the frequency seems to be increasing. In the past 18 months – since mid 1994 – 15 to 20 leaks have been reported. Luchini said Alyeska's policy has always been to monitor the corrosion rate and replace sections of pipe before corrosion actually penetrates the pipe.

"The monitoring program isn't perfect because we can't inspect the entire piping system. We have to rely on inspections of representative samples," Luchini said. Alyeska had previously used just ultrasonic testing to gauge corrosion rates. In 1995, they tried two additional inspection methods: real time radiography and internal visual inspection using a video camera. Each inspection method has limits but Luchini said using all three should provide a more complete picture of the piping, which is mostly above-ground.

"Our goal is to be far enough ahead of the corrosion curve to replace pipe before penetrations occur," Luchini said. "As our inspection data gets better, we'll get closer to that."

A big factor in the problem is that Alyeska did not stop using carbon steel piping until November 1994. Approximately 40 percent of the 27,000 feet of vapor system piping has been replaced over the years, according to Luchini, but only half of the new pipe was stainless steel. Carbon steel has a life of 15 years at most, and a 1986 Alyeska engineering report gave carbon steel a life of only four years. Because carbon steel was used, some of those sections that had been replaced before must be replaced again. Since November 1994, Alyeska has been using only stainless steel – which lasts approximately 50 years – for replacement pipe, Luchini said.

The vapor system piping extends through the west tank farm, the vapor system plant, and the east tank farm. So-called "high pressure" piping – maintained at 10 pounds per square inch – conveys vapors to the tanks, while lower-pressure lines carry vapors away from the tanks, as needed. Most of the leaks occur in certain sections of the higher-pressure pipes. Leaks in the low pressure line are actually more dangerous because they can suck oxygen into the pipe, making conditions ripe for explosion.

To mitigate the risk, nine oxygen analyzers have been installed in the low pressure system to monitor oxygen levels and shutdown the system should oxygen levels rise above a safe limit.

As of December, Alyeska had identified nine sections, two of which are in the low pressure line, that need replacing because of recent leaks.

The nine sections with current leaks have been patched and will be permanently replaced with stainless steel in 1996, Luchini said. One of those sections had been targeted for replacement in 1995, but a conscious decision was made to delay the work until related engineering decisions were made about a new vapor control system that will capture emissions from tanker loading.

> "Our goal is to be far enough ahead of the corrosion curve to replace pipe before penetrations occur. As our inspection data gets better, we'll get closer to that." – Jim Luchini, Alyeska

Alyeska is currently performing quantitive risk assessments on both the low pressure and high pressure piping systems. According to Luchini, preliminary results indicate that leaks in the high pressure piping do not pose a significant hazard to employees or the terminal because of the relatively low energy, the small amount of vapor escaping, and the fact that any leaked vapors quickly dissipate in the open air. The exception to that is in areas where vapor pipe runs through the vapor control plant building. Under the 1996 work plan, any carbon steel piping in the plant building will be replaced with stainless and some of that piping will be re-routed.

Alyeska's work plan – which now could change – called for replacing 5,900 feet of pipe in 1996, another 4,300 feet in 1997, and 1,100 feet in 1998. If that schedule stays on track, 65 percent of the piping – including all of the high pressure piping – will have been replaced with corrosion-resistant stainless steel by the end of 1998.

## Lab tests inconclusive

Laboratory tests on core samples of very deep sediments found petroleum hydrocarbons, but the tests were inconclusive about the source. Additional tests will be conducted to determine whether the hydrocarbons are from the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

In an effort to identify the source of the hydrocarbons, the lab compared relative quantities of markers from the recent samples with reference markers for Katalla oil, which is a natural seep, and oil spilled by the Exxon Valdez.

The comparisons yielded different results. In one, the sample was in the same range as Katalla oil. In the second comparison, the sample did not clearly match the range for either Katalla or Exxon Valdez oil. In the third comparison, the sample more closely matched the range of Exxon Valdez oil.

In summary, the consultant's report said, "deep sediment cores collected at the five sites indicate accumulations of petroleum hydrocarbons originating from a natural source, such as the Katalla Seep. A clear signature of EVOS oil is not present in the core samples; however, the cores may contain trace levels of Exxon Valdez oil."

Samples of deep sediments were taken in mid-July near Knight Island, which was heavily hit by the 1989 spill, to determine whether oil spilled from the Exxon Valdez sank and accumulated on the sea bottom. There was no visual evidence of oil in the sediment samples.

RCAC commissioned the special sampling because of anecdotal reports by fishermen of oil in their nets. Curiosity was further piqued by information about the fate of oil spilled in the Braer incident of 1993.

In the case of the Braer, which dumped 20 million gallons of light crude off the Shetland Islands, data indicate that approximately 30 percent of the oil went to the bottom in a 30-mile radius. Episodes of high energy wind and wave action followed both the Braer and Exxon Valdez oil spills.

The sediment samples, taken by gravity core, were about four inches wide and one-half meter to one meter long. They were taken from water depths of 175 meters to 695 meters.

Information about the fate and effects of oil spilled from the Exxon Valdez would be useful in the event of any future spills.

# Response and planning

## Tanker contingency plans still under appeal

Attempts will be made through the winter to resolve disagreements over oil spill contingency plans for tankers carrying North Slope crude from Valdez.

Tankers must have state-approved contingency plans in order to operate in state waters. The plans are being challenged by the City of Cordova, the Kodiak Island Borough, the United Fishermen of Alaska, and individual citizens.

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) approved the plans, with conditions, in October. Contingency plans describe steps taken to prevent an oil spill and the response that would be mounted in the event of a spill. The plans are lengthy, detailed documents that spell out training programs, how response equipment will be procured and activated, and response strategies, among other things.

The tanker plans are being challenged on several grounds, including protection for sensitive areas important to Cordova and Kodiak, the amount of equipment required, and use of best available technology in tanker escorts. The City of Cordova protests that the plans do not have response planning for the Copper River Flats and Delta.

Kodiak Island Borough is challenging the plans because there is no protection plan for Kitoi Bay Hatchery, which was spared from the Exxon Valdez only because local citizens deployed their own logs and boom to keep out the encroaching oil.

Linda Freed, Community Development Director for the Kodiak Island Borough, said the Borough believes the state should require shippers to develop and implement a hatchery protection plan.

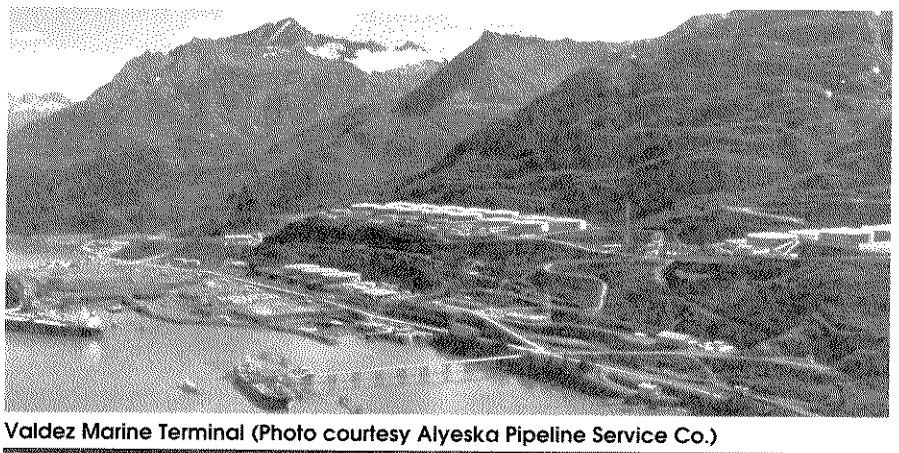
"We believe that another catastrophic spill will impact Kodiak and we think protection for Kitoi Bay Hatchery is essential," Freed said.

"We find it remarkable that there are protection plans and equipment for all the hatcheries in Prince William Sound, even those that weren't impacted by the 1989 oil spill. Yet there is nothing for Kitoi Bay," she said

Meeting Dec. 5 in Anchorage, the Alaska Coastal Policy Council – the state panel that decides certain coastal issues – gave the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) four months to work with communities, groups and individuals who have appealed the ADEC's approval of the oil spill contingency plans.

RCAC is not a party in the appeals, but has provided information and technical assistance to its member organizations and individuals from the region who are appealing the plans. RCAC will also sponsor a two-day session to try to help resolve some of the disagreements.

Two shippers are also appealing because ADEC attached conditions requiring oil spill trajectory simulations in the Copper River Delta/Flats, and information about response equipment delivery times to Kitoi Bay. The shippers argue that the state does not have jurisdiction to require response planning for those areas because, they maintain, any spill affecting those areas would not occur in Prince William Sound.



Valdez Marine Terminal (Photo courtesy Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.)

## Terminal spill plan heads toward public review

The state is preparing to take public comment on Alyeska Pipeline Service Company's oil spill prevention and response plan for the Valdez Marine Terminal. The 60-day public comment period is tentatively scheduled to begin in January. Public hearings will be held in Valdez and Anchorage, according to Bonnie Friedman, of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC).

Friedman, in a Dec. 7 presentation to the RCAC Board of Directors, said reviewers – which include RCAC representatives – have raised seven major issues and another five issues that originated in the Prince William Sound tanker plans.

The major issues are:

- Adequacy of fire prevention and control
- Appropriateness of using in-situ burning as a spill response option in Port Valdez
- Documentation of training programs
- Adequacy of secondary containment structures
- Measures taken to address ground slope stability in the event of seismic activity;
- Additional information referenced in the plan; and
- Estimated amount of spilled oil that would reach open water

Five issues of public concern raised during review of the Prince William Sound tanker plans also carry over to the terminal plan. They are use of dispersant, application of best available technology for spill response, identification of sensitive areas, training of wildlife recovery personnel and lessons learned from the Eastern Lion incident.

The contingency plan for the terminal initially began in the fall of 1993. The process has been complicated by several factors, among them on-going revisions to the plan, correction of deficiencies at the terminal identified in several audits, reorganization at ADEC, and public concerns raised in review of the tanker plans that also apply to the terminal plan.

The review process includes several stages of consideration in which a state agency, the Division of Governmental Coordination, first determines whether the plan contains all of the information required by regulations. After the plan is deemed complete, it is evaluated for adequacy.

An RCAC consultant is reviewing the plan for RCAC's Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee. Pending RCAC review, the comments will be sent to the Division of Governmental Coordination and Alyeska as the plan moves through the public review process.

## Questions abound on dispersants use

Everybody seems to agree on one thing when it comes to dispersants: some important questions have yet to be answered definitively. What effect do dispersants, and the dispersed oil, have on marine life? Do dispersants even work in cold water?

Questions about dispersants and policies for using them were discussed, at times heatedly, at RCAC's quarterly board meeting, Dec. 7 and 8, in Anchorage.

Dispersants are chemicals used to disperse spilled oil into the water column. Unlike mechanical methods of spill response which physically remove oil from the water, dispersants basically separate and sink the oil particles. At best, dispersants are effective only in certain conditions. They don't work on weathered oil or in flat calm seas, since some mixing action is needed. In addition, since dispersants are applied by airplane, winds over 25 or 30 knots can preclude accurate application.

Dispersants are considered one of the "tools in the tool box" available to spill response managers.

However, dispersant use must be approved by state and federal on-scene coordinators, and they have guidelines to follow for deciding whether dispersants are appropriate. Under the guidelines, dispersants are to be approved only if mechanical recovery is deemed inadequate.

The topic was raised because of RCAC concerns about the decision-making process in oil spill drills, most recently during a SeaRiver drill in September. The concern is that regulators may be too willing to approve dispersant use, even in sensitive areas.

"I worry that drill scenarios act as a conditioning for the real thing," RCAC director C. Kelley Weaverling said. "It gets everybody used to okaying dispersants."

U.S. Coast Guard Cmdr. Greg Jones defended the decisions made during the SeaRiver drill and pointed out that a subsequent request to use dispersants on the second day of the drill was turned down.

"We've been working the dispersants use policy issue for years," he said. "From the outside, it might appear cavalier. It's not. I think the expectations for mechanical recovery are too high in Alaska. . . In this drill scenario, mechanical recovery would not have been adequate."

RCAC is expected to pursue outstanding questions about dispersants, their effects and effectiveness, in work plans being developed for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1.

# Spill Prevention

## RCAC kicks in more for tanker risk assessment

The RCAC Board of Directors has agreed to contribute an additional $200,000 to help pay for a major study of tanker traffic in Prince William Sound. That raises RCAC's contribution to the Prince William Sound Risk Assessment Project to $550,000.

The total budget for the project, including a peer review by the National Academy of Sciences, is $1.95 million. Prince William Sound shipping companies are contributing $1.25 million and the U.S. Coast Guard is contributing $150,000 to help pay for the peer review.

The mission of the risk assessment is to improve the safety of oil transportation in Prince William Sound. The project will provide research-based information specific to Prince William Sound about the relative risks of oil transportation, and measures that might be effective in reducing those risks. The study is expected to produce credible, scientific information for decisions by different agencies and industry.

The project will identify and rank the risks of oil transportation in Prince William Sound, identify and rank measures to reduce the risks, and develop a plan for managing (i.e. reducing) the risks associated with oil transportation in Prince William Sound.

The project includes examination of the myriad factors that contribute to risk, such as marine traffic, weather, human error, mechanical failure and other external environmental variables. Information is being gathered through interviews and questionnaires, review and analysis of existing reports and data, and computer modeling.

In simple terms, the researchers are looking at the system as a whole, analyzing the risks and how those risks result in casualties, and evaluating measures to reduce risks. The work also includes comparing the risks and comparing the possible risk reduction measures.

Scientists from three institutions are working on the project, which has attracted national interest because of its potential application for other water ways. The methodology will be peer reviewed by the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council Marine Board.

**Public input**

As the tasks are completed, communities and organizations in Southcentral Alaska will have the opportunity to review them and provide feedback to the Steering Committee. Interested individuals are asked to work through those communities and organizations, which include towns and cities in Prince William Sound, lower Cook Inlet and the Kodiak Island Borough.

The project is guided by a Steering Committee composed of Prince William Sound shipping companies, the U.S. Coast Guard, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co., the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and Prince William Sound RCAC.

The project began in spring 1995. The peer review should be completed by the end of summer 1996.

## Prospect of oil exports generates questions

Questions about potential implications of exporting North Slope crude are expected to be raised when the U.S. Department of Commerce holds public hearings in January. The only hearing in Alaska is tentatively scheduled for Jan. 8, in Anchorage. Other hearings will be held in Washington, D.C., Seattle and Bakersfield, California.

Over the past year, as lifting of the export ban became imminent, RCAC quietly registered concerns with Alaska's Congressional delegation and with Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer, about the change in tanker routes and ships that an export trade might bring. RCAC took no position on the lifting of the export ban.

The primary question is whether spill prevention and response measures would be needed to match any changes in tanker routes and vessels. For example, areas such as Kodiak could be at greater risk from oil spills depending on the route of tankers bound for Asian ports.

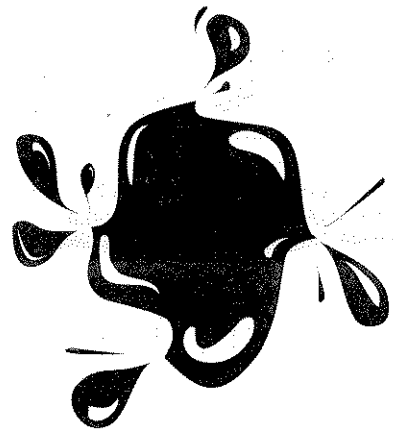
The export trade could also use larger ships, which would increase the potential volume of oil spilled in a catastrophic casualty.

RCAC fears a new traffic pattern could increase the risk of an oil spill that could affect Seward, Homer, Kodiak and portions of the Gulf of Alaska, including the Copper River Delta.

In a Nov. 30 letter to shippers and Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer, RCAC President Bill Walker disagreed with assertions that currents would move oil spilled outside Hinchinbrook Entrance away from land.

"In fact, the currents in that area are counterclockwise and could take the oil directly into the Kodiak area or the Copper River Flats, rather than out to sea. In the event of a major catastrophe outside Hinchinbrook Entrance, there would be a high likelihood of an incident similar to the *Braer* in Scotland two years ago which resulted in a total loss of the cargo," the letter said.

Tanker routes would not necessarily change significantly, however. Officials at BP shipping



say tankers with their product would likely follow established lanes 15 miles past Hinchinbrook Entrance, proceed southwest between Montague and Middleton Islands, and turn south when abeam of Middleton Island. From there, they would sail 300 miles south of Hinchinbrook before turning westward. BP says its ships would stay at least 200 miles off shore from the Aleutians.

RCAC also asked whether steps are being considered to investigate the potential introduction of non-indigenous species into Alaskan water through ballast water picked up in other areas. Non-indigenous species can create serious problems for the native ecosystem. The introduction of non-indigeous species through ballast water is a huge problem in the Great Lakes, and a lesser but still significant problem in San Francisco.

Even without an export trade in North Slope crude, the issue needs to be addressed in Prince William Sound, since tankers now in the TAPS trade may be introducing species picked up elsewhere. The prospect of exports brings the question into higher relief because ships used in the export trade might take on ballast water from a broader range of sources.

Shippers' stated plans to exchange ballast water before tankers enter the Sound may not be enough to address the problem, for two reasons. First, not all of the original ballast is removed in an exchange – indeed, the amount of ballast water exchanged varies from tanker to tanker. Second, some species can cling to the tank sides and thus remain in the tank even if all the ballast is exchanged.

## Fire prevention task force reactivated

CPR has been administered to a dormant task force in hopes that the group will come back to life to develop a comprehensive marine fire response plan for Port Valdez and Prince William Sound.

In response to an RCAC request, the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Office in Valdez has agreed to lead the reactivated Fire Protection Task Force. As of mid-December, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. and SeaRiver had also agreed to participate.

The earlier task force met from March 1992 to July 1994. It included representatives from BP, SeaRiver, other industry groups, the U.S. Coast Guard, the City of Valdez and RCAC.

"We believe that a current and integrated planning effort is essential to ensure the best possible response to fire emergencies at the terminal, on a tanker at berth and on a tanker underway," RCAC Executive Director Stan Stanley wrote to task force members.

RCAC is also asking the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) to join the task force.

As before, it would be a joint working group organized to investigate fire prevention and response issues at the terminal, on board tankers and on tankers underway. RCAC would advise the task force of citizens' concerns and retain a consultant for expert advice on fire preparedness and response issues.

RCAC hopes that the revived task force will consider using as a model a fire response plan developed for the Port of Hampton Roads, Virginia. The plan there is a coordinated effort of all federal, state and local agencies responsible for the handling of marine fire emergencies. The Hampton Road plan was developed to promote a coordinated response and ensure a mutual understanding for a potential disaster that would involve the cooperation of numerous parties.

# Miscellany

The tug Sea Voyager pushes at the stern of a tanker during tethering exercises conducted last summer and fall. Lessons learned from the drills were incorporated into a new Vessel Escort Response Plan, which took effect Nov. 15. The shippers cited the drills in its case to ADEC that escort enhancements have been instituted. RCAC supports the drills but disagrees with the conclusions drawn from them. (Photo courtesy SeaRiver Maritime.)

## Interim escorts in limbo

*Continued from Page 1*

The fate of a laden tanker disabled in the Valdez Narrows – where the threat of grounding is most immediate because of the narrow passage – depends on the play of numerous variables.

These variables include external factors such as wind speed and wave height; operational considerations, such as tanker speed and escort configuration; human performance (the time it takes the tanker crew to recognize the problem and alert the tug that help is needed); and the capability of the tug, itself.

A two-year study (1992-1994) of disabled tanker towing showed how those factors affect the ability of a tug to save a disabled tanker. The study showed that 7000 HP tractor tugs could keep a disabled tanker from grounding in situations where a conventional tug could not.

The same study demonstrated the limits of escort procedures and equipment that had been used. In response to the study findings and new federal escort requirements, shippers and the Coast Guard instituted operational and procedural changes, and new transit limitations, including new weather limits.

In early October, the ADEC made additional escort enhancements a condition of its approval of the shippers' oil spill contingency plans. In a letter to the shippers, ADEC said improvements were needed because under severe conditions, existing escorts would not be able to save a very large tanker disabled in the Valdez Narrows.

Furthermore, it said, "escort improvements are available, can be obtained and readily applied to assist very large crude carriers transiting the Valdez Narrows." The shippers were to have their escort enhancements in place by Nov. 15.

The escort enhancements were to have been an interim measure for the winter, pending completion by the end of summer 1996 of a risk assessment study. The risk assessment is expected to produce valuable information about the relative risks of tankers and tanker escorts, and mitigating measures to reduce those risks.

The ADEC now has authority to require the use of "best available technology" in tanker escorts, but there are questions about exactly what that means.

ADEC agreed to hold off enforcing the "best available technology" standard pending the risk assessment study, so long as the shippers took steps to improve tanker escorts this winter. It is the adequacy of those steps that is now in question.

## Mental health pilot project starting up

Six strategies for helping communities recover from technological disasters will be field-tested in Cordova, beginning in February.

The strategies include radio and newspaper series, pamphlets, in-service training and crisis intervention. The strategies will be conducted as a pilot project under RCAC's Mental Health Demonstration Project, a multi-year program intended to help communities plan for and mitigate the mental health impacts of a major oil spill or other chronic technological disaster.

Beginning in August 1996, the pilot project will be evaluated and the results incorporated into a guidebook for use in other communities impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

The project is led by Dr. J. Steven Picou, of the University of South Alabama. Picou had done extensive research in the community impacts of technological disasters, including the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

The pilot programs are:

• Community education radio program - A series of six radio programs, 30 to 60 minutes each, will address technological disasters, their consequences, and development and management of coping skills.

• Community education leaflets - Leaflets will be distributed throughout the community on topics such as "Managing Anger," "Coping with Uncertainty" and "Overcoming Depression."

• Community education newspaper series - A series of nine articles are being written on different aspects of technological disasters, their impacts and coping strategies. The articles will be submitted to the Cordova Times to run over a period of four to five months.

• In-service training - Local mental health professional staff and community providers will be given information on short and long-term impacts of disasters and intervention training for future oil spills.

• Peer listener program - Local volunteers will be trained to help family and friends with on-going problems related to the oil spill. The fishing community will be targeted for the pilot program, because fishers are at high risk of on-going problems.

• Talking Circle - This will be a two-day event involving the Native community in Cordova, organized around the traditional grieving cycle.

The pilot programs were developed in close consultation with mental health professionals and providers, as well as local community leaders, fishing groups and Native organizations.

## Ecosystem database available on CD

The National Biological Service is offering free of charge a geographic information system (GIS) database for the Prince William Sound/Copper River ecosystem on compact disk.

The database was created by compiling information from existing state and federal resource agency databases into a unified geographic framework by Ecotrust, Conservation International and Pacific GIS. Publication support was provided by Pacific GIS and the National Biological Service.

The CD contains GIS databases in ARC/INFO format, a User Guide, documentation for each layer, and ARCVIEW1 software for DOS PCs to allow query and display of the data. The ARC/INFO databases can be used on both UNIX and DOS platforms. Microsoft Windows is needed to run ARCVIEW1.

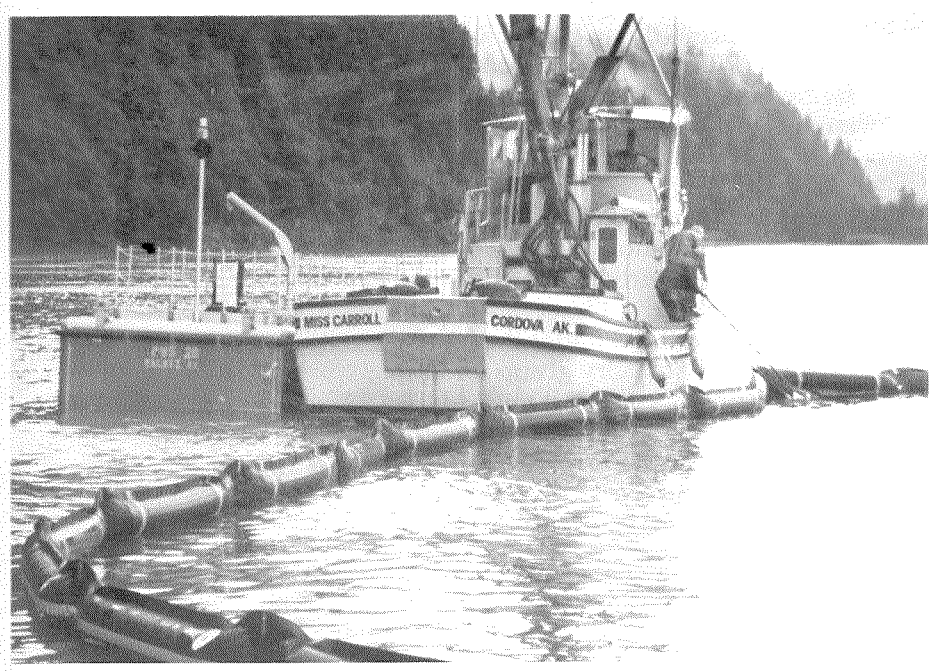
The recommended minimum DOS PC system requirements are 486/33 with 12 MB RAM.

The CD contains 35 coverages, including: anchorages, bathymetry, coastline, camping beaches, environmental sensitivity index, eagle nest locations, ecosystem boundary, elevation, hydrography, land cover, land ownership and status, latitude and longitude grid, shoreline oiling from fall 1989, trans-Alaska pipeline system, protected areas, USGS quadrangles, roads, streams, rivers, seabird colonies, section and township boundaries, towns, and vegetation.

To obtain a copy of the Prince William Sound/Copper River Integrated Ecosystem GIS, contact Karen Oakley, National Biological Service, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503. Phone (907) 786-3579, FAX (907) 786-3636. On the internet: karen_oakley@nbs.gov

Alyeska

# Fishing vessel training puts fishers in new role




Crew members of the Miss Carroll, out of Cordova, position boom. At left is the mini-barge used to temporarily store recovered oil and water.

The Alaskan Spirit deploys boom and a skimmer during spill response training conducted last fall by SERVS.

Early October is a time for many things — raking leaves, putting snow tires on, but at SERVS (Ship Escort Response Vessel System) it meant Fishing Vessel Training. As part of the Tanker Spill Prevention and Response Plan, Alyeska has contracted approximately 300 Fishing Vessels (F/V) to respond in the event of a TAPS tanker spill in the Prince William Sound region. Each year, those fishing vessel crews go through oil spill response training.

The training takes place in two parts: classroom and on-water. The classroom portion includes the required HAZWOPER and safety training, and equipment training. Basic training is offered to newly contracted vessels, and advanced training to returning crews. Some crews are returning for their fourth or fifth year.

"It's great. We're working with crews that we've worked with before. They know the basics. We can cover advanced training," said Rich Long, SERVS F/V Coordinator. This year the crews involved in the Level 2 training receive more specialized training on near shore equipment and response strategies.

The crews also participate in a table top exercise to respond to a near shore incident at the end of the classroom portion.

"We're giving them the opportunity to be Strike Team Leaders, and decide where they would deploy equipment given the situation," said Long. "Then the next day, during the on-water portion, they deploy the equipment according to their plans. It gives a real meaning to classroom section."

This year's fall sessions have included a total of 99 vessels and 262 fishers. The table top exercises have been exceptionally well received with fishers reporting that it has made all the previous training come together for them.

Having fishing vessels on contract provides Alyeska with a fleet of available vessel resources, should an incident occur in Prince William Sound. The Response Plan states that Alyeska will use "vessels of opportunity" to respond. The training provided by Alyeska insures that Alyeska will have an adequate number of "vessels of opportunity" and that the crews are knowledgeable in Alyeska's response strategies.

An additional benefit has occurred since Alyeska started contracting with fishing vessels. "Alyeska has become a real presence in these communities. We've established relationships with the people," Long says. "We're acting as a good neighbor to these communities."

# Short takes

### Terminal firefights beat competition

A crew of firefighters from Alyeska Pipeline Service Company's Valdez Marine Terminal won the firefighters competition held in Anchorage in October. Teams from around the state competed in the daylong event. The 1995 win was the fourth year in a row that the Valdez Marine Terminal has won the statewide competition. The firefighting team included Steve McCann, Bill Reiswig, Brian Major, Doug Fleming, Lloyd Street and co-captains Boyd Norton and Jean Shoop.

### Safety milestone

Alyeska contractor Price-Ahtna passed the five-year mark without a lost-time accident.

### Scholarships funded for Alaska Native students

Alyeska has funded a total of $600,00 in scholarships for Alaska Native students at 12 educational programs in the state. The scholarships will assist Native students preparing for careers ranging from engineering to vocational occupations.

Alyeska is providing the scholarships as part of its commitment under Seciton 29 of the Grant of Right-of-Way, which states in part that Alyeska will train Alaska Natives " . . .to qualify them for initial employment in connection with the pipeline system and for advancement to higher paying positions thereafter."

# Employee Concerns Program opens doors

The Employee Concerns Program has officially opened its doors to employees and contractors. The Employee Concerns Program is an independent department that responds to concerns from employees or contractors on issues of the integrity, quality or safety of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System.

The program began an official roll out to supervisors in early October. "We hope that every employee or contractor can go to their immediate supervisor first with any concern that they have," said Harry Kieling ECP Manager, "but we know that sometimes they don't feel comfortable doing that or don't feel they've gotten an adequate response. That's when the Employee Concerns Program can help." The identity of individuals expressing concerns will be kept confidential upon request.

"The Employee Concerns Program is available to address any concern about safety, quality, environmental or integrity issues pertaining to TAPS," said **Ted Owen**, Business Practice Officer. "We will also focus on intimidation and harassment concerns that may be raised."

"This is a structured program, with trained ECP representatives to listen to and resolve issues internally," continued Owen. "Our expectation is that all individuals will feel free to raise issues and get them resolved at the lowest level. I hope that supervisors and group leaders will recognize that ECP can be a resource to them in that regard."

**Alyeska will not tolerate harassment, intimidation, discrimination, or other acts of retaliation against any employee for identifying any concern to either supervision, management, the Employee Concerns Program or the Joint Pipeline Office.**

The Employee Concerns Program offices are located on the first floor of the Bragaw I. Please visit, or call at ext. 7504, or 1-800-455-7558. The Employee Concerns Telephone line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

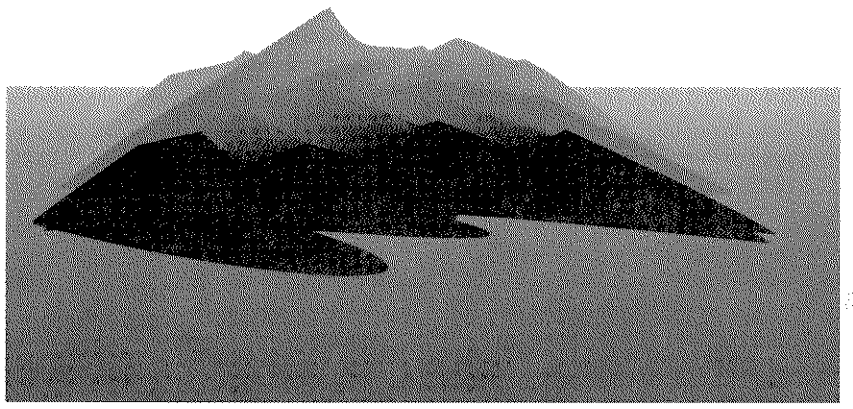
Employees and contractors for TAPS may also direct concerns to the Joint Pipeline Office (1-800-764-5070) or other governmental agencies.

# RCAC

## '96 Board meetings scheduled

RCAC's quarterly meetings of the Board of Directors will be held March 14-15 in Valdez, May 2-3 in Chenega (tentative), September 26-27 in Larson Bay (tentative), and December 5-6, in Anchorage.

The annual meeting in March is always held in Valdez and the December meeting is always in Anchorage. The spring and fall meetings rotate among other communities.



## RCAC, Alyeska agree on funding

RCAC will receive $2.1 million for each of the next three years under an agreement approved by the RCAC Board of Directors, Dec. 7. RCAC is funded through a contract with Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.

Under terms of the original contract approved in February 1990, Alyeska will continue to fund RCAC so long as oil flows through the pipeline. However, the funding level is renegotiated every three years.

The new funding agreement represents a slight drop in funding. For the three years ending Dec. 31, 1995, RCAC received $2.22 million per year.

## Publications, reports available

***Copies of most documents are available to the public free of charge. A handling fee will be charged for unusually large documents and for requests of more than 10 documents. The following are recent publications and reports.***

### Publications

- "Oil Spill Prevention: Improvements in Tanker Safety," September 1995. (Ref. #5.5.5005)
- 1994 RCAC "Year in Review." (Ref. #5.9.511.94)
- "The Observer," RCAC newsletter, published since 1991. (Specify issue).

### Consultants' Reports

- VSP-Tug Escort Simulations in the Prince William Sound Area. Author: MSCN, 11/9/95. (Ref. # 3.5.3014)
- Sixth Survey Report, Long Term Environmental Monitoring Program. Author: Kinnetic Laboratories, Inc. July/95. (Ref. #4.5.4022B)
- Fifth Survey Report, Long Term Environmental Monitoring Program. Author: Kinnetic Laboratories, Inc. 4/26/95. (Ref. #4.5.4022A)
- "Disabled Tanker Towing Study: Aquamaster Data Consultant Review." Consultant: George Randall. 3/17/95. (Ref #3.5.3015)

### Advice & Comments (1995)

- Comments to State of Alaska on proposed changes in regulations for marine pilots. 12/11/95. (Ref. #A/C 3.2.3505)
- Comments to U.S. Coast Guard on Draft Guidelines for Classifying Oil Spill Removal Organizations. 11/30/95 (Ref. #A/C 2.2.2555)
- Comments to ADEC on the Cook Inlet Sub-Srea/Regional Plan. 11/30/95 (Ref. #A/C 2.2.2556)
- Letter to ADEC regarding SeaRiver drill exercise of out-of-region equipment acquisition. 11/9/95 (Ref. #A/C10.2.2027)
- Letter to regulatory agencies regarding decision about dispersant use in SeaRiver drill. 11/9/95 (Ref. #A/C2.2.2533)
- SeaRiver Drill Comments, 9/18/95. (Ref. #A/C10.2.1026)
- Volume 1, Comments to ADEC on the PWS Tanker Spill Prevention and Contingency Plans and ADEC's Draft Findings. 5/19/95 (Ref. A/C #2.2.2547)
- Volume 2, Comments to ADEC on the PWS Tanker Spill Prevention and Contingency Plans and ADEC's Draft Findings. 5/31/95 (Ref. A/C #2.2.2548)
- Comments to ADEC regarding response to request for comments on water quality standards and petition filed by the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund. 4/19/95 (Ref. A/C #1530)
- Supplemental comments to EPA on proposed rule for marine tank vessel loading. 4/6/95. (Ref. A/C #1532)

## Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

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 has 18 member organizations, including communities impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill, a Native regional corporation and groups representing fishing, aquaculture, environmental, 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.

*The mission of RCAC is citizens promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers.*

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