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Oil exports ok includes steps to keep nuisance species out of Sound

To reduce the chances of introducing aquatic nuisance species into Prince William Sound, tankers in the newly-opened export trade must exchange clean ballast in deep ocean prior to entering the Sound. Ship logs will record ballast exchange and will be checked periodically by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The ballast water exchange requirement is one of four conditions imposed by President Clinton April 29, when he formally approved export of Alaska North Slope crude. Federal officials told RCAC that the requirement for deep-ocean ballast water exchange was a direct result of RCAC's recommendations.

The three other conditions imposed by the President relate to transit routes, tracking equipment and inspections. Tankers exporting Alaska North Slope crude oil must remain outside the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone once they leave Prince William Sound. Exporting tankers must be equipped with satellite communications systems to

permit the Coast Guard to monitor their position, and they must be inspected annually, in accordance with Coast Guard policies and procedures.

Congress had already required that crude exports be carried in U.S.-flag tankers with U.S. crews.

Aquatic nuisance species – also called "non-indigenous species" – can create serious problems for the native ecosystem. Introduction of aquatic nuisance species through ballast water is a huge problem in the Great Lakes, and a growing problem in San Francisco Bay.

According to scientist Andrew Cohen at the University of California at Berkeley, 231 species of introduced organisms have been identified in the San Francisco Bay Area. He estimates that a new organism shows up and establishes itself about every 15 weeks.

Questions about the presence and potential of aquatic nuisance species introduced via tanker ballast water are only now beginning to surface in Prince William Sound. Nobody knows

A bill in Congress would tackle growing problem of non-indigenous aquatic species. See story, Page 5.

whether aquatic nuisances have been introduced in the Sound from tankers picking up ballast water from other ports.

Experts speaking at an annual conference in March on aquatic nuisances warned port officials to act before aquatic nuisances show up.

The issue caught the attention of RCAC last year when RCAC began to look at the implications of Congress' decision to remove the 23-year-old ban on export of North Slope crude. The prospect of exports brought the question into higher relief because ships used in the export trade will likely have taken on ballast water from a broader range of sources.

Ballast water exchange is only part of the solution to keeping aquatic nuisances out of Prince William Sound. It is not likely to provide the complete solution, since organisms can remain on tank sides, in sediments on tank bottoms, and on the hull of vessels. Although mid-ocean exchange is mandatory, a ship's master is never required to take a risky action. Severe weather and sea conditions in the Gulf of Alaska may prevent some tankers from exchanging ballast water in the name of safety.

Nor is there a guarantee that foreign ballast water exchanged in mid-ocean will stay outside Prince William Sound, since counterclockwise currents in Hinchinbrook Entrance and the Gulf of Alaska could carry it directly into Prince William Sound. Alternate methods for dealing with foreign ballast will need to be developed for those situations. Possibilities include

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Zebra Mussels are wreaking havoc on the Great Lakes, as they attach to anything and everything, even beer cans. The Zebra Mussel is not indigenous to the region; it was introduced through ballast water. Photo courtesy Minnesota Sea Grant.

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People

Volunteer Profile: Gordon Scott

Gordy Scott was first appointed to RCAC's Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee in 1992.

Like many of the people associated with RCAC, Gordy was personally impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Although he started out gillnetting for salmon, he moved into shrimping and long-lining. By 1989, pot shrimp in Prince William Sound was his main fishery. Normally a three to five month fishery, the Sound's shrimp fishery was open a total of three weeks in 1990; it has been shut down ever since with little hope for reopening for several more years.

During the spill response, he towed boom for three months and towed a skimmer for another three months.

"I feel that my experience out there collecting oil – and seeing what an uphill battle spill response is – is valuable to RCAC. I've seen a lot of oil go in and out of boom. There's a lot that can be done right and there's a lot that can be done wrong. The main thing I'm still interested in is strong prevention

and strong response. Prevention, we can't work hard enough on it, we can't stop working on it. Response, we can't stop improving that, either."

"As time goes on, the people who were involved in '89 are slowly drifting away. We won't have that core of really experienced people. The main thing is I don't want to see laxness and complacency taking more hold. Yet, I see it happening. I see the response budgets being cut in SERV. I'm in the SERV fishing vessel response program. I see them backing off on training. We just need to keep pecking away at it. We need to keep a strong front."

"I do think the industry is a lot more responsive to our position than they were. That's a good thing. Before, the public didn't mean anything to them. RCAC has been able to force them to do some things they wouldn't otherwise do with just members of the public talking. . ."

Because of his oil spill work and RCAC experience, Gordy headed up a "mini RCAC" after the 1993

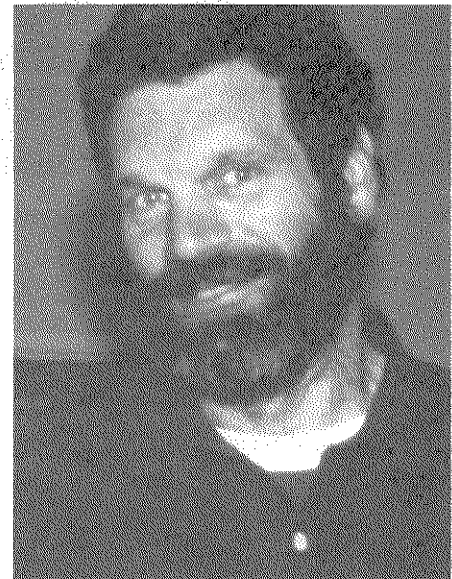
spill of pipeline jet fuel in Indian Valley. The task force provided local residents with an organized mechanism for participating in the response and advising response leaders. As such, it had a significant effect on the response activities.

Gordy came to Alaska in 1974 from Massachusetts, hoping to get work on the pipeline. He had a friend up here who thought he'd like Alaska. The friend was right. In his 22 years here, Gordy has done construction work and surveying, ski patrol, fishing and gold mining.

Gordy lives with his wife Elly and three young sons (ages 5, 3 and 1) in Girdwood, where Gordy works ski patrol and avalanche hazard mitigation at Alyeska Resort. He has done a fair share of glacier and mountain rescue and maintains an avalanche consulting business on the side.

Perhaps the strongest of his several passions is a "hobby" introduced to him by friend Norman Vaughn: digging out World War II planes in Greenland. In 1982, Vaughn got Gordy involved in a privately funded project to locate and recover World War II fighter planes abandoned in Greenland in 1942. Eight warplanes had been abandoned when they ran out of fuel. The crews were rescued, but the planes were left where they landed. Over the decades, the planes – six P-38s and two B-17s – ended up buried in an icecap, 260 feet down.

"This was a many-year problem. The first problem was locating the planes. We used radar, but it took a couple of years. The next step



Gordy Scott

was getting down to them and assessing their condition. Then, we had to figure out how to get them and eventually bring them home."

In 1992, Gordy headed up the team that recovered one of the planes, the only one to be recovered so far.

"In some ways it was like fishing. You knew they were there; you just had to develop a strategy for finding them and getting them out. We had to develop our own technology for getting 260 feet down into a glacier and getting the plane out. We melted a shaft down, then melted a cavern around the aircraft and took it apart and brought it up through the shaft piece by piece."

"It was not an easy project. The location and logistics were very difficult and very expensive. The satisfaction came from surmounting incredible odds to accomplish something."

"As time goes on, the people who were involved in '89 are slowly drifting away. . . I don't want to see laxness and complacency taking more hold. Yet, I see it happening."

– Gordy Scott

RCAC board approves internal changes

Several internal structural changes will be implemented this year, under a plan approved May 3, by the RCAC Board of Directors. Under the new structure, the standing technical committees will no longer sponsor and manage projects. Projects will be managed by staff, while the committees will work more directly with the council as technical and citizen advisors.

The committees – Oil Spill Prevention and Response, Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems, Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring, and Scientific Advisory Committee – will advise the Board of Directors on any and all issues the committees deem appropriate. The committees will continue to participate in the annual long range planning process. They could comment on staff recommendations and raise issues they think the council should address.

In the past, the committees have been routinely represented by staff

at meetings of the Board and the Executive Committee. Under the new system, the committees will represent themselves. Staff will continue to provide administrative support for the committees, but staff will not represent the committees nor act on their behalf.

Staff who have been program coordinators will become project managers, reporting and accountable to the Executive Director and the Deputy Director. They will not have committee responsibilities, other than providing information about projects of interest. Project managers will be able to tap individual committee members for assistance on specific projects. In that capacity, however, the volunteer would not represent the committee.

Most or all of the work products and recommendations would pass through management before it gets to the Board of Directors. That would be a significant change since currently, much of the committee work bypasses management.

The changes are intended to provide better accountability, establish a clearer committee role as advisory to the Board, clarify the overall structure of RCAC, and provide management with authority over all staff and work products. The changes are consistent with RCAC's gradual move over the last several years

toward project-specific orientation.

The Board also approved the addition of a community liaison position, working out of Anchorage. Project Manager Leann Ferry will move to the Community Liaison position July 1. The project manager position in Valdez will be upgraded to a supervisor in charge of the 5-member Valdez office.

Radio series to rebroadcast

A five-part radio series to help people deal with the psychological and social impacts of the Exxon Valdez oil spill will be re-broadcast on radio stations in Cordova and Valdez this summer and fall.

Cordova station KLAM will broadcast the five programs in July and October. Valdez public station KCHU, which also broadcasts in Cordova, Chenega Bay and Whittier, will run the programs in August and November.

A series of nine newspaper

columns dealing with those and related issues is available from RCAC. The Cordova Times began running the series in April; they will continue into August.

The radio and newspaper series are components of an RCAC projects called the Community Impacts Planning Demonstration Project for Mental Health and Coping Strategies.

RCAC retained J. Steven Picou, Ph.D., University of South Alabama, to head up the project.

Oil spill prevention

Tanker's off-track transit generates recommendations to prevent recurrence

State and federal regulators have proposed a series of measures aimed at keeping laden tankers on track as they travel through the Valdez Narrows.

The recommendations emerged from investigations by the U.S. Coast Guard and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) into the off-track transit of the S/S Kenai, Nov. 10, 1995.

It is generally agreed that the Kenai's transit was about 600 yards outside the optimum mid-channel trackline, taking the laden tanker within approximately 310 yards of Entrance Island.

While opinions differ about whether the ship was at serious risk of grounding, the Coast Guard and ADEC do agree on the need for changes. The Coast Guard report was issued in February; ADEC's report was released May 14.

Both agencies recommended that a standard approach to Valdez Narrows be developed, beyond the imaginary optimum trackline. An off-transit course will be recognized sooner if there is an

established "boundary" to the trackline. As a result, escorts and the Vessel Traffic Center would have a clear point at which to warn a tanker that its heading is off. Such a corridor has been identified.

In addition, the ADEC recommended the 5-knot speed limit through Valdez Narrows be reevaluated to determine whether it makes transits riskier because of reduced maneuverability. The 5-knot speed limit is directly related to the type of escort tugs used. Tugs now in service in Prince William Sound would likely not satisfy requirements for assist capability if the standard speed through the Narrows is more than 5 knots.

ADEC recommended steps to ensure that escort crews understand their responsibility to communicate and intervene if the tanker is off-course, and an independent evaluation of piloting and tanker bridge management procedures. ADEC also recommended the Coast Guard consider changes in how the Automated Dependent

Surveillance System (ADSS) is used, to more closely record and document tanker positions.

The Coast Guard recommended that Keystone Shipping, which owns and operates the Kenai, develop helmsman qualifications appropriate for the complexities of the transit, improve helmsman training, and give masters the flexibility to use their most qualified personnel during the most critical phases of a transit.

The Coast Guard also emphasized the value of "bridge team management" on all vessels. The concept of bridge team management is that personnel on the bridge work as a team, understand each others' jobs and maintain a big-picture perspective of the bridge. The Coast Guard report urged Keystone to use bridge team management on all its vessels, and suggested that Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System (SERVS) likewise train its escort crews in the principles of bridge team management.

The report also recommended shippers incorporate into their Vessel Emergency Response Plan training in steering a laden tanker with a tug tethered astern.

"There's a lot we can learn from the Kenai transit," RCAC Director Stan Stephens said. "So-called 'close calls' like this one allow us to learn more about preventing spills without having to suffer the consequences of an actual spill. The ADEC and the U.S. Coast Guard are both to be commended for their commitment to safer transits. That's what counts."

After the November 10 transit of the Kenai came to light, BP Shipping, which charters the Kenai, prohibited the pilot from sailing aboard its chartered tankers. The tanker owner, Keystone Shipping, made numerous changes, including reassigning the ship's four senior officers. The ship captain ultimately resigned.

Keystone now requires position fixes at various locations and has instituted an audit of bridge team management on all its vessels.

Alyeska

SERVS applies lessons learned from Kenai

Since the November 1995 S/S Kenai transit, several SERVS lessons learned meetings have occurred and resulted in changes to tanker and escort operations.

In addition to Alyeska, SERVS personnel, representatives from ADEC, ARCO, BP, Coast Guard, RCAC, SeaRiver and Southwest Alaska Pilots Association also participated in the meetings and discussed what additional actions or procedures would enhance the safe navigation of TAPS tankers.

A significant outcome of the session was the recommendation of a maneuvering zone for approaching the Narrows to clearly establish where the Coast Guard Vessel Traffic System and escort vessels should question a tanker's position.

Capt. Harry Scally, Southwest Alaska Pilots Association, took the lead in recommending the location and shape of the zone. The group agreed to implement the zone on Feb. 1, 1996.

A second lessons learned action item resulted in internal procedural changes at SERVS to emphasize proper documentation and notification to SERVS management of escorts that are non-routine or unusual.

"A primary function of the

escort vessels is to immediately question or warn a tanker if it appears to be heading into danger," said Capt. Tim Plummer, SERVS Manager. "SERVS management must also ensure that tank vessel masters and pilots understand and support this function of the escort vessels."

To ensure proper documentation, escort logs will include all details of an escort:

weather, ice observations and scouting, positioning of escort vessels, tether tug activities, tanker course changes, departure and entry from and to traffic lanes, radio traffic related to the escort, communications plan, submission of escort log to the SERVS duty office and any non-routine events.

Various detailed SERVS department operating procedures have been modified, implemented

Articles under the Alyeska heading are submitted by Alyeska and published unedited under a standing invitation from RCAC.

and discussed at weekly operations meetings, one on one discussions with escort vessel masters and documented with memorandums.

A compelling commitment to safety

Tidewater Marine Alaska, Alyeska's contractor for tanker escort and response, has successfully implemented a new Safety Management System that will improve safe escort of tankers in Prince William Sound. The American Bureau of Shipping certified compliance with the International Safety Management (ISM) Code. The Tidewater office received a Document of Compliance and all vessels operated by Tidewater in Alaska received Safety Management Certificates.

Although not mandatory for the class of vessels operated for SERVS, Tidewater Marine Alaska made the decision to pursue ISM

certification.

"We firmly believe that the principles in the ISM Code will lead us to better performance," said John Teague, Operations Manager for Tidewater Marine Alaska and one of the Unified Team Leads for Operations at SERVS.

Tidewater Marine Inc., a world-wide marine transportation company, selected Alaska to be the first division to achieve this international standard of safety management. Tidewater Marine Inc. operates in 50 different countries with a variety of work environments.

"The corporate plan is to implement this program world-

wide," said Teague. "We were chosen to be the first to implement it and now the corporation is going to learn from our implementation. I've already been in contact with our New Orleans office talking about implementation."

"The efforts Tidewater has demonstrated to enhance their safety performance is a tribute to the vessel personnel, shore staff and the corporation," said Tim Plummer, SERVS Manager. "It is a very compelling commitment to safety."

Tidewater Marine Alaska operates the Escort/Response Vessels, escort tugs, and an oil spill response barge in Prince William Sound.

Air and water

RCAC to resume monitoring of tanker ballast

RCAC will use its own funding to resume a program that monitors oily ballast water offloaded from arriving tankers at Alyeska's Valdez Marine Terminal.

RCAC Board President Tex Edwards said the monitoring program provides citizens of Valdez with confidence that tankers are not dumping untreatable substances into the Ballast Water Treatment Facility. That has been a concern in the past.

"We think it's in the shippers' interests, as well, to show that the tankers are complying with laws and regulations. This program will provide independent documentation that they are handling ballast water properly," he said.

A monitoring program was conducted from June 1994 through December 1995, through a joint effort of RCAC and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). The money to pay for it was left over from a legislative appropriation to RCAC in 1991 for a related project. Funds for the monitoring ran out in December.

The purpose of the program is to determine whether ballast water arriving at the terminal contains compounds not anticipated for treatment at the Ballast Water

Treatment Facility. Such compounds have rarely been detected in past analyses, and only then in very small amounts.

Because samplings are not announced in advance, it also serves as a deterrent against dumping of unauthorized substances. As before, RCAC will periodically sample the ballast water discharged to Alyeska's Ballast Water Treatment Facility from tankers calling at the terminal. Samples will be collected once or twice a month and analyzed by an independent laboratory to detect untreatable substances in the ballast water.

Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. had objected to the monitoring program, primarily because of concerns about how atypical results would be handled. Alyeska executives withdrew their objections after RCAC assured them that the standard protocol would be followed.

(Under the protocol, RCAC and Alyeska make good faith efforts to resolve problems, conflicts and sensitive subjects before they are publicized.)

RCAC and Alyeska agreed to review existing procedures for sample collection and laboratory work.

However, Prince William Sound



Tankers off load ballast water before taking on a load of crude. Photo by Tom Sweeney.

shippers continue to oppose the monitoring program on grounds that monitoring has not uncovered any problems. They argue that such monitoring is a regulatory function not appropriate for RCAC.

The RCAC Board of Directors considered the industry objections but decided to proceed with the program, anyway. The board concluded that it is in the public's interest to resume an independent monitoring program. The program will cost approximately \$30,000 per year.

Fears have been expressed in the past that the ballast water contains unauthorized substances which the BWTF may not be capable of treating and which

therefore could be discharged into Port Valdez.

When tankers are not carrying cargo, they carry sea water for ballast in the tanks to stabilize the vessel. In ships where the ballast is carried in the cargo tanks, the ballast water is contaminated by oil and other residue. When a tanker arrives at the Valdez Marine Terminal, the dirty ballast is off-loaded to the Ballast Water Treatment Facility, where it is treated and then released into Port Valdez.

One of RCAC's responsibilities, under both the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and its contract with Alyeska, is to monitor terminal and tanker operations that could affect the environment.

Environment

Congress considers frontal assault on aquatic nuisances

The National Invasive Species Act of 1996 could accomplish much of what RCAC recommended in its comments to the Department of Commerce on the environmental effects of lifting the export ban.

If passed in its current form, the act would provide for:

- ballast water exchange alternatives,
- sampling procedures to monitor compliance with guidelines,
- an ecological survey of Prince William Sound with an estimate of the effectiveness of ballast water management, and

- a demonstration program of ballast technologies and practices specifically including tankers that call in Prince William Sound.

The bill requires voluntary ballast water guidelines within one year of enactment. These include:

- ballast water exchange for vessels operating beyond the exclusive economic zone of the U.S.,
- alternative ballast water management methods including modification of the vessel ballast tanks and intake systems if determined to be as effective as

ballast exchange,

- record keeping on board each vessel with reporting of the precise locations and thoroughness of the exchange and any other information necessary to assess compliance with the voluntary guidelines,
- sampling procedures to monitor compliance with the guidelines,
- an assessment within three years of enactment to determine compliance by vessels with the voluntary guidelines,
- an assessment of the effectiveness of the voluntary guidelines.

The bill calls for the Secretary of the Interior to institute and enforce mandatory guidelines in regions where the voluntary guidelines are deemed inadequate.

The bill would require an ecological survey of Prince William Sound, among other places, to examine the attributes and patterns of invasions of aquatic nuisance species.

The ecological survey would estimate the effectiveness of ballast water management and other vessel management guidelines in

abating invasions of aquatic nuisance species.

The survey would include examination of the rate of, and trends in, ballast water discharge in the waters of Prince William Sound and assess the effectiveness of voluntary guidelines.

The bill provides for a ballast

Export regulations

Continued from Page 1

keeping segregated ballast on board or devising a way to exterminate organisms in segregated tanks.

Not all tankers coming into Prince William Sound carry their ballast water in segregated tanks. Some carry the ballast in non-segregated tanks, those used to carry crude oil. Ballast from non-segregated tanks, sometimes called "dirty" ballast, is contaminated with oil and must be treated at the Ballast Water Treatment Facility before it can be discharged into Port Valdez.

Mid-ocean exchange is not appropriate for dirty ballast, since it must be brought into the

water management demonstration program, to demonstrate technologies and practices to prevent aquatic non-indigenous species from being introduced in U.S. waters. The bill specifically states that this program would involve vessels that call in Prince William Sound.

terminal for treatment. The Ballast Water Treatment Facility removes hydrocarbons but is not designed to remove or kill organisms. Other approaches will have to be developed to make sure aquatic nuisance species are not introduced through the Ballast Water Treatment Facility.

President Clinton did not take all of RCAC's suggestions, but some of them would be addressed under legislation introduced in Congress earlier this year. (See story above).

RCAC's recommendations were conveyed in comments earlier this year to the U.S. Department of Commerce, which conducted an environmental assessment of lifting the export ban.

Response and planning

Comments due on spill plan for terminal

The public has until July 1 to submit comments on an updated oil spill contingency plan for the Valdez Marine Terminal. The plan describes steps taken by Alyeska Pipeline Service Company to prevent an oil spill at the terminal and respond to any spills that do occur.

In addition to the plan, the public may also comment on the draft findings of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). ADEC is reviewing the plan for compliance with state requirements for oil spill prevention and response, and for compliance with the Alaska Coastal Management Program, to ensure that the plan is consistent with local coastal plans.

The 60-day public review began May 1, and public hearings were to have been held June 13, in Anchorage, and June 18, in Valdez. RCAC is preparing comments on the plan; they may be available prior to the comment deadline.

ADEC has issued draft findings that identify 10 major issues, based on review of the October 1995 version of the plan. Some of ADEC's concerns have been addressed in the April 10 version, which is the version under review. The major issues, and ADEC's draft findings on them, are:

1) Fire prevention and control - ADEC has found that Alyeska's plan adequately addresses measures to prevent or control a potential fire hazard arising from an oil spill, and demonstrated ability to respond to an oil spill caused by fire or explosion.

RCAC argues that the regulations require that the plan include an analysis of the potential for a spill induced by fire or

explosion, and a description of actions taken to prevent such a spill. RCAC doesn't believe the current plan does that.

2) In situ burning - The contingency plan includes burning as a response option. ADEC does not believe sufficient back up work has been done to explain the environmental conditions and physical circumstances when burning might be appropriate in Port Valdez. Since Port Valdez is essentially in a basin, it frequently experiences inversions.

3) Training - The October plan did not adequately document training programs for personnel involved in operations that could result in a spill.

4) Secondary containment in case of a spill - Some secondary containment structures, especially those around crude oil storage tanks and the ballast water treatment tanks, are not sufficiently impermeable.

5) Slope stability in case of an earthquake - The October version of the plan needed additional measures to ensure that an adequate maintenance, surveillance and monitoring program is in place to maintain slope stability.

6) Compliance schedule for spill prevention requirements - Alyeska's schedule for coming into compliance in three areas - oil storage tank, secondary containment and facility piping - does not meet state requirements.

7) What information must be included in the plan and what information may be referenced - Reviewers requested guidelines to govern what information must be directly included in the plan, as opposed to information included by reference. Examples of the



Alyeska proposes burning as one of the options for responding to a spill at the terminal. The state wants more information about the factors that need to be considered for burning in Port Valdez. File photo by Lisa Ka'aihue.

information in question include manuals, supporting documents and standard operating procedures.

8) Estimate of spilled oil to reach open water - Alyeska asserts in the contingency plan that oil leaked from a tank rupture would not reach Port Valdez because the secondary containment would hold the spilled oil. ADEC disagrees. However, ADEC believes the plan does adequately address the response needed if oil does reach open water.

9) Status of contractors - The question is whether any of the contractors currently employed at the Valdez Marine Terminal should be identified by Alyeska as "Primary Response Action Contractors" (PRAC) as defined in state regulations. This is a complicated issue with some significant implications. "Response Action Contractors" (RAC) have a much higher level of protection

from liability than the plan holder, i.e., the party responsible for the spill. Therefore, a contract employee with RAC or PRAC status would be held to a lower standard of accountability for mistakes. On the other hand, the state requires more detailed documentation about RAC and PRAC equipment and personnel.

10) Cross over issues from Prince William Sound Tanker Plans - Five issues raised in the review of the tanker contingency plans are also issues in the terminal plan. They are use of dispersants, best available technology in response equipment, identification of sensitive areas, training and facilities for wildlife response, and lessons learned from the Eastern Lion oil spill of 1994.

The "reviewers" referenced by ADEC include RCAC. RCAC has participated in the plan review process since late 1993.

State backs off from nearshore response

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) will no longer maintain and operate equipment for oil spill response close to shore, unless funds can be found from other sources.

The state is asking local communities to take over operations and maintenance of equipment purchased in the last several years.

RCAC has expressed concerns that smaller communities will be left unprotected because they won't be able to afford the operating and maintenance costs.

Mayor Tim Volstad, who also serves as Seldovia's representative on the RCAC Board, said there is no way his community can shoulder the operating and maintenance costs for response equipment.

"There's no funding to do training, operation and maintenance, pay for even the mooring fees of the barge," Volstad said. "ADEC has offered the barge to us, but Seldovia only has 325 people. Our total city budget is \$330,000. We can't spend \$50,000 or more to maintain a response barge."

Seldovia is considered an excellent site for a spill response barge because of its geographic location in the path of both Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet, and because of the local fishing community's experience in spill response.

RCAC and the Cook Inlet RCAC are working with the City of Seldovia and the ADEC in an effort to solve the funding problem, while retaining the barge and other equipment in Seldovia.

Legislation

Tort reform fate uncertain

RCAC has urged Governor Tony Knowles to veto a tort reform measure because of fears that it would remove important incentives for spill prevention efforts.

HB 158 was passed by the legislature and will become law unless the Governor vetoes it. From RCAC's perspective, the most problematic part of the measure is the cap on punitive damages. It would limit punitive damages to \$300,000 or three times the actual damages, whichever is higher.

"The value of oil shipped is so substantial as to make the proposed penalties in this law meaningless. We are vitally concerned that this bill could negate important punitive damages and impact future mass disaster claims," RCAC wrote to the Governor.

"Without meaningful penalties, there is little incentive for

correcting practices which put the coastal and marine environments at risk, as well as the many livelihoods which depend upon them . . ."

A provision added to the bill late in the session has set off fears that the cap on punitive damages could apply to the \$5 billion jury award in the Exxon Valdez oil spill. The cap would apply to any suit in which a final judgement has not been entered.

A bill that would have provided broad immunity to companies that reveal environmental, health and safety violations died in committee.

The goal of SB 199 was to foster greater compliance with environmental, health and safety requirements by encouraging companies to find and correct problems, themselves. RCAC endorsed the concept but not the vehicle.

Back page

Board approves budget, work plan

RCAC's budget and workplan for fiscal year 1997, which begins July 1, was approved May 3, by the Board of Directors. The total budget for the year is \$3.3 million. Specific projects include:

- Long term environmental monitoring program (\$207,390) - An on-going project in which mussels and sediments are collected and analyzed to establish a hydrocarbon baseline for selected sites in Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska.
- Community Outreach - A new position was added to implement a community outreach program to increase awareness of RCAC and facilitate communication between RCAC and its constituents.
- Terminal maintenance (\$30,300) - Evaluate the effects of aging and facilitate preventive maintenance at the Valdez Marine Terminal.
- Ballast Water Treatment Facility (\$107,000) - This covers several projects, including a pilot study using caged mussels as a tool for monitoring hydrocarbons in Port Valdez; participation in a working group with regulators and industry on ballast water treatment facility issues; and evaluation of Alyeska's ongoing monitoring programs.
- Non-indigenous species (\$38,620) - Discourage introduction of aquatic nuisance species into Prince William Sound via tanker ballast water; encourage tanker practices that reduce the risk of non-indigenous species.
- Influent monitoring (\$30,000) - Resume a program of taking, unannounced, samples of ballast

water from arriving tankers.

- Dispersant use (\$57,000) - Re-evaluate RCAC's policy on the use of dispersants in oil spills. Promote environmentally sound decisions by regulators; research dispersant use on North Slope crude.
- In-situ burning (\$38,800) - Research the effects of burning as a spill response tool and present a draft policy on use of in-situ burning for the board to consider.
- Bioremediation (\$70,400) - Research the effectiveness of bioremediation as a response tool for spills of North Slope crude.
- Field implementation of contingency plans (\$31,700) - Monitor the field implementation, placement and testing of spill response equipment, with emphasis on out-of-region response equipment. Develop a monitoring plan to systematically analyze implementation, planning and testing.
- Glacier Study (\$114,000) - Study the effects of glacier movements and the potential for calved ice impacting tanker transportation.
- Community Impacts Planning - Social (\$51,143) - This project, called the mental health impacts demonstration project, has been in progress for several years. The purpose is develop methods for lessening the psychological and sociological impacts of an oil spill.
- Prince William Sound Risk Assessment (\$94,237) - Complete the study begun in 1995 to identify the risks of tanker transportation in Prince William Sound and risk reduction measures.

Projects underway; contracts issued

- Kinnetic Laboratories, Inc., was selected to conduct a fourth year of environmental monitoring for RCAC. Under the Long Term Environmental Monitoring Program (LTEMP), samples of mussels and sediments are collected from sites in Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska.
- A Seattle team, Iceberg Monitoring Project, has been awarded a contract to study iceberg calving from the Columbia Glacier and the potential impacts on tanker traffic.
- Tim Jones and Lance Gilpatrick, of Valdez, were selected to develop a program for monitoring the placement and testing of spill response equipment, as required by state-approved

contingency plans.

- A consultant retained to advise RCAC on fire protection issues will visit Alaska in June to conduct the on-site portion of its review. The firm of Hildebrand and Noll Associates, Inc., will review fire-related contingency plans and audits of fire-related procedures and systems.
- On another fire-related front, a new working group has been formed to address fire issues at the Valdez Marine Terminal and to work with RCAC's consultant. The Terminal Fire Working Group is composed of representatives of Alyeska, RCAC, the State Fire Marshall's Office, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, City of Valdez and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

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 commercial 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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