

The Observer

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AK Chamber of Commerce - AK Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Assoc. - Chugach Alaska Corp. - Cordova District Fishermen United - OSREC - PWS Aquaculture Corp.

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Council visit to French spill shows readiness still crucial

By Leann Ferry

Community Liaison

On December 12, 1999, the 590-foot tanker *Erika* broke in two and sank off France's Southern Brittany coast. It originally spilled 3 million gallons of what was described in the press as French No.2 Export Fuel, comparable to Bunker C, and was still leaking weeks after the sinking. The tanker was owned by Italy's Panship Management, registered in Malta, and chartered by the French-Belgian company TotalFina. The *Erika* was traveling from Dunkirk, France to Livorno, Italy.

John Devens and I arrived January 19th at the invitation of the Syndicat Mixte — an organization of communities damaged by the Amoco *Cadiz* oil spill of 1978. The main purpose of our trip was to visit communities and coastal sites polluted by the *Erika* oil spill. Our goal was to learn what we could about the cause of the spill, clean-up operations and plans for

See p. 7, **Erika**



Volunteers in Le Croisic, France, use buckets, scrapers and shovels to clean a beach drenched in oil from the *Erika* spill. Photo by Leann Ferry

Council and partners move ahead with research project into iceberg safety

By Alexander Kotlarov
Project Manager

Encouraged by the results of radar tests last fall, the citizens' council and several partners are continuing their efforts to find ways to detect and report icebergs in Prince William Sound.

More tests are planned, and a working group has been formed to locate vendors and funding sources for radar equipment that can pick up icebergs.

Icebergs are one of the most serious threats to tankers in the Sound and have been involved in two major accidents. The *Exxon Valdez* had left the tanker lanes to avoid ice when it hit Bligh Reef in 1989. And in 1994 an empty BP-chartered tanker hit an iceberg on its way into Valdez. Over \$1

million in damage resulted, though there was no oil spill.

In January of this year, freak weather conditions actually brought small icebergs known as "bergie bits" through Valdez Narrows and into Port Valdez, the body of water between Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.'s tanker terminal and the city of Valdez.

The council and its partners tested a UHF (Ultra-High Frequency) radar system at Busby Island last fall. It did better than conventional microwave radar at reducing the screen clutter caused by wind and wave conditions, according to a report by the Newfoundland-based Center for Cold Ocean Resources

See p. 4, **Radar**

Tanker spill plans get green light with grass-roots support of regional coalition

In early March, three major shipping companies dropped their opposition to key requirements in the latest oil-spill contingency plans for tankers that ply Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation approved the new plans in November of last year. In December, shipping subsidiaries of ARCO, BP and Exxon appealed eight requirements that the state added to the plans after the companies first submitted them in July 1998. After three months of discussions with the environmental conservation department, the citizens' council and other

stakeholders, the tanker companies on March 1 and March 2 dropped their appeals.

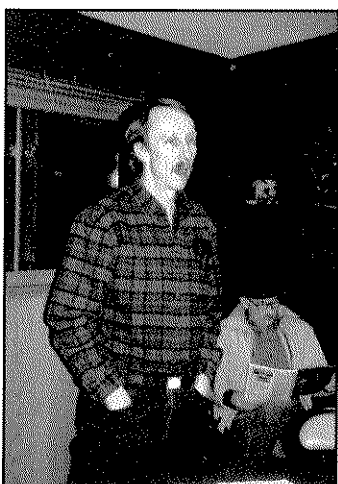
BP spokesman Ronnie Chappell said the appeal had given his company time to understand what the state wanted in imposing the new conditions. "We've

clarified what they mean and moved on," Chappell said.

After the appeals were filed, the citizens' council helped organize a 25-member coalition of communities and other stakeholders to support the requirements under appeal by the shipping subsidiaries of BP, ARCO and Exxon.

"The size and diversity of this coalition shows how important these safety

See p. 3, **Coalition**



Council board member Steve Lewis briefed the Seldovia City Council on the contingency plan appeals. Photo by Stan Jones.

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Volunteer profile

Fairbanksan Janice Wiegers is a long-distance member of committee

Of the nearly 40 members of the technical advisory committees to the citizens' council, none lives farther from salt water than Janice Wiegers.

Wiegers, a member of the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee (also known as TOEM), lives in Fairbanks, where she works for AGRA Earth and Environmental, an international engineering and environmental consulting firm. Fairbanks is 364 miles from Valdez, where the "terminal" in the committee's name is located.

But Wiegers' interest in the environment of Port Valdez and Prince William Sound isn't as odd as it might seem. In the mid-1990s, Wiegers worked with a consultant who was involved with permitting for the Ballast Water Treatment Plant at the Valdez tanker terminal, and with the ecological risk assessment that

followed.

"I learned a lot about the port and I was really interested in the council's role in the ecology of the area and in protecting the port," Wiegers said.

So when she moved back to Fairbanks, her childhood home, in 1997, it was only natural for her interest to continue. "I just kept wondering what was going on in Port Valdez, so I called up and asked if they needed any volunteers."

The council did, and Wiegers has been on the committee since early last year, normally participating by telephone.

"She's always at the meetings

and she has a lot of good wisdom to provide," said Valdez resident Sean Thurston, chairman of the committee.

"Her background with the risk assessment has been invaluable."

Wiegers works as an environmental scientist for AGRA, dealing mostly with soil and groundwater contamination issues.

Wiegers, 36, was born in Fairbanks and lived there until she was in her early 20s, but always figured she'd come back someday. "I decided if I didn't

do it soon I was never going to do it," she said.

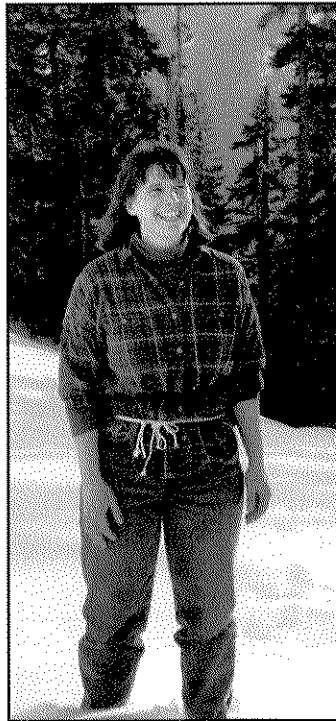
She lives with her cat, Mims,

and is into hiking, skiing and other outdoor pursuits. Last year she played on her company's city league soccer team.

She is spending the early part of this year on temporary assignment in AGRA's Portland office, but expects to be back in Fairbanks in April. Meantime, she continues to participate in TOEM meetings by telephone, the same as if she were still at home in Fairbanks.

As a TOEM member, she's become familiar with the fire-suppression and vapor-control issues that have come up over the past couple of years at the terminal.

"It's interesting to see how the whole thing is run and is managed and where the problems come in," she said. "I've always known of Alyeska, always heard of Alyeska, but this is a unique opportunity to really get in there and see how Alyeska works."



Janice Wiegers

Tanker companies criticize council in recertification

The citizens' council has again applied to the Coast Guard for recertification as the monitoring group for North Slope crude oil transportation in Alaska waters.

And the shipping subsidiaries of the three largest Alaska oil companies have again filed lengthy letters of complaint about the council with the Juneau-based Coast Guard officials in charge of this year's recertification.

The tanker companies of BP, ARCO and Exxon this year made many of the same criticisms they made last year during recertification. They allege confrontational behavior by the council or its members, complain about council participation in the development of oil-spill contingency plans, and assert that council residency policies fail to ensure that only Alaska residents sit on the board.

The council has prepared a response to the Coast Guard, noting that most of the criticisms were reviewed in detail last year

by the Coast Guard's Washington headquarters and found to be without merit. After last year, the recertification process was transferred to the Coast Guard's Juneau office, and it is the council's hope the agency's Alaska officials will also dismiss the complaints.

Recertification is required annually by the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990, passed in the hope of preventing more oil spills like the *Exxon Valdez* accident of 1989.

The three critical letters from the shipping companies were outweighed by an outpouring of supportive letters from Alyeska Pipeline Service Co., the Coast Guard's Valdez office, state and federal agencies, and interest groups and communities in the council region, which stretches from Cordova to Kodiak.

By Observer press time, the Coast Guard had not indicated when it expected to complete the recertification process.

THE OBSERVER is the free quarterly newsletter of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council. Except as noted otherwise, articles in the Observer are written by Stan Jones, Public

Information Manager. Questions and suggestions should be directed to him by mail to the council's Anchorage office, by phone to 907-273-6230, or by email message to observer@anch.pwsrccac.org.

Board's Lindow is appointed to serve on national panel on non-indigenous species

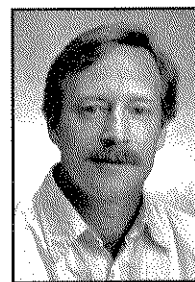
Cordova resident Bill Lindow, who represents the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp. on the citizens' council board, has been appointed to the federal Invasive Species Advisory Committee. He was one of 25 people picked for the panel by Bruce Babbitt, U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

The group is just getting organized and held its first meeting in January. It was set up under an executive order President Clinton signed in February 1999 to combat the problem of non-indigenous species invading the United States.

The committee will advise Babbitt and other federal officials on how to prevent such invasions, how to control them and how to minimize the economic, environmental and human health damage they cause.

The council has long been interested in the issue and has for several years conducted a research project on the whether non-indigenous marine species are

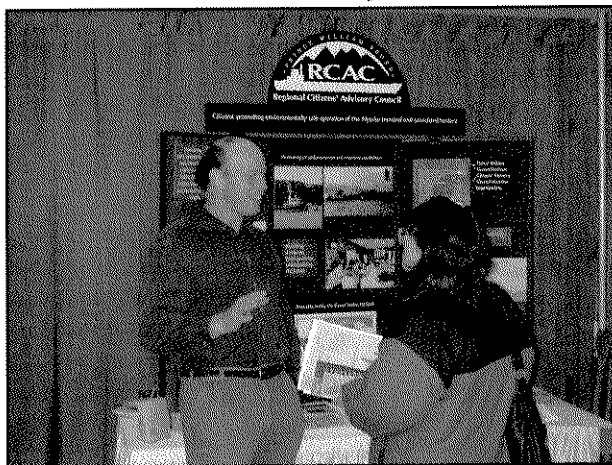
reaching Alaska in the ballast water discharged by oil tankers arriving in Prince William Sound. Marilyn Leland, a deputy director of the council, has for some time served on the Western Regional Panel of the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. That group was set up to help implement legislation Congress passed in 1990 and 1996 to control invasions by non-indigenous species, and to provide a forum for exchanging information on the effects of non-indigenous species and on how to combat their invasions.



Bill Lindow

Anchorage invasive species workshop set

The citizens' council and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service this month will co-sponsor a workshop on non-indigenous species. It takes place March 23-24 at the Hawthorn Suites in Anchorage. For information, contact Andrea Archer in the council's Anchorage office.



The citizens' council set up an information booth at the Alaska Forum on the Environment in Anchorage, February 7-11. Here, board member Paul McCollum greets a visitor to the booth. Also at the forum, deputy director Lynda Hyce made a presentation on the non-indigenous species project. Photo by Leann Ferry.

Study of sunlight's effects on spilled oil raises new questions about dispersant use

By Lisa Ka'aihue
Project Manager

In its on-going effort to investigate technologies for responding to oil spills, the citizens' council recently released a white paper on the toxicity of chemically dispersed oil. The paper contains a review of existing research on the subject and recommendations for future studies.

The council views the use of chemical dispersants on oil spills with caution and supports scientific research to help answer outstanding questions.

For example, we understand little about how chemically dispersed oil behaves in the water column from the surface of the sea to the bottom, or how it affects the species that live there. And virtually nothing is known about how dispersed oil is affected by sunlight, though it is known to increase the toxicity of un-dispersed crude oil. This

process is called photoenhancement and substances susceptible to it are called phototoxic. Of the research needs identified in the paper, the role of photoenhancement in the fate of chemically dispersed oil in the ocean is of particular interest to the council.

Photoenhanced toxicity of un-dispersed oil has been documented in a number of cases. Various studies have shown the toxicity of hydrocarbons and other compounds increased from two-fold to a thousand-fold in the presence of ultraviolet light similar to sunlight.

Photoenhanced toxicity to aquatic organisms may occur two ways: through photomodification or photosensitization.

In photomodification, the ultraviolet light changes the chemical in the water to make it more toxic. In photosensitization, an aquatic organism eats the oil, then the oil inside the organism

absorbs ultraviolet energy, causing tissue damage in the organism. Evidence suggests that the photoenhanced toxicity of oil occurs through photosensitization rather than photomodification.

No published studies were found that consider the photoenhanced toxicity of oil in Alaska waters. Further, no studies were found that evaluate the photoenhanced toxicity of chemically dispersed oil in any kind of sea water. The council believes this is a large gap in the understanding of the use of chemical dispersants. To help promote research in this area, the council has asked Dr. Mace Barron, an expert in the field of photoenhanced toxicity, to prepare a peer-reviewed paper on the potential for photoenhanced toxicity of oil in Prince William Sound and Gulf of Alaska waters. That paper will be completed this month.

In a presentation to the council in December, Dr. Barron explained the potential for photoenhanced toxicity of spilled oil in the council's region. North Slope crude has been shown to be phototoxic in laboratory tests. Sufficient ultraviolet radiation may penetrate the water of Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska to produce photoenhanced toxicity. However, no research has been done to evaluate this potential. Dr. Barron will elaborate on research experiments and studies that could be taken up to answer these questions.

In addition to photoenhanced toxicity, other research recommendations are contained in the paper on the toxicity of dispersed oil. Other possible subjects include testing the effectiveness of the dispersants stockpiled in Alaska, toxicological testing of these dispersants, and a dispersants risk analysis.

To learn more about these recommendations, you can view the white paper on the councils' web site (www.pwsrca.org) or request a copy from the Anchorage office (see back page for contact information). Dr. Barron's paper on photoenhanced toxicity will be available later this spring.

COALITION

Continued from Page 1

requirements are to people who care about Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska," said John Devens, executive director of the citizens' council. "We're glad the oil shippers came around and decided not to fight these new protections in the contingency plans."

In January, the coalition wrote letters requesting the three companies to drop their appeals, and issued a

press release announcing the request and the coalition's support of the challenged requirements. As the process went forward, the citizens' council and other coalition members worked with the state to persuade the shipping companies the new requirements were acceptable.

Contingency plans specify what operators of oil tankers must do to prevent spills, and how they are to respond if there is a spill. The requirements appealed by the shippers included:

- Development of site-specific response plans for sensitive areas in Prince William Sound and the

- outer Kenai Peninsula. These are known as Geographic Response Strategies. Until now, plans to protect these critical areas were not to be developed until after an oil spill actually occurred, which

under the worst conditions in which loaded tankers are allowed to sail.

- Development of contracts with more barge operators to store oil recovered during a spill re-

sponse. In past spills, insufficient storage capacity has limited how fast the oil could be recovered.

- Development of a system for reporting tanker accidents and near misses to the state. This could allow problems in the system to be detected early and corrected, possibly preventing a major oil spill.

DEC Commissioner Michele Brown appointed Shelley Higgins, a state administrative hearings officer, to hear the appeals. At the request of the state and the tanker companies, Higgins on Jan. 21 put the proceedings on hold so the parties could try to work out their differences. Higgins scheduled another conference for March 3 to see if formal administrative hearings would be needed. By that time, the dispute had been settled and the tanker companies decided to drop the appeals.

The Twenty-Five Members of the Contingency-Plan Coalition

Alaska Center for the Environment
Alaska Forum for Environmental Responsibility
Alaska State Office, National Audubon Society
Alaska Waveriders
Alaska Wilderness League
Alaskan Wilderness Sailing and Kayaking
Campaign to Safeguard America's Waters
City of Seldovia
City of Seward
Cook Inlet Keeper
Cordova District Fishermen United
Eastern Kenai Peninsula Environmental Action Association

Greenpeace
Kodiak Island Borough
Nanwalek IRA Council
Nanwalek Salmon Enhancement Project
National Wildlife Federation
Oilwatch Alaska
Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation
Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council
Seldovia Native Association
Seldovia Oil Spill Response Team
Tatitlek Village IRA Council
Trustees for Alaska
Wildlife Federation of Alaska

Volunteers recognized

Several members of the citizens' council board and technical advisory committees were recognized at the annual Volunteer Appreciation Party in December for service to the organization. The honorees are:

- Ten-Year Service Awards: Board members Bill Walker, Wayne Coleman and Charles Christiansen; Deputy Director Marilyn Leland.
- 1999 Volunteer of the Year: Tom Copeland (board member).
- 1999 Board Members of the Year: Stan Stephens, Dennis Lodge.
- 1999 Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee Member of the year: Jerry Brookman.
- 1999 Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems Committee Members of the Year: Bill Conley, Vince Kelly.
- 1999 Scientific Advisory Committee Member of the Year: Peter Armato.
- 1999 Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee Members of the Year: Paul McCollum (board member), Sean Thurston, Bob Benda.

French tanker accident provides a refresher course in oil-spill lessons

By John S. Devens, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Recently I visited France to observe the effects of the *Erika* oil spill.

Sadly, the main thing I learned was how easy it is for a society to ignore the lessons of events like our Exxon Valdez spill in 1989 or France's own Amoco *Cadiz* spill in 1978. The French were poorly prepared for the *Erika* spill and the response appeared haphazard, unorganized and ineffective.

The tanker *Erika* broke up off the coast of France two weeks before Christmas, spilling 3 million gallons of heavy fuel oil. The oil hit France's southern Brittany coast on Christmas Day and continued to come ashore as the cleanup proceeded.

A large depository of oil spill equipment is housed in Brest, at the northern edge of the spill area. Yet, despite two weeks to prepare, it was not possible to disperse, burn, stop or clean up the oil, or otherwise protect the coast of southern Brittany. Though the weather was bad, it still seems remarkable that so little could be done.

Had the spill occurred along the north Brittany coast, the Syndicat Mixte, a citizen advisory group much like our council, would have been able to coordinate the communities and demand more responsibility from government and industry. Unfortunately, no such organization exists along the southern Brittany coast.

During the weeklong visit, I — along with Leann Ferry, our community liaison — saw dedicated people attacking the spill with little financial support from the federal government or the spiller. Much as Alaska fishermen built log booms to protect their fisheries, French volunteers worked with minimal equipment to save their beaches. We saw very little personal protective equipment and the usual clean-up tools were little more than putty knives, shovels and buckets.

Volunteers complained of skin rashes and respiratory and eye

problems. This, combined with an unusually high death rate in oiled birds, suggested to many observers that the oil was more toxic than they had been led to believe.

Since our visit, more news has come out. Between 20,000 and 40,000 people demonstrated for more protection and better response. A French laboratory analyzed the pollution and concluded it contained toxic industrial chemicals. More oil washed ashore, suggesting the two halves of the ship were still leaking weeks after the sinking.



John Devens

Leann and I went to France to learn about the techniques and philosophy applied by the French in responding to the *Erika* spill, and to provide advice based on our experience in Alaska. During one of our meetings, I observed to a group of French fishermen and elected officials that we see the same lessons over and over again in oil spills:

- Once oil is in the water it is very difficult to remove. We should focus most of our effort on prevention.
 - Local citizens frequently have different priorities from those of government and industry.
 - It often comes down to local citizens working together, supporting each other, and taking the lead in responding to the threat to their environment.
 - Citizens must not rely solely on assurances from government and industry that their health and welfare are being protected. We must look beyond superficial early claims that the pollution is not toxic, or that we can detect hazardous chemicals through a see, smell and taste test.
- Citizen groups provide valuable assistance to communities in a disaster such as an oil spill. The communities and citizens along the Southern Brittany coast needed the coordination, information, and other support provided by groups such as the Syndicat Mixte and the Regional Citizens' Advisory Council. These groups alone have the local citizens' interests as their highest priority.

RADAR: Tests of iceberg-detection systems to go on

Continued from Page 1

Engineering.

The center, known as C-CORE, conducted the tests in partnership with the council, the Canadian Coast Guard and the U.S. National Ocean Service.

UHF radar operates at a lower frequency than microwave radar, and its antenna does not rotate.

The test results suggest that UHF radar may one day be able to detect even dangerous "black" icebergs. These are icebergs that ride very low in the water because they are weighed down by dirt and gravel picked up while still in the glacier.

The results were promising enough that C-CORE is seeking an additional \$155,000 (about \$107,000 in U.S. dollars) from Canadian sources for the next phase of development. That will include an upgrade to a radar with as much power as a standard commercial radar, and field trials in Newfoundland as well as Prince William Sound.

In January, the council and some partners formed the Ice Detection Working Group. It is exploring technologies to detect and track icebergs, and how to get the information to the Coast Guard, to Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System (SERVS), and to the bridge crews

on tankers.

SERVS is upgrading its communication system on Reef Island by installing a microwave transmitter. This system would have the capacity to transmit radar images from the site near Bligh Reef back to Valdez. That would allow SERVS, the Coast Guard and ultimately tanker crews to have real-time ice information 24 hours a day.

The ice detection group has two sub-groups. One will assess the ice-detection capabilities of conventional marine radar systems already operating in Prince William Sound. It has collected information on two such systems and has secured the assistance of the Coast Guard's research and development arm in Connecticut to analyze and advise on which is best at picking up icebergs.

The other subgroup will look for funding sources for the ice-detection work.

The council's Port Operations and Vessel Traffic System Committee has many members in common with the working group and also looks at ice issues. In late February, it reviewed the Coast Guard analysis of radar systems and recommended the council support installation of two systems in Prince William Sound.



ICE WATCH -- This antenna was part of system set up on Busby Island last fall to test whether UHF radar can detect icebergs in the tanker lanes out of Valdez. Photo courtesy of C-CORE.

One would be a Raytheon/SeaScan system. That is a conventional marine radar paired with a computer. The computer analyzes the incoming signal so that small targets, such as icebergs, show up better.

The other would be a C-CORE system for further research

into UHF radar.

The council's partners in the group include SERVS, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, the Prince William Sound Science Center/Oil Spill Recovery Institute, and tanker companies.

Alert PRT -- Alyeska's first Prevention and Response Tug, the 10,000-horsepower Alert, arrived in Valdez Feb. 21. The Alert, built for Alyeska by Crowley Maritime, is 140 feet long and equipped for firefighting and emergency oil-spill response. Photo by David Predeger, courtesy Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.



Alyeska goal: Ensure effective operation of terminal's fire response system

By Dan Hisey

Senior Vice President
Valdez Business Unit

Early last summer, concerns were raised internally and externally about the fire system at the Valdez Marine Terminal. Alyeska Pipeline investigated the concerns and substantiated many of them. We established a task force whose sole task is to inspect, test and prove operability of the fire system at the Marine Terminal.

The transportation and storage of crude oil has inherent risks. It is our job to reduce or eliminate those risks so we can safely do our job. When addressing the issue of fire, our primary focus is prevention.

There are 18 crude storage tanks at the Marine Terminal. The vapor control system provides the primary fire prevention method for a crude oil storage tank fire. This system maintains an inert atmosphere inside each tank. Close monitoring and control of the conditions in the tanks ensures oxygen levels in tanks cannot reach combustible levels. Our

management systems — work permitting, site specific safety plans, controlled access and personnel training — augment and reinforce our fire prevention measures.

Many of the concerns raised last year were focused on our response capabilities. We are correcting the problems we found.

The fire response system at the Marine Terminal was designed with significant redundancy.

- The main firewater system with 74 fire hydrants, 8 miles of pipe and main pump building with three diesel pumps is capable of supplying 15,000 gallons of Port Valdez seawater per minute.

- Foam systems installed at the tank farms use fixed arms inside the bottom of crude storage tanks to distribute foam radially so that the foam floats to the top to extinguish a tank fire.

- An external fixed Deluge System flows water down the roof and sides of a tank to cool tanks adjacent to a burning tank.

- Each berth has its own separate fire control system capable of supplying firewater and/or foam.

- Vessels from our Ship

Escort/Response Vessel System can play an integral response role for a fire situation at a tanker berth. As we upgrade our fleet we further increase our response capabilities. Our new tug fleet will have a combined

capacity of 69,900 gallons per minute of water and 46,000 gallons per minute of foam.

- A fire brigade with mobile fire-fighting equipment is trained and ready to respond.

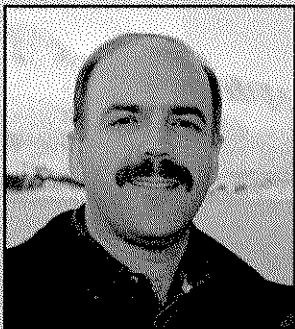
One issue that is being addressed by the task force is the possible plugging of the fire foam piping in storage tanks where accumulated sediments have risen above the level of the piping. In 23 years of operation, sediment has accumulated in the bottom of the crude storage tanks at the terminal. About 10 years ago, Alyeska began replacing tank

bottoms and transferring sediment accumulations between tanks. This practice has led to large accumulations of sediment in some tanks. When one of those tanks was taken out of service this past summer, contractors who were cleaning the tank noted that the sediment had reached the foam piping in the tanks and that some of the piping was clogged. We should have identified and addressed this problem sooner, but we didn't.

This discovery led to a plan to remove the sediment and clean the piping. A project team, augmented by citizens' council consultants, has developed and is implementing a five-step process to determine sediment levels in all tanks, inspect internal fire-foam piping, fluidize and process sediments, clean the fire foam piping and demonstrate that our subsurface fire systems are functioning.

My commitment is that we will address the problems of the fire system at the Marine Terminal.

Alyeska Report



Dan Hisey

High court rules against Washington state in tanker case

The U.S. Supreme Court on March 6 ruled against Washington state in a case testing the power of states to regulate oil tankers.

The justices held that federal regulation of tankers generally overrides the authority of states to set standards, according to an Associated Press report on the case.

The rules adopted by Washington state were "in an area where the federal interest has been manifest since the beginning of our republic," the court held.

The court noted that federal

law allows states to set their own liability rules for pollution caused by oil spills, and said that states can regulate their own ports and waterways if the rules don't conflict with federal rules and are based on "the peculiarities of local waters."

The court rejected Washington state rules on crew training, English-language proficiency, navigation watch requirements and accident reporting. The court held those rules would affect operations outside state waters and therefore were preempted by federal regulation.

However, the court referred

other Washington state rules back to a lower federal court for further review.

The citizens' council filed a friend-of-the-court brief explaining the importance of state regulations to oil transportation safety in Alaska and urging that they be allowed to stand as long as they do not conflict with federal law.

The council, wrote attorneys Avrum Gross and Susan Burke, "does not appear here simply to bear first person witness to the horrors of a catastrophic spill such as the Exxon Valdez . . . RCAC is

here because it believes the Court's decision in this case will have a major impact on the degree to which similar spills can be prevented in the future."

How the Supreme Court ruling would affect state regulation in Alaska was not clear as the Observer went to press.

The case started when Intertanko, an international association of tanker operators, asked the federal courts to overturn certain crew and equipment requirements that the state of Washington imposed on oil tankers in 1994.

Federal agency puts brakes on BP-ARCO deal

British Petroleum's \$26 billion plan to buy ARCO was on hold as the Observer went to press in late February, the result of opposition from the Federal Trade Commission.

In mid-January, BP Amoco (as the company is known since its 1998 merger with Amoco) announced it would go ahead with its purchase of ARCO unless the Federal Trade Commission intervened. The commission, which is charged with ensuring that corporate mergers do not harm consumers by reducing competition, voted in early February to block the purchase and BP announced it would take the fight to U.S. District Court.

Gov. Tony Knowles then announced the state of Alaska will intervene in the case to support BP's takeover of ARCO.

During the course of the state and federal deliberations over the acquisition, the citizens' council urged Knowles and the trade commission to include environmental protections in any government approval of the deal. When Knowles endorsed a modified version of the takeover in early December, his agreement included some protections the council sought, but omitted others. And even the ones included were not legally binding on BP.



ARCO HONORED -- Council President Bill Walker (right) presents a glacier photograph to Tim Clossey (left center), president of ARCO Marine, in recognition of the company's contributions to environmental safety in Alaska. Also shown during the presentation at the council board's December 1999 meeting in Anchorage: ARCO's Richard Ranger, left, and Curt Hallier, right center. Photo by Stan Jones

OUT AND ABOUT -- COUNCIL PAYS VISITS TO JUNEAU AND FISH SHOW IN SEATTLE



JUNEAU VISIT — Board and staff members of the citizens' council traveled to the capital for meetings with state officials Jan. 26-27. Shown here, board member Jody McDowell with Lt. Gov. Fran Ulmer. Photo by Stan Jones



As usual, the citizens' council had a booth at Fish Expo, held Nov. 18-20 in Seattle. Over 300 visitors stopped by to pick up literature and talk with council board members and staffers, such as deputy director Marilyn Leland, shown at right. Some of the council's member organizations were also represented at Fish Expo. At left, Jerry McCune, president of Cordova District Fishermen United, makes a point during a talk on salmon marketing. Photos by Stan Jones.

New oil-spill plan in development for terminal

The latest version of the plan for preventing and controlling oil spills at the Valdez tanker terminal is under development by the state of Alaska, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. and the citizens' council.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation put the terminal's contingency plan out for public review on Nov. 2 of last year, and has been taking comments ever since.

The council submitted detailed comments on Feb. 14, with the following issues topping the list of concerns:

- The plan needs to go further in laying out strategies for keeping an on-land spill at the terminal from reaching the waters of Port Valdez. A guide already in the plan explaining how to use settling ponds to contain land-spilled oil is a good start, but other tactics need to be developed as well, according to the council's comments.

- The plan lists personnel who would make the first response to a terminal spill, but it needs a more detailed listing of those who would be brought in later.

- The plan needs to devote more attention to preventing spilled oil from reaching sensitive areas in Port Valdez, such as the Duck Flats and the Solomon Gulch Hatchery.

- The plan should include an analysis and explanation of how much land-spilled oil could be expected to reach open water.

- The plan needs further development of oil-spill scenarios to clearly demonstrate Alyeska can provide a comprehensive and effective response.

- A project with clear criteria and timelines should be started to assess the risks of an oil spill at the terminal.

Final comments are due March 20. The state hopes to have the final version of the plan approved by April 5.

Publications, presentations and reports available

Copies of most council documents are available to the public free of charge. A handling fee will be charged for large documents and for requests of more than 10 documents. Contact the council's Anchorage office (see back page) to order.

Reports

1998-99 Year in Review. 10/1/99. SR\Annual Report\98-99
 1997-98 Year in Review. 7/1/1999. SR\Annual Report\97-98
 Then and Now: Changes in Oil Transportation Since the Exxon Valdez Spill. 3/24/1999. RCAC\Then and Now\9903\sj
 Fire Protection System Assessment - Alyeska Valdez Marine Terminal. 1/24/2000. C\630.00.1
 Fire Protection System Assessment, Alyeska Valdez Marine Terminal. 1/17/2000. C\630.00.3
 Dispersed Oil Toxicity Issues - A Review of Existing Research and Recommendations for Future Studies. 12/1/1999. 615.00.2
 Valdez Marine Terminal Worst Case Discharge Drill - September 1-2, 1999. 11/12/1999. 604.2000.2
 PWS RCAC 1998-1999 Long-Term Environmental Monitoring Program Report. 11/8/1999. 608.99.1
 UHF Radar Prince William Sound Field Program Final Report. 11/1/1999. C\639.99.1
 Valdez marine Terminal Response Planning Standard Drill September 1-2, 1999 Preliminary Report. 10/4/1999. 604.2000.1
 Drill Monitoring Annual Report - 1998. 5/7/1999. C\605.99.1\1998Annual
 Coping with Technological Disasters: A User Friendly Guidebook. 5/7/1999. C\644.98\CIP Guidebook
 Final Report: Vapor Control Technology and Maintenance Review. 4/23/1999. C\629.97.1\Vapor Review

Presentations and Papers

Biological Invasions of Cold-Water Coastal Ecosystems: Ballast Mediated Introductions in Port Valdez/Prince William Sound, Alaska. (Report by Dr. Anson Hines, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center.) Presented by RCAC Project Manager Joel Kopp, April 12, 1999. Study Group on Ballast Water and Sediments. Llandudno, Wales
 Oil Spill Response and Prevention: Can It Happen Again? Panel appearance by RCAC Executive Director John Devens, March 1999. Symposium — Legacy of an Oil Spill: 10 Years after Exxon Valdez. Anchorage, Alaska.
 Community Recovery from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill: Mitigating Chronic Social Impacts. Presenter and co-author: J. Steven Picou, Ph.D., University of South Alabama, RCAC contractor, March 1999. Legacy symposium, Anchorage.
 Community Stress Management for Technological Disasters: A Guidebook for Community Leaders and Mental Health Professionals. Poster presentation by Lisa Ka'ahue, RCAC Project Manager, March 1999. Legacy symposium, Anchorage.
 A Decade of Progress, A Vision for the Future in Prince William Sound (Panel discussion moderated by Mark Hamilton, University of Alaska President). Participation by John Devens, RCAC Executive Director, March 1999. Symposium — Partners in Prevention, a decade of progress in Prince William Sound. Valdez, Alaska
 Valdez over the Last Decade (Panel discussion moderated by Dave Dengel, Valdez City Manager). Participation by John Devens, RCAC Executive Director, March 1999. Prevention symposium, Valdez.
 How Oil Has Affected Alaska. (Panel of former Alaska governors) Moderated by RCAC Board Member Stan Stephens, March 1999. Prevention symposium, Valdez.
 Citizens and Industry Working Together to Make Oil Transportation Safer. Leann Ferry, RCAC Community Liaison, March 11, 1999. 1999 International Oil Spill Conference, Beyond 2000: Balancing Perspectives. Seattle, Washington.
 Team Building. Session chaired by RCAC Executive Director John Devens, March 1999. International Oil Spill Conference, Seattle.
 Dispersant Use In Alaska: An Update. (Report by Ken Trudel, S.L. Ross Environmental Research Ltd., et al.) Presented by RCAC Scientific Advisory Committee volunteer Peter Armato (with Coast Guard Captain Ron Morris), March 1999. International Oil Spill Conference, Seattle.

ERIKA: Spill drenches French coast

Continued from Page 1

prevention.

A French government inquiry concluded the *Erika*'s poor condition caused the accident. According to the commission, the ship's problems began when a bulkhead failed between a full tank and an empty one. Other structural failures followed and the tanker split in two a few hours later. Past captains and crews of the *Erika* had reported bulkhead corrosion but no action was taken.

The two pieces of the tanker came to rest in about 400 feet of water and 11 miles apart with approximately 5.8 million gallons of oil still on board. The pieces of the ship reached the bottom about 46 miles off the coast and continued to leak for weeks afterward. During our visit TotalFina and the French government were still trying to decide how to remove the oil from the sunken tanker.

For a variety of reasons, some still unclear, there was no successful on-water clean-up operation until Monday, December 20, 8 days after the accident.

French citizens' group formed after Amoco Cadiz spill is now focusing on prevention

By Leann Ferry
Community Liaison

In 1989, the Syndicat Mixte — an organization of communities damaged by the Amoco *Cadiz* oil spill of 1978 — arrived unsolicited in Alaska to help citizens after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. They have been our friends ever since. At the request of the Syndicat, John Devens and I attended an important meeting on January 22 — one that could change the way the oil industry, government and citizens work together in France.

Meeting in Perros-Guirec on the north coast of Brittany, the Syndicat voted unanimously to recreate itself. (Despite the coincidence of timing, the change had been in the works well before the *Erika* spill.)

Originally set up to sue Amoco for the 1978 *Cadiz* spill, the Syndicat will now work on response capabilities and prevention much like our council but in a more complicated system of shipping.

Where our council works only with the transportation of oil, the Syndicat will work with a wide array of cargo being transported continually off the coast of Brittany.

TotalFina says it is not responsible for the spill but lent the French government \$155 million worth of clean-up equipment. The company has also promised a total of about \$112 million dollars for clean-up, shoreline restoration and tourism promotion in the oiled areas. Most communities we visited were counting on the promises of TotalFina to thoroughly clean their beaches though none of them had yet received any funds from the company. In Le Croisic, the community had already spent over \$150,000 U.S. on the clean up and was expecting reimbursement by the federal government.

There is also a dispute over what product was spilled. The February 3 Oil Spill Intelligence Report called it "toxic, carcinogenic refinery waste and not fuel oil" and said the independent laboratory Analytika is reporting the cargo should have never been loaded for shipment but instead should have been incinerated at the Dunkirk refinery. TotalFina refutes the claim, saying the cargo is No.2

Another difference between the Syndicat and our council is that the Syndicat is financed primarily by the communities in its region and by funds remaining from the Amoco settlement. If the member communities support the new mission of the Syndicat, the new objectives will include:

- Research on the effects of oil and chemical pollution on the marine environment.
- Advocacy for improvements to national and international maritime regulations to reduce the risks associated with marine transportation and improve response capabilities to marine pollution. The Syndicat will work in France and internationally for the protection of all coastlines.
- Educating the public in France and internationally on the Syndicat's work.
- Promoting citizen involvement in decision making about marine transportation and pollution.

The Syndicat's work on legal action against Amoco (including a lawsuit between the Syndicat and its own lawyers) finally ended on December 15, 1999 — 21 years after the *Cadiz* spill and three days after the *Erika* spill.



French mayors and members of Syndicat Mixte discuss the *Erika* spill during a January visit by Leann Ferry and John Devens of the citizens' council. The French citizens' group, which was formed after the Amoco *Cadiz* spill of 1978, sent representatives to Alaska after the Exxon *Valdez* spill. Photo by Gerard Le Goff, Syndicat Mixte.

Export Fuel, poses minimal health risks and is not a serious threat to clean-up workers.

Bird mortality has been high. Gilles Bentz, who runs one of the bird rescue centers on the North Brittany coast, told us they had found 50,000 dead oiled birds and about 10,000 oiled but alive. The actual numbers may be worse. Usually only about 10 percent of the birds hurt by an oil spill wash ashore, according to a January 24 article in the *Edinburgh Scotsman*.

In this coastal area rich in fisheries and tourism, people are worried about their livelihoods. Brittany sees more than 2 million visitors per year. Le Croisic is one of the largest producers of oysters in all of France and Belle-Ile is a famous tourist destination for Europe. Le Croisic ships 2,000 tons of clams and 1,000 tons of oysters a year. After the *Erika* spill, officials closed shellfish operations in Le Croisic. Tourism brings over \$15 million to this community each year; shellfish operations bring about

the same. French health officials are warning the public it may be years before the oysters from the *Erika* spill area are safe to eat.

The *Erika* spill may become a catalyst for change in France — change for the better. Citizens are organizing and the French government has vowed to use its power when it takes the next Presidency of the European Union to enact stricter laws on marine transportation.

Since our visit, French oil companies, ship owners and charter companies have signed an agreement to implement new safety measures in advance of any new international regulations. The agreement bans single-hull tankers beginning in 2008, 11 years earlier than originally planned. It also outlaws the practice of registering tankers in so-called flag-of-convenience countries to take advantage of looser safety requirements there. Malta, where the *Erika* was registered, is considered a flag-of-convenience nation.



VISITORS FROM THE PACIFIC RIM — Kenji Nishigaki, left, and Ivan Melnikov, right, visited the citizens' council Anchorage offices in early February to discuss oil-spill response and international cooperation. Nishigaki is general manager of oil-spill response for the Petroleum Association of Japan. Melnikov works for a company that produces oil-spill response materials on Sakhalin Island. Photos by Stan Jones.

Seldovia sees disaster guidebook

By Leann Ferry
Community Liaison

On January 12, 2000 I traveled to Seldovia with our public information manager Stan Jones. With our host Steve Lewis of the council board, we toured the community under blue skies, conducted a well-attended community workshop, dined with Steve and his wife Savannah at their home and attended the Seldovia City Council meeting (which ran past 11:00 p.m.). Thank you, Seldovia, for such a warm welcome! We hope to be back soon.

Eight Seldovia community members, including Mayor Sue Hecks, attended our workshop on the "Coping with Technological Disasters" guidebook. After the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the citizens' council sponsored research to learn how to mitigate the psychological and sociological impacts of a major oil spill or other technological disaster. The mitigation strategies are contained in this guidebook.

At the workshop, we reviewed the guidebook chapter by chapter and discussed how it would be useful during an oil spill or other disaster. Workshop attendees also discussed the relevance of guidebook topics and materials to daily life in Seldovia and suggested the guidebook tools could be useful in many circumstances other than an oil spill disaster. As a result of the workshop, more people in the community are now familiar with the contents of the guidebook and know how to put it to good use. The guidebook can be accessed on our web site at www.pwsrca.org or purchased for \$40 plus shipping.

If you would like a community workshop on the guidebook or any other citizens' council project, just give me a call.

Seldovia and contingency plan appeals

Board member Steve Lewis and citizens' council contractor Tim Robertson made presentations to the Seldovia City Council on the

Community Corner



Leann Ferry

tanker oil spill contingency plans for Prince William Sound. Steve Lewis asked the city council to join the citizens' council, other communities and interest groups in signing a letter to BP, ARCO and SeaRiver Maritime asking the companies to withdraw their appeals and work cooperatively with the

state and other stakeholders to implement the conditions in the state-approved plans. The letter indicated the groups would intervene in the appeals process to defend the oil-spill requirements if the companies do not withdraw the appeals. The city council took action in favor of this request and signed on to the letter.

In addition, I reported to the city council on other activities of the citizens' council and reminded them to look to us as a technical resource for contingency plans and other issues.

We'd Like To Hear From You

Remember you can always email, call our toll free number, write us a letter or send us a fax with questions or comments about our work. Contact information is to the right. Subscribe to PWSRCAC_Hotline and receive regular email announcements about oil transportation issues in the region. Just send an email to ferry@anch.pwsrca.org.



City councilman Mike Webber (gesturing) and other community members in Seldovia discuss the council's "Coping with Technological Disasters" Guidebook. Photo by Stan Jones.

Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council is an independent, non-profit corporation formed after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill to minimize the environmental impacts of the trans-Alaska pipeline terminal and tanker fleet.

The council has 18 member organizations, including communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill and groups representing Alaska Native, aquaculture, environmental, commercial fishing, recreation and tourism interests in the spill region.

The council 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 Pipeline Service Co. The contract, which is in effect as long as oil flows through the pipeline, guarantees the council's independence, provides annual funding, and ensures the council the same access to terminal facilities as state and federal regulatory agencies.

The council's mission: Citizens promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers.

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