

# 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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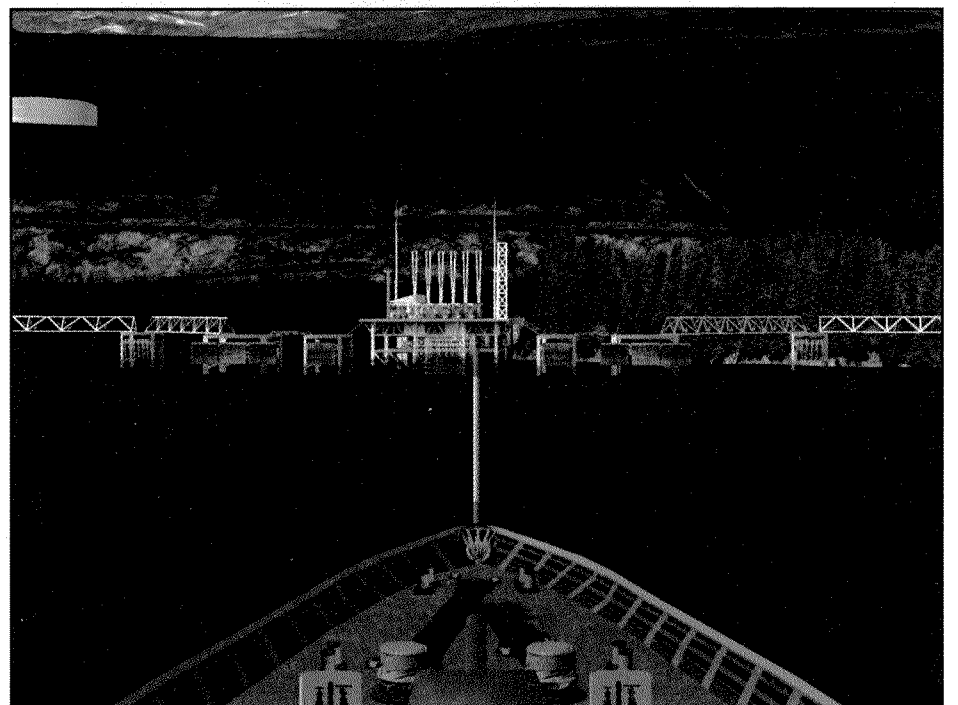
## Hinchinbrook barge move raises concerns about response time

The seasonal relocation of an oil-spill response barge from Hinchinbrook Island to Naked Island is drawing scrutiny from the citizens' council and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

The concern of the council and the state agency is that the move could slow Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.'s response to a spill at the south end of Prince William Sound or in the Gulf of Alaska because the barge would have to travel farther.

The issue is of particular importance to the council's "downstream" communities, located to the west and southwest of Prince William Sound. Based on the experience of the *Exxon Valdez*

See page 6, **BARGE**



**REAL OR SIMULATED?** — Thanks to advances in computer technology, it's now possible to create uncannily accurate simulations of tanker operations, oil-spill response activities, and even oil-spill trajectories. Above, a vessel approaches the tanker terminal in Valdez, as captured in a screen shot from the new bridge simulator at the Alaska Vocational Technical Center in Seward. In Valdez, a simulator at Prince William Sound Community College helps train workers in oil-spill response. On the Kenai Peninsula, the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council has created a downloadable computer model of how oil would move if spilled in the Inlet. *Story and pictures, page 5.*

## Legislature takes up contingency plan rules for non-crude haulers

Legislation to require oil-spill contingency plans for ships that *don't* haul crude oil was among the first measures to hit the desks of Alaska legislators as they started their 2001 session last month.

Near-identical measures were introduced in the House and Senate to require contingency plans of vessels that carry large amounts of fuel, such as cruise ships and large fishing vessels. The measures also apply to the Alaska Railroad. The legislation was drafted by a task force that the Legislature established last spring.

Contingency plans have long been required of the tankers that haul crude oil out of Valdez and Cook Inlet, but vessels carrying only fuel have been exempt.

As the Observer went to press earlier this month, the Senate version of the contingency-planning legislation was moving rapidly with little opposition. In the House, however, Reps. Scott Ogan, R-Palmer, and Vic Kohring, R-Wasilla, had raised concerns about how the state's cost for administering the pro-

gram would be funded, and were vowing to amend the bill.

The citizens' council does not oversee the operations of non-crude carriers as it does for crude-oil tanker operating out of Valdez. Consequently, the council is not taking a position on the merits of the legislation.

The council did, however, write key senators and representatives to urge that nothing in the legislation jeopardize either existing laws and regulations governing the operation of crude-oil tankers, or the funding for state administration of those laws and regulations.

Last fall, the council called on the task force to include a provision for adequately funded citizen oversight of contingency planning for the non-crude carriers, but no such requirements appear in the bills finally filed in the Legislature.

In mid-March, the council's Legislative Affairs Committee plans a visit to Juneau to talk with legislators about the contingency planning legislation, and other measures of concern to the council.

## Plan would streamline recertification process

The Coast Guard in late December proposed a simpler process for the annual recertification of Alaska's two Regional Citizens' Advisory Councils.

Ever since the councils were created shortly after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, they have been required to send the Coast Guard a voluminous application once a year to prove they were meeting the requirements of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

The Coast Guard would then take public comments, often followed by a detailed response from the council and a lengthy analysis by the agency before recertification was complete. The result was a process that sometimes lasted for months and consumed many

staff-hours for both the Coast Guard and the councils.

Under the new system proposed by the Coast Guard, the original recertification process would be required only once every three years.

For each of the two intervening years, the councils would instead file a much shorter application summarizing major developments since the last recertification, and there would be no public comment period.

In a Federal Register notice announcing the proposal, the Coast Guard said a streamlined process was justified because the councils had evolved "from new,

See page 4, **PLAN**

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Volunteer Profile

George Skladal attended first TOEM meet and plans to make last one also

No matter what it is or where it's at, the odds are pretty good that George Skladal has been there and done it.

Skladal, 67, is a member of the council's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee. He was born in the Philip-pines, the son of an Amer-ican military officer sta-tioned there.

After the family moved back to the United States, Skladal went to a military high school and college, then spent the next 20 years in the Army. He served in such widely-scattered points as Georgia, Japan, Kansas, Korea, Vietnam — and Alaska. Mostly he worked in logistics — the part of the Army that makes sure the troops get the food, fuel and gear they need.

Skladal's specialty was petro-leum-related facilities like pipe-lines and tank farms, which would later dovetail with his interest in serving on the council's terminal operations committee.

The Army sent Skladal to Alaska in 1967. He drove up

the Alcan to become a petroleum officer, scheduling the tankers that brought military fuel to Alaska and overseeing the pipelines that carried it to Anchorage and Fair-banks.

In 1970, he was posted to Vietnam to command a petroleum battalion at Cam Ranh Bay, a sprawl-ing facility that served American operations in the middle section of the country. He spent 18 months there, overseeing 2,500 people and enduring almost nightly rocket attacks by the enemy. They never hit one of his fuel tanks, Skladal said, though a pump at the docks was struck one night.

"We had to step over unex-ploded rockets to get in and fight the fire," Skladal said.

His Vietnam stint ended in 1971 with his return to Alaska, where he once again worked in Army logistics.

When Skladal retired in 1974, at age 41, he had to decide what to do next. Become a lawyer, or a professional engineer?

When he learned the engi-neering track would require a five-year apprenticeship under a practicing professional, the choice was easy. "As a lawyer, you're knighted immediately," he said. "You don't have to work under anybody."

He went to law school in Texas, and now practices com-mercial, property and tax law out of his home. In addition, he teaches math at a private school in Anchorage.

When Skladal heard after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill that the cit-izens' council was forming a commit-tee to oversee oper-ations at the Valdez tanker terminal, he was one of the first to volunteer. As Skladal remembers it, the first meeting of the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Com-mittee consisted of him and Joe Bridg-man, long-time stalwart of the citi-zens' council's Valdez office.

That was in 1990. Bridgman is gone now — he took a job Out-side last year — but Skladal is still a TOEM member, putting in 10-12 hours a month by the esti-

mate of Betty Skladal, his wife of 44 years.

"I had operated terminals and pipelines in the Army," Skladal said. "I thought I could make some contribution with my knowl-edge of operations, and I was also familiar with environmental con-cerns."

He's most interested, he says, in safety and maintenance issues, always a top priority in the Army.

And how long does he figure to stay on TOEM?

"As long as it lasts," Skladal said. "You've got a bunch of people on that committee that are just outstand-ing."

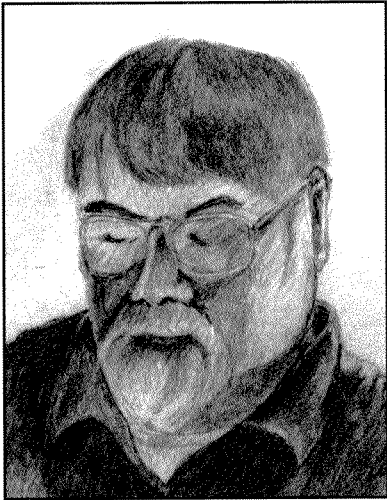
In 1994, Skladal began taking art lessons — first painting, then drawing, and now sculpture. It was a childhood inter-est, but one that he had never had time to develop. He can often be seen at board meetings of

the citizens' council with drawing pad on his knee, practicing for an art class or sketching the proceed-ings.

"I learn something new every day," he said. "I'm a perennial student."



George Skladal, with a mask he made of himself for a sculpture class. Photo by Stan Jones



Skladal made this sketch of council board member John Allen during a Kodiak meeting in September 2000.

Stephens appointed to navigation panel

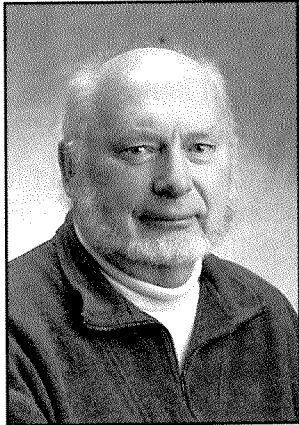
Stan Stephens, a long-time member of the citizens' council board, was named in November to the Navigation Safety Advisory Council by Rodney Slater, outgoing Sec-retary of Transporta-tion in the Clinton administration.

The navigation council has 21 mem-bers who meet twice a year to advise the federal Department of Transportation on how to prevent ship collisions, groundings and ramming. Ste-phens' term on the body runs until June 2003.

Also, Marilyn Leland, deputy director in the council's Anchor-

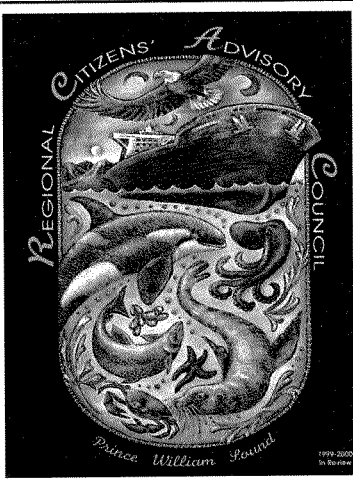
age office, was invited in Novem-ber to join the Mitten Crab Com-mittee of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force by the U.S. Fish and Wild-life Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Adminis-tration.

The mitten crab, an import from China, is a pest in the San Fran-cisco Bay area, where it has interfered with water diversion and fish salvage facility opera-tions. The Mitten Crab Control Committee will help develop a management plan to control the species. The committee is expected to operate for six to nine months.



Stan Stephens

**ANNUAL REPORT** — The council's annual report for 1999-2000 is available free by request to the Anchorage office (see back page). The 28-page report covers council activities from July 1, 1999 through June 30, 2000. The subjects include the council's mission and responsi-bilities, oil spill prevention, environmental protection and science, oil spill prepared-ness and response, community response planning, public outreach and government relations.



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

Manager. Questions and suggestions should be directed to the council's Anchorage office, by phone to 907-273-6230, or by an electronic mail message to [observer@anch.pwsrca.org](mailto:observer@anch.pwsrca.org).

Board approves peer-listening video; seats Pete Kompkoff as Tatitlek's representative

The citizens' council board at its December meeting in Anchor-age approved production of a video training course that will help communities and organi-zations prepare for man-made disasters.

The course will teach peer-listening techniques, which allow community members to counsel each other in time of a manmade disaster such as a major oil spill. The community member learns to be an adviser, friend and refer-al agent for people who may not want professional services or may not know that help is avail-able.

The course will be based on material developed for the coun-cil's popular guidebook, "Coping With Technological Disasters."

"This is one of the few proj-ects where citizens in our region can see for themselves the tan-gible results of our efforts,"

said Community Liaison Leann Ferry, who presented the video proposal to the council. "We often can tell them what we are doing on their behalf in making oil transportation safer, but we do not often have something tan-gible to give them."

The board approved \$51,000 for the project, assuming the council staff can find a sufficient mixture of funds from outside sources and project surpluses in this year's budget.

The project is to result in four 45-minute training sessions. They will be made available immediately on VHS cassette. Later, they may also become available on CD-ROM or the Internet.

Also at the December meet-ing, the council voted to seat Pete Kompkoff as representative of the community of Chenega. He replaces Darrell Totemoff.



## Council watches the political process, too, not just agencies and industry

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

With a new legislature starting work in Juneau and a new administration taking office in Washington, this is a good time to reflect on the role of the citizens' council in advising and informing government.

We are charged with the tasks of observing, verifying, advising, and informing government, citizens, and industry about the safety of crude oil transportation through Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska.

To carry out this charge, our board has four public meetings a year and we attend dozens of public events and meetings of city councils and borough assemblies. We distribute four editions of our Observer newsletter each

year, and we issue news releases and send public opinion articles to newspapers. We publish technical papers and make presentations at conferences, and we set up our information booth at numerous trade shows.

Most of our day-to-day work focuses on the oil industry and the agencies that regulate it. You're far more likely to see us at an oil-spill drill or an agency meeting on tanker regulations than in the halls of the state or federal capitol.

Nonetheless, we pay considerable attention to the political sector of government. It is the source of the environmental-protection policies that

regulatory agencies apply to the oil industry.

We have a very active Legislative Affairs Committee that tracks developments during the state legislative session. Consultants in Juneau and Washington help



John Devens

us monitor issues that might affect the safe transportation and handling of North Slope crude oil. They attend committee hearings, confer with elected officials and their staffs, analyze developments, and send us regular reports. When appropriate, they present testimony on

behalf of the council.

As needed, we mobilize our network of volunteers in the

Exxon Valdez oil spill region to write letters and otherwise make their view known on issues of concern to us. In addition, we make special outreach trips to put our board members in direct contact with elected officials in local communities, Juneau and even Washington D.C.

All of this effort is worthwhile because we are able to provide our elected officials with objective information to help them write sound laws and make informed decisions.

The complacency that allowed the Exxon Valdez spill to take place 12 years ago wasn't limited to the oil industry and regulatory agencies. It also permeated the political system.

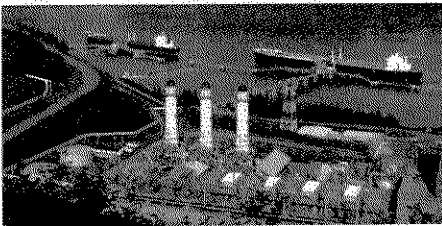
We hope and believe that our citizen voice will help prevent it from ever taking root there again.

## Council to monitor right-of-way renewal process for Alyeska terminal in Valdez

By Tom Kuckertz  
Project Manager  
Citizens' Council

The citizens' council is developing its work plan for the coming expiration and renewal of government right-of-way agreements for the Alyeska's tanker terminal in Valdez.

Alyeska's right-of-way agreements with the state and federal governments expire early in 2004. Alyeska and the agencies involved have already begun preparing for the renewal process.



The Alyeska terminal

The agreements cover the entire Trans-Alaska Pipeline System from the North Slope to Prince William Sound, but the council's review authority extends only to the Valdez terminal.

The council's goal, as it monitors this process, is to see that the new agreements address the age of the terminal and the adequacy of current maintenance and operations programs. The council expects that the facility will be brought up to modern standards and be in "as good as new" condition when the permits are renewed.

The council's involvement in the process will be two-fold.

The council intends to coordinate the activities of a working group of constituents to gather and coordinate citizen input to the renewal process. In addition, the council will address technical aspects of terminal operation specifically cited in the original right-of-way agreements.

The council's work plan includes the following:

- A legal review of the

current right-of-way agreement with its enabling legislation, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act, the Alaska Coastal Management Plan, and other relevant documents to identify opportunities for influencing the renewal agreements.

- Explore the best available ballast water treatment technology with an eye to seeking

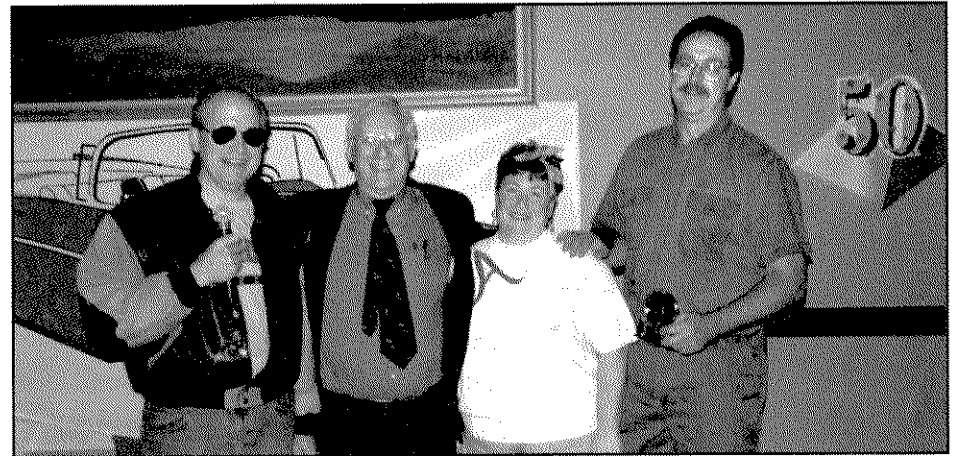
requirements in the new right-of-way agreements for the use of such technology.

- Review of preliminary documents generated

in the renewal process by federal and state agencies before they become final.

- The council's staff and consultants will review system integrity studies — commissioned by Alyeska and by the state-federal Joint Pipeline Office — and will identify issues that turn up that are of concern to the council.

- The council will propose creation of a working group to verify that all identified repairs and maintenance at the terminal have been completed; that all components meet "state of the art" and best available technology criteria; that agency jurisdiction and authority are clearly defined; and that maintenance and operational programs are in place to ensure the terminal can operate safely for the duration of the new agreements. The working group will include, at a minimum, Alyeska, the council, the federal Bureau of Land Management, the state Department of Natural Resources, and all other state and federal agencies with authority over terminal operations.



**VETERANS** — Board President Bill Walker, committee volunteer George Skladal, Administrative Assistant Andrea Archer and Project Manager Joe Banta received awards for 10 years of service at the council's 1950s-theme Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in December. Not shown but also receiving 10-year awards: Board member Stan Stephens and Financial Operations Manager Linda Robinson. Photo by Stan Jones.

## Disaster guide dispatched to help with effects of oil spill in Galapagos Islands

The citizens' council last month sent a copy of its "Coping With Technological Disasters" guidebook to officials in Ecuador, where a spill of diesel oil threatened the ecologically fragile Galapagos Islands.

The tanker *Jessica*, carrying about 243,000 gallons of fuel, ran aground Jan. 16 in the Galapagos and began leaking diesel three days later, according to press accounts.

The council contacted Ecuador's embassy in San Francisco and sent a copy of the guidebook to Consul General Fernando Flores, who said he would forward it to the appropriate officials in Ecuador.

"He was very thankful," said John Devens, executive director of the council. "We just hope some of the painful lessons we learned here after the Exxon Valdez spill will help people in the Galapagos deal with their crisis."

The guidebook is intended to help individuals, small businesses and city governments cope with the social and economic problems caused by man-made disasters

such as oil spills. In the case of the Exxon Valdez spill, those problems included stress, community friction, the distractions of litigation, loss of community workforce to cleanup jobs, and loss of livelihood as commercial fisheries were shut down.

Since it was completed almost two years ago, the disaster guidebook has been distributed to numerous organizations in Alaska, and also has been sent, by request, to people elsewhere coping with various disasters. These include Coos Bay, Oregon, site of the *New Carissa* oil spill; Bellingham, Washington, site of a pipeline explosion; and Brittany, France after the *Erika* oil spill.

The Galapagos Islands are in the Pacific Ocean about 600 miles west of Ecuador's coast. They are home to several species of wildlife not found anywhere else on earth, and were the basis for Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. At Observer press time earlier this month, it appeared that wind and sea conditions would prevent the *Jessica* spill from causing much harm to the shorelines and wildlife of the islands.



# The Ship Escort and Response Vessel System practices risk management

By Greg Jones

Senior Vice President  
Valdez Business Unit

Since Alyeska's Ship Escort and Response Vessel System (SERVS) was established nearly 12 years ago, we have made significant strides in our preparedness to protect the waters of Prince William Sound from the consequences of oil spills. SERVS is more than the equipment in our inventory. It includes the people who operate that equipment, and an ongoing effort to manage risk and to prepare for emergencies.

Prevention is the key. The spill that never happens is the easiest to clean up. Beginning with tanker escorts, our system has evolved to one uniquely suited to the challenges found in Prince William Sound. Our fleet includes the two most powerful tractor tugs in the world, along with three 10,000 horsepower z-drive tugs. Each of the new SERVS tugs is available to provide immediate assistance to avoid a grounding should a tanker lose power, to tow a tanker in distress, or to respond to a fire with

10,000 gallons per minute of fire fighting power. SERVS' fleet of escort tugs operates 365 days per year, manned by vigilant crews who are deeply familiar with the challenging conditions of Prince William Sound.

Vigilance is not only essential for prevention. It is a critical component of SERVS' readiness for response. Because we have been fortunate to have avoided significant spills in Prince William Sound for several years, SERVS responders must improve their capabilities through training and drills throughout the year. This commitment enabled SERVS crews to deploy 26,000 feet of boom to protect five sensitive sites in the Tatitlek area with overnight notice during last summer's drill with SeaRiver Maritime. It is a commitment that equipped the crew of the Enhanced Tractor Tug *Nanuq* to rescue the F/V *Alaskan*

*Beauty* when it had taken a large wave across the bow in heavy seas off Montague Island last winter.

Management of risk and vigilance remain core values for our business. We have also set a high safety goal that "Nobody Gets Hurt". Thus, after two incidents when the barge at Port Etches broke free from its mooring in winter storms in 1998-99, we listened to the concerns of the crews manning the barge, and studied barge maintenance demands caused by

Port Etches' severe winds and seas. We made the decision to relocate the barge on a seasonal basis during winter months. It is a decision that reduces risk to people on whose performance the SERVS system of prevention and response depends. At the Naked Island location the barge and its full-time tug will be better positioned to execute the response strategies described in the Prince

William Sound tanker contingency plan during the challenging winter months. We think it is a sound decision – for people, for prevention, and for preparedness.

Preparedness also involves understanding and respecting the specific roles played by everyone who shares our commitment to safe transportation of oil through Prince William Sound. We are proud of the story we have to share about SERVS, its people, and its capabilities. We also recognize the need and the value of receiving feedback from our neighbors. This year we will be visiting the communities in the region – with a special focus on downstream communities – to offer information, to answer questions, and to demonstrate our boats and other equipment. We look forward to this opportunity for dialogue so that SERVS can continue to provide the capability for prevention and response to spills that is unsurpassed.

## Alyeska Viewpoint



Greg Jones

## Alyeska returns Berth Four to operation, faces fine over October sparking incident

Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. in mid-December brought loading Berth 4 back into service at the Valdez tanker terminal after a maintenance project that lasted several months and gave rise to a series of problems.

One of those problems left the berth with only three functional loading arms at startup, rather than the standard four. And another of the problems – an electric sparking incident in October – has left Alyeska facing a possible fine of \$8,000 by the Coast Guard.

The berth was taken out of service for scheduled maintenance in August of last year. The project included replacing the aging 24-inch control valves on berth's four loading arms with new 16-inch valves. But the smaller valves produced unacceptable levels of vibration when Alyeska tried loading oil through them, and the company decided

to refurbish and reinstall the old valves. However, one could not be restored to serviceable condition, leaving the berth with only three useable loading arms when it started service again on Dec. 16.

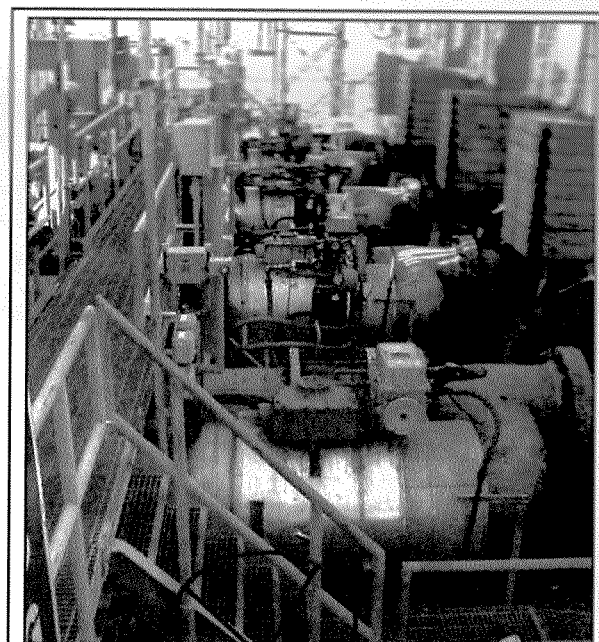
The sparking incident occurred Oct. 19, as Alyeska technicians prepared to connect vapor control equipment to a tanker that was about to be loaded at the berth. A spark leapt from the vapor control piping to the connection point on the tanker. Luckily, no oily vapors were in the air, so no harm occurred.

A Coast Guard hearing officer in Alameda, Ca., wrote Alyeska on Jan. 2, proposing to fine the company \$8,000 over the sparking incident and inviting it to submit a response before the decision would be final.

Alyeska wrote back on Feb. 1 to say it would not request a hearing in the case. But it asked the Coast Guard to note that the

company had cooperated with the authorities throughout the follow-up to the sparking incident. "We are confident that we have either already addressed, or are in the process of addressing each and every component and contributing factor that has been identified as a result of this matter," Alyeska wrote.

The council repeatedly expressed concerns over the fall and winter about conditions at the terminal. On Dec. 5, the council summarized its position in "Review of Pending Recommendations Affecting the Valdez Marine Terminal," a 14-page whitepaper sent to various



This photo shows the kind of 24-inch valves used on Berth 4 at Alyeska's Valdez tanker terminal. Photo courtesy of Alyeska.

federal officials in Washington, D.C.

Several wrote back to thank the council for the information, including all three members of Alaska's congressional delegation. "I continue to appreciate the work you do authorized under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990," wrote Sen. Ted Stevens.

## PLAN: Streamlining

Continued from Page 1

untested organizations to stable, functioning organizations" since the first recertifications in 1993.

The proposal refers only to the two Alaska groups, the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council and the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council. It does not say what

recertification process would be used if citizens' councils are formed elsewhere in the United States.

The Coast Guard took comments on the proposal until Feb. 12. It will review them and decide whether to adopt the new process. The Prince William Sound council wrote in support of the proposal. The council said the new system would reduce the administrative

burden on everyone involved without compromising Coast Guard oversight of the council or the opportunity for public input on the council's work.

"After more than a decade of existence, most of the major questions about what we do and how we do it have been settled," said John Devens, executive director of the Prince William Sound council. "We think a simpler recertification

process is justified and we're glad the Coast Guard has come to the same conclusion."

The council has filed its new recertification application, which will be put out for public comment under the original process. At Observer press time earlier this month, the Coast Guard had not announced when the comment period would open.



# For Alaskans, simulators are rapidly becoming the wave of the present

All around Southcentral Alaska, computers are moving into the job of helping humans learn how to avoid oil spills, and how to deal with them if they happen anyway.

At the Prince William Sound Community College in Valdez, a computer-powered simulator helps teach students how to manage the response to an oil spill. During classes in response management, students reach the point where — in a real spill — they'd board a helicopter to fly over the oil.

At the college, however, the students just go to the simulator for a virtual flyover.

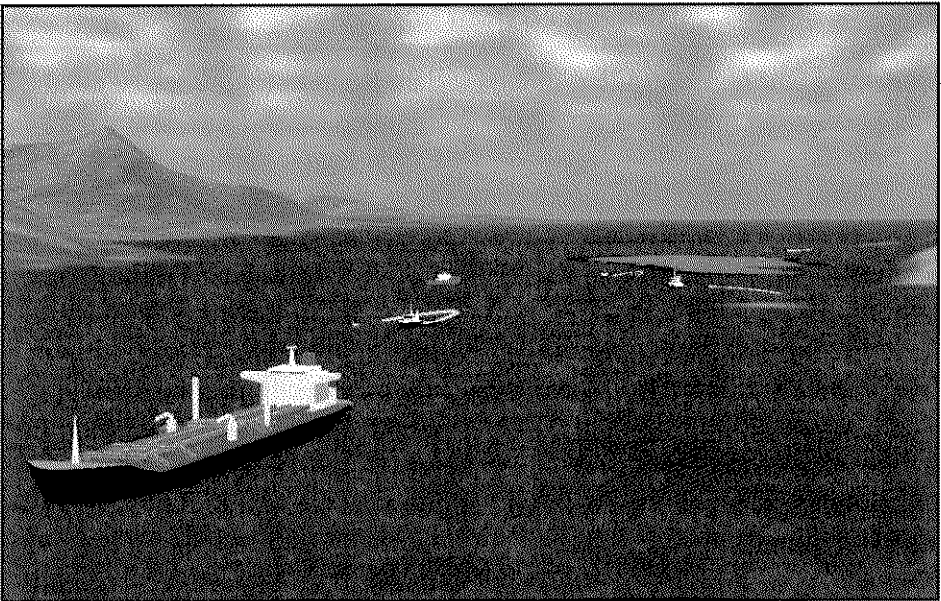
"We are able to take them to the spot in the helicopter, and show them what's happening on-scene, said Vince Kelly, an

instructor at the college.

The college's simulator is linked to a larger computer system at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, which does the real work of creating the images seen onscreen in Valdez. Controllers at the Massachusetts facility move the vessels involved the simulated spill response, and determine where the spilled oil goes. In addition, they communicate with students by simulated radio to make the exercise seem more realistic.

The Valdez simulator was developed with funds from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, which contributed \$50,000.

Before it became available,

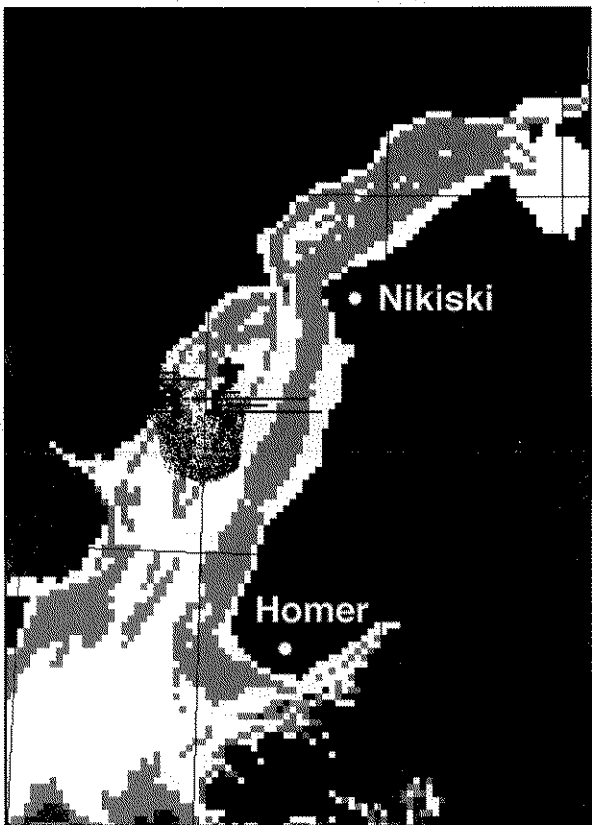


**VIRTUAL SPILL** — This screen shot shows a simulated oil spill on the system at Prince William Sound Community College in Valdez.

said college President Jo Ann C. McDowell, such training required a trip to simulators outside Alaska.

"It's a huge benefit to industry

because they don't have to spend all that money sending people to be trained," McDowell said. "It's a win-win for all of us."



**KENAI** — The Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council has created a computer program called "DOTMOD" — for Desktop Oil Transport Model — that projects the path of oil spilled anywhere in the Inlet. The program can be downloaded and run on a home or office computer.

In a hypothetical spill in Cook Inlet off of Kalifornsky Beach while a brisk southeast wind was blowing, DOTMOD showed the oil would ride back and forth on the tide without either leaving the Inlet or moving north towards Anchorage. Instead, the wind would push

it west across the Inlet, oiling Kalgin Island and the Inlet's west

shot from the DOTMOD program. The oil is represented by the black dots in mid-Inlet.

The Cordova-based Oil Spill Recovery Institute is developing a spill trajectory model for Prince William Sound. Called "OSCAR" — for Oil Spill Contingency and Response model — it will forecast not only the oil's behavior on the surface of the water, but also what happens to oil suspended in the water column below the surface. According to Walter Cox, technology coordinator for the Institute, the model should be complete later this year.

## DOTMOD Details

- Download from web site of Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Council: [www.circac.org](http://www.circac.org)
- Requires Windows PC to run
- Projects path of oil spilled anywhere in Cook Inlet
- Factors in wind, tide and sea current information

shore at Redoubt Bay.

This spill is depicted on the chart at left, which is a screen

**SEWARD** — The Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) has installed a system of 43 Hewlett Packard computers that allows students to pilot tankers, escort tugs and other vessels through the waters of Prince William Sound.

Dennis Lodge, the just-retired head of the Maritime Department at the center, said the decision to go for a powerful new simulator was triggered when the facility's 15-year-old radar simulators began to wear out in 1998. With help from \$2.5 million in funding arranged by Sen. Ted Stevens, the new simulator, made by Kongsborg Norcontrol of Connecticut, was born.

"It was my dream to see such leading-edge technology at AVTEC before my retirement," said Lodge, who represents Seward on the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens'

Advisory Council.

A student using the simulator stands in a classroom converted to resemble the bridge of a real ship. Video screens and projectors create a simulated Prince William Sound around the bridge. The video version of Prince William Sound was assembled from more than 1,500 photographs of the Sound taken last summer by the staff of the center.

The system's computers are programmed so that the student can find himself or herself on any one of a number of simulated vessels, according to Jim Herbert, who became head of the maritime program after Lodge retired in December. Vessels in the "ship library" include two oil tankers, Alyeska's Prevention and Response Tugs such as the *Alert*, oil supply vessels, ferries and fishing vessels.

The system is so realistic

it includes icebergs. The ship even "rolls" with the waves — meaning the video picture outside the bridge heaves up and down. Simulated or not, it's enough to induce seasickness in

the unwary landlubber who wanders in.

The simulator, Herbert said, "adds a real-world twist to what might otherwise be paper exercises and lectures."



**SEA LEGS** — With a student at the controls, the bridge simulator heels to a virtual swell at the Alaska Vocational Technical Center in Seward.

## BARGE: To spend winter at Naked Island

Continued from from Page 1

spill, they fear that oil spilled in this area would rapidly be carried in their direction.

Wayne Coleman, a council board member from Kodiak, addressed the subject at a special board meeting on Feb. 2.

"The downstream communities have three concerns," Coleman said. "Continuous availability, a high state of readiness, and positioning for rapid response at Hinchinbrook Entrance — inside and out."

Hinchinbrook Entrance is the passage between Hinchinbrook and Montague islands where loaded oil tankers leave Prince William Sound and enter the Gulf of Alaska.

Greg Jones, the head of Alyeska's operations in Valdez, said the company is sensitive to the concerns of downstream communities, but believes they are well protected. The addition of powerful new tugs to the escort system over the past couple of years have dramatically reduced the risk of a spill, he said.

"You have to look at things as a totality," Jones said. "The best protection we can afford to everybody, including the downstream communities, is to not have an accident."

Jones noted that having the barge at Naked Island would actually improve response times for spills in northern Prince Wil-

liam Sound. Examples he cited included Bligh Reef, scene of the *Exxon Valdez* spill, and Valdez Arm, where icebergs sometimes enter the shipping lanes.

Alyeska moved the barge late last month, citing safety concerns about Port Etches at the southwest end of Hinchinbrook Island, where the barge has been stationed for the last 10 years. The new location is Outside Bay on the west side of Naked Island. That is about 30 miles northwest of Port Etches.

The barge was originally positioned at the Hinchinbrook Entrance so it could respond to oil spills in that area and at Seal Rocks, located several miles outside the Sound in the Gulf of Alaska.

Alyeska said high winds made it dangerous to keep the barge at Port Etches in the winter months, and in late 1998 proposed moving it to Naked Island from October through March. The rest of the year, it would be stationed back at Port Etches.

The proposal bounced between Alyeska, the Coast Guard and the state of Alaska for over two years before Alyeska finally moved the barge last month.

Because the move affects how quickly Alyeska could respond to a spill in the Hinchinbrook Entrance-Seal Rocks area, the Department of Environmental

Conservation determined it would require amending the oil-spill contingency plans governing tanker operations out of Valdez.

But when Alyeska sought the amendment, the agency turned down the request, saying the company had not supplied enough information to make its case that the Port Etches location was unsafe. The council had argued in comments on the proposal that further information was needed to determine whether Naked Island was safer in winter than Port Etches.

Alyeska then got Coast Guard concurrence that the barge should be moved for safety reasons. The Department of Environmental Conservation deferred to the Coast Guard on the safety question, but stuck to its position that the contingency plan would have to be amended to reflect the barge's new location and show what Alyeska is doing to offset the increase in response time for Hinchinbrook Entrance and Seal Rocks.

That process started in late January with a call for public comments on the proposed amendment. The council at its Feb. 22-23 meeting was expected to approve comments. The comment period was to close Feb. 26.

In a letter last month, Alyeska estimated the barge's new location would require an additional 2.5 hours of travel to reach a spill at the northeast tip of Montague Island in Hinchinbrook Entrance. Alyeska said in the Jan. 9 letter that, during the winter months

when the barge was at Naked Island, prevailing southeasterly winds in the winter would move oil from a Hinchinbrook Entrance spill into Prince William Sound rather than southwest towards the downstream communities. Even with the change, Alyeska says, it can still meet required response times to Hinchinbrook-area spills.

Until the issue of amending the contingency plan is resolved, the barge is posted at Naked Island and ready for action. However, it is technically out of service for safety reasons until either the contingency plan is amended or April 1 arrives and the barge moves back to Port Etches.

On Feb. 2, the council wrote the Department of Environmental Conservation to suggest certain requirements for approving a temporary out-of-service status hadn't been met, and urging that Alyeska be required to take interim measures while the contingency plan amendment is in process. Those measures, the council said, could include restricting tanker operations at Hinchinbrook Entrance in bad weather, tethering an escort tug to tankers in Hinchinbrook Entrance, or placing response equipment on beaches in the area.

"The key point to be considered while solving this problem," wrote Executive Director John Devens, "should be the importance of protecting the sensitive resources in the Hinchinbrook Entrance area and coastlines downstream from these that are at risk from an oil spill."

## Publications, presentations and reports are available from council offices

### Reports

1999-2000 Year in Review  
(Annual Report). 11/1/2000  
PWS RCAC Fire Protection  
Review. 10/9/2000

Valdez Marine Terminal Maintenance - Review of Outstanding and Deferred Maintenance Work Orders Ballast Water Treatment Facility. 9/1/2000

Mitigating Navigation Hazards from Columbia Glacier Icebergs in Prince William Sound. 5/26/2000

RCAC Video "A Noble Experiment". 5/4/2000

Biological Invasions of Cold Water Coastal Ecosystems: Ballast-Mediated Introductions in Port Valdez/Prince William Sound Alaska. 3/15/2000.

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.

Copies of most council documents are available to the public free of charge. Contact the council's Anchorage office (see back page) to order.

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

1998-99 Year in Review (Annual Report). 10/1/1999.

SR\Annual Report\98-99

Site Specific Oil Spill Response Plans for Sensitive Resources Near the Village of Chenega. 8/6/1999. Chenega\response\



**FORUM** — The council operated its information booth at the Alaska Forum on the Environment in Anchorage earlier this month. Here, board member Paul McCollum chats with Bob Shavelson, executive director of Homer-based Cook Inlet Keeper. Photo by Leann Ferry

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