

THE OBSERVER

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Pathfinder grounding investigation report released by Coast Guard in May

By **ALAN SORUM**

Council Project Manager

On December 23, 2009, Crowley Maritime Corporation's tugboat Pathfinder was serving as an ice scout vessel in Prince William Sound. At about 6:18 pm that evening, the 136-foot vessel ran aground on Bligh Reef, the same reef on which the Exxon Valdez grounded twenty years earlier.

The grounding of the Pathfinder caused extensive damage to its hull opening two fuel tanks along its centerline. Crowley initially estimated that 6,410 gallons of diesel fuel were released into the water, based on its estimate of the amount of fuel in the tanks at the time of the incident. However, when the vessel was subsequently dry-docked, 1,088 gallons of diesel were found remaining in the damaged fuel



The Pathfinder, surrounded by oil spill boom, is tethered to a dock in Valdez after the grounding on Bligh Reef. Photo by Donna Schantz, citizens' council.

tanks, resulting in Crowley reducing its estimate of the amount spilled to 5,322 gallons.

The Coast Guard's official report on the Pathfinder incident, released in May of this year, lists a number of factors that contributed to the event. At the root of these factors lies a story of inattention and complacency on the part of the tug's master and crew, resulting in their failure to follow standard procedures, poor communication between them, and a loss of situational awareness.

The Pathfinder's mission was to help protect the Sound's environment by serving as an ice scout. Crowley is known for its professionalism and the tug's grounding shook management of the company to its core. The company stepped up to address issues related to the incident and was painfully honest after the incident about the mistakes and omissions of its crew.

Crowley launched a thorough investigation of the incident, and shared its findings with the Coast Guard, the state, and the public. However, results of the Coast Guard's investigation into the grounding were not released until May of 2011. Coast Guard officials said that delays in releasing its reports stemmed from the complexity of the

See page 7, **PATHFINDER GROUNDING**

Teaching tomorrow's spill responders



An oil spill educational event was held in Homer on April 6, hosted by the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve. Photo: Axel Gilam, Discovery Lab volunteer explains to Homer resident George Matz the process for cleaning an oiled bird. Photos by Amanda Johnson.



For more on this event, see page 5.

Alaska legislature in cliffhanger on future of coastal management program

By **STAN JONES**

Director of Administration and External Affairs

As this issue of The Observer went to press, the Alaska Legislature was at work in a special session in an effort to keep the Alaska Coastal Management Program under state control.

Absent legislative action, the program was scheduled to pass to federal control on July 1.

After a 90-day regular session and a 27-day special session, the Legislature adjourned without action on two issues of concern to the citizens'

council. One was preservation of the coastal management program. The other was creation of a statewide council to coordinate the battle against invasive species.

No invasive-species legislation at all was introduced in either session this year.

However, legislation to extend the coastal management program was under consideration during both the regular session and the first

See page 6, **ALASKA LEGISLATURE**

New Coast Guard leadership in Alaska

Two high-ranking positions in Alaska's U.S. Coast Guard changed hands in recent months.

The U.S. Coast Guard's Marine Safety Unit in Valdez has a new leader: Commander Benjamin J. Hawkins, a native of Hastings Michigan.

Command of Alaska's Seventeenth Coast

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AK Chamber of Commerce - AK Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Assoc. - Chenega Bay - Chugach Alaska Corp. - Cordova - CDFU - Homer - Kenai Peninsula Borough - Kodiak - Kodiak Island Borough - Kodiak Village Mayors - OSREC - Port Graham Corp. - PWS Aquaculture Corp. - Seldovia - Seward - Tatitlek - Valdez - Whittier

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Busy council volunteer passionate about educating youth about the Exxon Valdez oil spill

Kate Alexander, member of the council’s Information and Education Committee and native of Hummelstown, Pennsylvania, recalled seeing images of the Exxon Valdez oil spill on the news in 1989. Eight years old at the time, she remembers her parents’ negative emotional reaction.

In January of 2003, just after graduating from Dartmouth with a degree in biology, Alexander moved to Alaska to take an internship position with the Prince William Sound Science Center in Cordova and came to understand more about how the spill was still affecting Alaskans.

She was excited to come up and work for an organization where she could put her skills in research science, education and outreach together under one roof.

In 2006, Alexander coordinated a field trip to take high school students from the oiled region into the Sound to learn about the oil still lingering from the spill. This expedition was the first time Alexander witnessed Exxon Valdez oil, under just a few shovelfuls of pebbles on a beach in the Sound.



1989 Exxon Valdez oil in gravel beach sediments, much like the oil found by Alexander in 2006. This photo was taken by David Janka, Cordova resident, on the east shore of Latouche Island in Prince William Sound on May 28, 2011.

The students from that trip put together a lot of outreach materials, and the group visited Washington, D.C., to share what they found with other students and legislators.

As a result of that expedition and her work

with the science center developing education programs, Alexander acquired an in-depth knowledge about oil spill education for youth in the Prince William Sound region. As education coordinator for the science center, Alexander worked with the council’s outreach coordinator, Linda Robinson, on projects, including getting the Alaska Oil Spill Curriculum online.

Alexander used her knowledge of oil spill education again recently when she helped Alaska Geographic to initiate its Prince William Sound student expedition program, which involved a discussion of the history of the spill. The past two years, the expedition took students on a search into the Sound to see the oil.

“It’s a very, very powerful experience,” Alexander said about sharing the moment of discovery with the students.

Alexander left Alaska for a short time to get her master’s degree in Public Administration, and upon her return, went to work for the Copper River Watershed Project.

“What I like about it, is that it’s similar to what the council is, in that it’s an organization that represents people from the region,” Alexander said. “It’s a way to help make sure people from the region are engaged in the discussions that have a direct and immediate impact on their lives.”

In spring of 2009, Robinson asked Alexander if she would be interested in joining the council’s new Information and Education Committee.

“It’s been great,” Alexander said. “I really enjoy working with the dynamic group of individuals who are involved in the committee. It’s great to have that network. Living and working in rural Alaska, it can be hard to see outside your immediate community and what’s right in your face. It’s great to be able to connect with educators and other resources throughout the oiled region.”

“The Information and Education Committee is an exciting committee due to the expertise, enthusiasm and focus on youth and outreach that Kate and members like her bring to it,”



Alexander assists 7th grade students with recording water quality data for Odiak Pond in Cordova, AK. Photo courtesy of the Copper River Watershed Project.

Robinson said. “Kate seems to have boundless energy to create and participate in exciting programs in the Prince William Sound region with students. We are very fortunate to have her as part of our organization.”

Alexander also said she feels fortunate to be able to represent the council to the community, which she does through the various youth programs that she works with.

She is excited about the council’s recent efforts to involve youth by co-funding programs with other groups. “It’s exciting to find ways for organizations to keep working together to make these programs happen, and happen well,” she said.

Aside from the youth education programs, Alexander’s passion, she also enjoys being on the committee to help with outreach.

“The committee is helping to bring innovative and creative ideas to help raise awareness of who we are and what we do,” Alexander said.

Copper River Watershed Project:
www.copperriver.org
Prince William Sound Science Center:
www.pwssc.org
Oil spill curriculum:
http://bit.ly/PWSRCAC_Education
Youth Involvement project page:
<http://www.pwsrca.org/outreach/youth.html>
Alaska Geographic expeditions:
<http://bit.ly/YouthExpedition2010>

Citizens’ council chooses new executive officers

By STAN JONES
Director of Administration and External Affairs

The council board elected a new seven-member executive committee during its May meeting in Valdez.

Dorothy Moore, who represents the city of Valdez on the board, was elected president. She succeeds Walter Parker of the Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition in the post.

“I look forward to carrying on the council’s work as an advocate for the safe transportation of crude oil through Prince William Sound,” Moore said. “An example of that work is our maintenance audit of some of the systems at Alyeska Pipeline’s Valdez tanker terminal, which is now over 30 years old. I think

having the council serve as an extra set of eyes helps make sure problems are addressed before they become crises, and that benefits everyone in and around the Sound – citizens, industry, and regulators alike.”

Besides Moore, the executive committee, which will serve until the board’s May 2012 meeting, is as follows:

Pat Duffy, representing the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce, is the new vice presi-

dent; Thane Miller of the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation is secretary; and Sheri Buretta of Chugach Alaska Corp. is treasurer. The members at large are Parker, the outgoing president; Blake Johnson of the Kenai Peninsula Borough; and Steve Lewis of Seldovia.

The council also seated two new board members at the Valdez meeting. Larry Evanoff will represent the community of Chenega Bay, and Roy Totemoff will represent the community of Tatitlek.



Dorothy Moore

Prince William Sound,” Moore said. “An example of that work is our maintenance audit of some of the systems at Alyeska Pipeline’s Valdez tanker terminal, which is now over 30 years old. I think



Thane Miller



Sheri Buretta



Walt Parker



Blake Johnson



Steve Lewis



Pat Duffy



Larry Evanoff



Roy Totemoff

From the Executive Director

Becoming “fish literate” and grasping what is at stake

Sometimes you do not know what you do not know. A year and some months ago I took this job as executive director of the citizens’ council feeling reasonably confident I understood the majority of technical issues and risks surrounding the safe transportation of oil.

After all, I had a background as spill responder and a naval architect managing “downstream” spill response for a major oil company involving potential spills from terminals, pipelines and ships. For a few years I was employed by a ship classification society teaching all aspects of technical ship management and stewardship to ship owners. I even worked two decades as an environmental and marine safety regulator.

Protecting the environment is an inspiring goal, and a great slogan. Every employer I have ever had (except perhaps at my high school hamburger-flipping job) espoused it. I think most folks have at least an aesthetic appreciation for the environment.

In oil and shipping towns like Valdez, Anchorage, Houston and London, there is a familiar industry and regulator vernacular and jargon. Oil and shipping are big business in every major port with influence that is felt in every coastal state and capitol city. I feel pretty well prepared for most conversations. But, upon further reflection it seems a much deeper appreciation of the environment and maybe a whole new vernacular is needed to truly grasp what we have to protect and what is at stake in Prince William Sound.

Despite the incomparable Alaskan scenery and a few exciting days on the water, this appreciation doesn’t come as quickly as it should. Fish and fish culture and even fish politics are central and have always been to the conversa-

tions and concerns of the communities of the Sound and the rest of coastal Alaska, including the communities outside the Sound that were affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. The commercial and tourist fishing industries drive our economy and employ more Alaskans than any other industry.

Only slowly as you travel around a bit does the awareness of what is at stake start to build. This whole fish culture relies on the foundation of well-informed stewardship. Stewardship involves enlightened public and private management and support of the resource in terms of hatcheries and long-term sustainability of fish stocks by protection from over fishing.

This sustainability also requires preserving the pristine coastal Alaskan maritime environment that makes the fishing industry possible. The public and private hatcheries around Prince William Sound and coastal Alaska are not just dots on the chart indicating remote locations where spill response equipment is warehoused and pre-staged in locked, slowly rusting shipping containers.

They are incubators for the sustainability of an entire industry. Fish that reliably return year after year after year bring Alaska millions of dollars, thousands of jobs, and drive the fate, health and sustenance of many coastal communities and countless families.

Ocean ranching, dip-netting, shoulder-to-shoulder fishing with tourists on a shore or river bank, subsistence fishing, celebrating the “first fish” caught, fish openers, and cost recovery fishing—what we have in Alaska is special. It takes a whole new jargon and vernacular just to understand it.

It is also vulnerable. Other maritime regions are struggling with overfishing and deteriora-

rated and increasingly industrialized marine environments. An oil spill from Alaska’s other major industry could wipe it out. The unintended introduction of non-indigenous species or waterborne pathogens into Alaskan waters from ship’s ballast tanks can alter the maritime food chain or endanger entire fisheries. It has already happened in other waters. As most newcomers to this region eventually do, I am slowly learning the vernacular and becoming “fish literate.”

The communities and entities that comprise the council understand the majesty and fragility of fish and the Alaskan maritime environment. We are working every day to better understand the oil industry and to look for opportunities to improve environmental protections through collaboration and cooperation. We work to educate ourselves and to advise and positively influence the industry and its regulators to maintain and improve the protections necessary to safeguard our maritime environment. Understanding what is at stake is part of the process. We are “citizens promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers.”

We are the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council.

• Mark Swanson is the executive director of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council.



Mark Swanson

From Alyeska Pipeline

Alyeska-funded health and safety fair travels Sound

By JOE KUCHIN
Acting Senior Director
Valdez Operations, Alyeska

The tug/barge Krystal Sea/Cordova Provider was tied up at the Ship Escort/Response Vessel System dock on the morning of April 10. Instead of oil spill response equipment, the barge was loaded with medical supplies and public health providers, poised to depart on the 11th annual Prince William Sound Traveling Health and Safety Fair.

Alyeska is committed to maintaining strong relationships with the communities of the Sound. Residents of the Sound routinely help respond during drills, and play a critical role in oil spill response. Every year, Alyeska sponsors several events to give back to the communities that support our efforts to safely transport crude oil beyond the waters of Prince William Sound. For more than ten years, the health fair has served this purpose.

During this week-long program, Alyeska uses oil spill response resources to bring health care providers to the communities of Valdez, Tatitlek, Chenega Bay, Whittier and Cordova. Once there, providers administer basic health care services and share safety messages in these communities. This year, volunteers included two nurses, a nutritionist, a physical therapist and volunteers trained to talk to kids and others about issues like domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide prevention.

The event began in Valdez, proceeded south to Tatitlek, then southwest across the Sound to Chenega Bay, then north to Whittier, and finally back across the Sound to Cordova. The theme this year was “Know Your Numbers,” and, at the fair, kids and community members alike came in to learn their baseline health information, such as height and weight, as well as cholesterol, glucose, and blood pressure. In the afternoons, the volunteers headed into the classrooms to talk to kids about nutrition, dating violence, suicide prevention, and other topics.

In Chenega Bay and Tatitlek, volunteers held women’s teas for the women of the community.

Around a table of tea, fruit and crafts, women chatted and discussed health and wellness issues. A wider range of ages were represented. In Chenega Bay, the youngest was an infant, and there were several elders in attendance. A similar event was held for men. The traveling health fair also included community dinners in these smaller communities. Volunteers were in the kitchen for much of the afternoon, and the dinners stretched leisurely into the evenings. In Tatitlek, the event was extended by an impromptu basketball game.

The planning for this health fair starts at least six months before the volunteers head to sea. Alyeska is the primary sponsor of the event, but it would not be possible without donations from countless companies and organizations, such as Alaska Marine Lines, who contribute the Krystal Sea/Cordova Provider. The health fair is a strong tradition for Alyeska and a meaningful way to thank those who call Prince William Sound home.



Joe Kuchin



Health Fair volunteers return to Valdez after a week in the Sound. Photo by Mike Levshakoff.

Reflections on a disaster

Notes from the Chenega Memorial Day service

By DOROTHY MOORE

President of the board of directors of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

Chenega Bay, June 10, 2011

It is good to stop and remember.

The day started early for the trip across the Sound to attend the Chenega Memorial Day Service and Celebration. This annual event was hosted by the Chenega IRA Council and the Chenega Corporation. The weather was overcast but not stormy. The water was calm.

We were welcomed by Lawrence Evanoff, president of the Chenega IRA Council, and Charles Totemoff of the Chenega Corporation. We toured the improvements that have been made to the area. Father Thomas conducted the memorial service and the casting of flowers into the bay.

As I reflected on the loss of life, the loss of a community, I came to several realizations, lessons I had forgotten in the busy pace of life we live. Prince William Sound is a big place. It is a beautiful place. And on this day it was sunny and calm.

We can learn from disasters.

We need to remember the past so we don't have to repeat history.

Having lived through two disasters, one man-made and the other natural, we need to adopt the girl scout motto, "be prepared" and add to it, "learn from the past," so our children will not have to relearn or relive the past.

I wish to thank the Chenega IRA Council and the Chenega Corporation for the invitation to share in the program, and for the opportunity to stop and experience the Sound and a very special village site.



Lawrence Evanoff and Charles Totemoff welcome the crowd in front of new bunk houses constructed at the Chenega Island village site. Photo by Dorothy Moore.

The original Chenega Village was the oldest continuously inhabited village in Prince William Sound. The name of this Alutiiq village was first reported in the 1880 census. The original village site was on southern Chenega Island. On March 24, 1964, it was destroyed by a tsunami resulting from Alaska's Good Friday earthquake. Approximately one-third of the residents of Chenega Village perished in the tsunami; it constituted the earthquake's single largest death site. For 20 years, members of Chenega Village lived uprooted from their home until the new village of Chenega Bay was established on Evans Island in 1984. Each year, survivors, elders, and other community members gather at the old village site for a memorial. Right: A new memorial altar has been built with a plaque in the floor of the altar. Photo by Dorothy Moore.



This plaque inside the new Chenega church altar lists the names of those lost in the tsunami following the March 27, 1964 earthquake. "Vechnaya pamyat" means "eternal memory." Photo by Dorothy Moore.



Chenega community members are invited to be in the front row during the memorial service. Photo by Dorothy Moore.



The gathering moves from the altar site to the beach where flowers are thrown into the sea in memory of the victims of the tsunami. Photo by Dorothy Moore.



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Teaching tomorrow's oil spill responders

By JESSICA RYAN

Education Coordinator

Kachemak Bay Research Reserve

Today's children have no memory of the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. They may have heard stories from parents who lost wages when fishing was suspended, or who helped with cleanup efforts. But these stories don't drive home the point that spills are always a hazard of oil exploration and transportation in Alaska. During some future spill, today's students may be called upon to cope with the devastating impacts of oil on the waters and coastlines bordering their communities.

How do we begin to prepare them to be oil spill responders? To address this need, the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve approached the Prince William Sound Regional

by the council in late 2010.

The Kachemak Bay Research Reserve, located in Homer, is part of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, which is comprised of 28 coastal reserves in 22 states and Puerto Rico. The national reserve system is managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA. Each reserve is made up of a partnership between NOAA and a state entity. In the case of the Kachemak Bay reserve, that state entity is the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Sport Fish Division.

The reserve engages in coastal research and education within Kachemak Bay. The reserve's education department offers public and school-based education using a "Discovery Lab" format. These labs utilize an on-site science lab

mapping efforts

- information on oil spill planning, response drills, animal rescue methods

- and a summary of regional response planners.

The reserve received materials and assistance from the Prince William Sound council, Homer's Pratt Museum, Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, Cook Inlet Spill Prevention and Response, Inc., and the U.S. Coast Guard. Fifty-seven people attended the public lab on April 6, including the council's executive director, Mark Swanson, Outreach Coordinator Linda Robinson, and Project Manager Amanda Johnson.

The lab was then modified for school groups from grades 4-7, who visited during the next three weeks. During these 90-minute labs, students gained an understanding of the impacts of the Exxon Valdez oil spill through personal stories shared by reserve staff who worked on cleanup crews during the spill, and through photographs.

Students participated in a simulated animal rescue, and role-played an oil spill response scenario that included responding to a simulated threat to critical salmon streams, shorebird habitats, and seal haul outs.

They received an introduction to topographic and nautical map reading, and participated in an outdoor activity designed to teach them how to measure slope, turbidity (sediment suspended in water), and vegetation cover while completing shore mapping data sheets. Six school groups with a total of 126 students and 24 teachers and



Visitors were able to see and smell a jar of beach sediments coated in oil from the Exxon Valdez spill. These sediments were collected in March, 2006 from Herring Bay on Knight Island in Prince William Sound. Photo by Amanda Johnson.

parents participated in the student Discovery Labs.

Funding for this Discovery Lab was through the council's Youth Involvement outreach program, which seeks to educate students and the general public in the Exxon Valdez oil spill region about the council and topics related to its mission. Limited funds are available to help support those projects or activities that best support the council's mission and responsibilities. The next deadline to submit an application is December 15, 2011.

The Kachemak Bay Research Reserve has assembled a traveling kit for teachers who would like to replicate "Could it Happen Here? Coastal Habitat Mapping and Oil Spill Response" in their classrooms.

For more information on the traveling kit, or details on the Youth Involvement Program funds, contact Linda Robinson: 907-277-7222 or robinson@pwsrccac.org.



Above: Roan Rediske, Discovery Lab volunteer, tells a volunteer about salt marsh mapping in Kachemak Bay. Below: Rediske demonstrates the salt marsh mapping software. Photos by Amanda Johnson.



classroom and an adjacent coastal salt marsh to explore an array of resource and science-based topics. The format works equally well for the general public and for area school groups.

With funding from the council, staff at the reserve developed *Could it Happen Here? Coastal Habitat Mapping and Oil Spill Response*, a Discovery Lab presented in April of 2011. The month-long outreach program included a two-hour lab open to the public and six labs for student groups.

The two-hour public lab on April 6 provided a wealth of information, including:

- an overview of the Exxon Valdez oil spill,
- information on current and proposed Cook Inlet oil platforms
- a synopsis of ocean circulation patterns and ocean floor mapping
- an introduction to topographic and nautical map reading
- data from the reserve's coastal

Citizens' Advisory Council with a request for funding to develop a month of programming on habitat mapping and oil spill response for the public and kindergarten through twelfth grade school groups. The request was approved



Mark Swanson, executive director of the council (left) and Linda Robinson, outreach coordinator for the council (second from right) talk to Homer residents and answer questions about a variety of topics related to the council and oil spills. Photo by Amanda Johnson.

COAST GUARD: New leadership for Prince William Sound

Continued from page 1

Guard District, based in Juneau, has been handed over to Rear Admiral Thomas P. Ostebo, originally of Kings Park, New York.



Rear Admiral Thomas Ostebo

Hawkins' most recent assignment was in Washington, D.C. where he served as Chief of the Human Element and Ship Design Division in the Office of Design and Engineering Standards at Coast Guard Headquarters, according

to his official biography. He also recently served on the U.S. delegations to Arctic Council working groups and the Antarctic Treaty System consultative meetings.

Hawkins is a graduate of the Coast Guard Academy and the University of Michigan and holds Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in naval architecture and marine engineering. He has received the Coast Guard's Meritorious Service Commendation and Achievement Medals, and the Marine Safety Professional Insignia.

During the change of command ceremony in Valdez on June 7, Hawkins replaced Commander Darryl Verfaillie. Verfaillie has been promoted to the rank of Captain, and will be the Chief of Prevention for the 9th Coast Guard District in Cleveland.

Following the ceremony, Commander Hawkins shared that he is excited at the opportunity to serve in Valdez and working closely with the many stakeholders in Prince William Sound.

"Working in partnership and leveraging our collective strengths, we can overcome the challenges of today while preparing for the demands of tomorrow," Hawkins said.

Ostebo's most recent assignment was as the Coast Guard's assistant commandant for engineering and logistics, where he was responsible for all naval, civil, aeronautical, and industrial engineering and logistics for the Coast Guard's \$22 billion inventory of buildings, ships and planes. His awards include two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, three Meritorious Service Medals, two Coast Guard Commendation Medals, and the Coast Guard Achievement Medal.

Ostebo took the helm at the Seventeenth Coast Guard District on May 19. The previous commander, Rear

Admiral Christopher C. Colvin, has been reassigned to the Pacific area, based in Alameda, California.



Commander Ben Hawkins, right, is the new leader of the Coast Guard's Marine Safety Unit in Valdez. In this 2008 photo, he inspects damage to survival suits recovered from the Alaska Ranger crew. (Official Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer Sara Francis)

ALASKA LEGISLATURE: Cliffhanger on coastal management program

Continued from page 1

special session, with many observers expecting the state House and Senate to reach a compromise version before going home for the summer. That hope appeared to end when the first special session adjourned on May 14.

As a result, state management of the program was set to end on June 30.

Then the Legislature convened in special session again on June 27 in a last-ditch effort to preserve state management. No decision had been reached as of Observer press time on June 28.

The end of state management would not mean an end to the coastal program itself. It was created by federal law in the 1970s, and the federal government administers it

if a state fails to do so. That would become the case if state management ended in Alaska, which took over the program in 1979. Administration would pass to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, parent agency of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The citizens' council has always supported the coastal management program as a desirable vehicle for incorporating the concerns of coastal residents into the decision-making process for development activities taking place nearby.

Formerly, the council was identified as a named review participant in the program regulations. That meant the council's comments were considered and responded to by the state on the same basis as those from coastal communities and state

agencies such as the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

This was of considerable value to the council, as the coastal management program process was used for reviews of oil-spill contingency plans in the 1980s and 90s. However, in 2003, the state changed the program regulations so that they would no longer apply to contingency plan reviews.

Invasive species council remains on hold for now

A bill to create an invasive-species council was introduced in the 2009-2010 legislature by Rep. Craig Johnson of Anchorage. The panel would have coordinated efforts by state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations to deal with invasions of Alaska's lands and waters by non-indigenous species of plants, animals, and fish.

The measure died when the 2010 legislature adjourned and was never introduced in the 2011 legislature. However, such a measure could be introduced next year and see action before the legislature adjourns ahead of the 2012 state elections.

"We were sorry to see the lack of action on this issue," said Pat Duffy, chair of the council's Legislative Affairs Committee. "But we still support the concept and will work to get it passed if it's introduced next year."

The issue of invasive species has long been of concern to the citizens' council because of the risk that non-indigenous organisms arriving on the hulls of oil tankers or in the ballast water they carry could colonize Prince William Sound and harm indigenous populations, including commercial fish species.

PATHFINDER GROUNDING: Coast Guard report released

Continued from page 1

investigation and the need for thorough vetting of information before it was released. Coast Guard representatives Captain Adam Shaw and Commander Darryl Verfaillie provided a comprehensive report on the Pathfinder grounding to the council's board of directors in May of 2011.

The picture painted of the incident by the Coast Guard's report points to many actions that must be taken to prevent this sort of thing from happening again. Like many accidents, there wasn't a single mistake that caused the grounding of the Pathfinder. Crowley and Coast Guard investigators found a number of questionable practices being employed by the tug's crew, some of which joined together to cause the mishap.

Crowley had a comprehensive set of policies and procedures in place to prevent accidents like the Pathfinder grounding. One focus of the Coast Guard's investigation centered on the human behaviors and errors related to company policies which the crew did not follow in the moments before the grounding. Prior to the incident, company requirements of the crew included:

- Keeping accurate logs
- Assuring vigilance is preserved on the bridge
- Maintaining a lookout
- Laying out a proper voyage plan
- Upon transfer of the bridge watch, providing a plot of the vessel's position, intended track, course and speed to the relief personnel
- Relief personnel certifying confirmation of the plot, track, course and speed

Crowley and the Coast Guard reported that the crew had not followed these procedures, and that their failure to do so was the immediate cause of the accident. As a result of its investigation, Crowley terminated the captain and second officer and disciplined another employee.

The Coast Guard report cited a number of other factors that may also have played a role in the grounding incident:

- The captain carried stress from home with him on the job.
- The second mate had been

involved in two previous marine casualties that should have served as warning signs.

- The vessel's position was not verified at shift changes or during normal operations.
- Not knowing their actual location on the water affected the crew's situational awareness.
- The captain did not communicate effectively with the second mate, especially during watch changes.
- In the minutes leading up to the grounding, the captain ordered full speed ahead to return to port in Valdez without knowing exactly where the Pathfinder was or charting its intended course.
- Both the captain and second mate were facing the rear when the Pathfinder struck the reef.

Following the grounding, the captain of the Pathfinder made a decision to move the tug off the reef and proceed to a safe anchorage. The Coast Guard report noted that the captain made no attempt to ask for guidance from others and had no idea of the damage sustained to the vessel before taking this action.

The Coast Guard report also noted that an electronic chart plotter had been removed from the tug before the incident. However, according to Crowley, this plotter is not USCG-approved navigation equipment and the vessel carried operable radars and GPS which the crew could have used to accurately track the vessel's position.

Several of the issues listed in the report were included in a list of safety recommendations sent to Crowley by the Coast Guard soon after the incident. Crowley has already adopted those recommendations.

Full Coast Guard report on the Pathfinder incident:
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/55138260/Coast-Guard-Pathfinder-report>
For more details on this incident, visit previous editions of The Observer.
January 2011: <http://www.pwsr-cac.org/newsroom/Obs11.Jan/Crowley.html>
January 2010: <http://www.pwsr-cac.org/newsroom/Obs0110/Pathfinder.html>

Valdez High School students visit Kasistna Bay research lab

In June, students from Valdez High School visited the Kasistna Bay Laboratory and Research Center near Homer to learn about native coastal species, coastal ecology and various monitoring methods. In the photo, Cody LaBonte looks at a sea star he found while tidepooling on Peterson Bay near Homer. Photo by Jenny Heckathorn.

Find out more about their trip in the September issue of The Observer.



Copper River watershed area students learn about oil spill prevention and response in Sound



High school students participating in the Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment's Copper River Stewardship Program spent ten days in June exploring the Copper River watershed and visiting Valdez to learn from local land and resource management organizations as well as visiting the council's office. During their visit, Mark Swanson (far right) talked to the students about the role of citizen oversight, and Todd Taylors (far left), of the U.S. Coast Guard spoke about the roles and responsibilities of the Marine Safety Unit in Valdez. Taylors then took the kids on a tour of the Coast Guard's Valdez Vessel Traffic Center. The stewardship program was co-sponsored by the council. Photo by Jacquelyn Kennedy.



2011 Marine Firefighting Symposium

Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council is sponsoring the 6th Land-based Marine Firefighting Symposium in Valdez, Alaska, October 4-6, 2011.

Through this program, 50-75 firefighters and responders from Prince William Sound and other Alaska coastal communities will be provided hands-on classroom and field training opportunities that are tailored for the challenges faced in Alaska.

Topics include: shipboard basics, cruise ship awareness, fire plans and ships crew coordination, politics of a marine incident, and more.

Classes will be a mix of hands-on training and classroom lectures.

Jeff Johnson will be returning as an instructor for the event.

More information on the upcoming symposium, including a complete schedule, will be posted online as details are worked out:
<http://bit.ly/2011Symposium>



Contact Project Manager Alan Sorum if you are interested in participating or helping to sponsor the event:
907.834.5020
or
alan.sorum@pwsr-cac.org

Council Board Meetings

The citizens' council board of directors meets three times annually. The January meeting is held in Anchorage, the May meeting in Valdez, and the September meeting is rotated between the other communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. This September's meeting will be held in Kenai.

Here is the tentative board meeting schedule for the coming year:

- September 15-16, 2011: Kenai
- January 20-21, 2012: Anchorage
- May 3-4, 2012: Valdez

Board meetings are open to public, and an opportunity for the public to provide comments is provided at the beginning of each meeting. Agendas and other meeting materials are available on the council web site at www.pwsr-cac.org/about/boardintro.html. Or, contact either council office: Anchorage, 907-277-7222, or Valdez, 907-834-5000.



Members of the citizens' council's board of directors stand outside the Seldovia Conference Center in September 2010. Each September, the council holds a public meeting in a different community affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Photo by Amanda Johnson.

Anchorage Citizens Coalition honors council board member Walt Parker

The Anchorage Citizens Coalition recently named an annual award for Walt Parker, a citizens' council board member representing the Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition.

The Anchorage coalition provides a "...voice for responsible growth," and promotes building a northern community, strong healthy economy, parks and open spaces, meaningful public involvement, transportation choices, and affordable homes near jobs, according to their website.

At the award banquet on June 26, the first award winner was announced, and to his surprise—it was Walt Parker himself!

The Anchorage coalition notes that Walt has "spent over half a century making Alaska a better place to live, and decades in Anchorage as an elected official, transportation expert, university professor, environmental advocate, urban planner, dog musher, founder of parks and always a spokesman for open and fair public process."

Parker also helped to create the Far North Bicentennial Park, a several-thousand-acre wilderness area in Anchorage.

Parker was chair of the citizens' council board from 2010-2011, and has been involved in oil issues for much of his life, including the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act of 1973, the National Fisheries Act of 1976, the Alaska Oil Spill Commission in 1989-90, and the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

Congratulations, Walt!

International Oil Spill Conference

Staff and volunteers attended the International Oil Spill Conference in Portland, Oregon, in May. This conference contributes to a culture of preparedness within the oil spill response community and provides a forum for professionals from the international community, the private sector, government, and non-governmental organizations to meet and discuss innovations and best practices in oil spill prevention, preparedness, response

and restoration.

There were over 120 presenters and over 2000 attendees, and topics ranged from scientific discussions (such as dispersants and biodegradation) to case studies such as the Deepwater Horizon incident in the Gulf of Mexico. Interest in citizen oversight groups has increased, including in the international arena.



Linda Robinson

New oil spill curriculum based on Prince William Sound expedition

A new Science of Oil Spills curriculum, based on the Ocean Science and Leadership Expedition, a trip co-sponsored through the council's Youth Involvement program in 2010, has been created by Alice Dou-Wang of the Prince William Sound Science Center. On the expedition, nine high school students completed an intensive course based in Cordova and Valdez, focusing on oceanography, marine environmental issues, oil spills, and leadership skills. This experience led Dou-Wang to create the curriculum which is available for free from the council's website.

Funding opportunity for youth projects

Proposals have been received for the second year of the Youth Involvement Project. This project funds educational efforts that relate to our mission, and involve the Exxon Valdez oil spill affected area. You will continue to see articles in the Observer by students and staff and we hope to have students doing presentations about some of these projects at the council's annual Science Night in December.

If you have a project or idea for which you would like funding help, another request for proposals will be sent out in the fall with a deadline of December 15.

We wish you all a good, hopefully sunny, summer.

Council Outreach page:
http://bit.ly/PWSRCAC_Outreach
Youth Involvement project:
http://bit.ly/PWSRCAC_Youth
Science of Oil Spills curriculum:
<http://bit.ly/ScienceOfOilSpills>

Walt Parker accepted the first annual Walt Parker Sustainable Community Award from the Anchorage Citizens Coalition on Sunday, June 26. Left to right: Board member Cathy Hart, Walt Parker, Mark Swanson, and board member Sheri Buretta. Photo by Eric Downey.



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 19 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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