

Consent Agenda Briefing for PWSRCAC Board of Directors – May 2025

ACTION ITEM

Sponsor: Danielle Verna and the Scientific Advisory Committee

Project number and name or topic: 9110 - Prince William Sound Marine Bird Winter Survey

1. **Description of agenda item:** The Board is being asked to authorize a sole source contract with the Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) in an amount not to exceed \$80,060 for project 9110 to conduct marine bird and mammal surveys in Prince William Sound during fall and early winter months (September and November 2025). Prior Council-sponsored surveys in late winter (March) have identified areas that may warrant additional protection in the event of a spill during that time period, however the marine bird community varies throughout the non-breeding season and community composition is distinct between fall, early winter, and late winter. This project will document density, species composition, and distribution of marine birds and mammals, and identify high use areas in and around the tanker escort lane. This is the second of four proposed years of surveys during fall and early winter.

This contract authorization is contingent upon Board approval of the FY2026 budget, which contains funding for this project, at the May 2025 Board meeting.

2. **Why is this item important to PWSRCAC:** This project will monitor habitat and densities of marine bird species that were impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill and would be impacted again in the event of another spill. The project identifies nearshore habitat important to marine bird survival that may warrant additional protection and can inform spill responders. These surveys take place in fall and early winter months, which have been identified as gaps in the available survey data for marine birds in Prince William Sound, particularly in and around the tanker escort lanes. The survey areas include Port Valdez, the Valdez Arm, Tatitlek Narrows, Port Fidalgo, Storey, Peak, and Naked Islands, Rocky Bay, Port Etches, Zaikof Bay, and mid-Sound west of Port Gravina. Data will be made publicly available via the Alaska Ocean Observing System data portal and NOAA's Environmental Response Management Application.

3. **Previous actions taken by the Board on this item:**

Meeting	Date	Action
Board	5/2/2024	Adopted the FY2025 budget as presented during the Budget Workshop on April 25, 2024. Funding was approved for the first year of surveys as part of the FY2025 budget.
Board	5/2/2024	Authorized the Executive Director to enter into a sole source contract with the Prince William Sound Science Center to conduct project 9110 – PWS Marine Bird and Mammal Winter Surveys in 2024 in an amount not to exceed \$78,928.

4. **Summary of policy, issues, support, or opposition:** Not applicable.

FY2026 Marine Bird Fall and Early Winter Surveys Contract Authorization 3-4

5. **Committee Recommendation:** The Scientific Advisory Committee supports this project.
6. **Relationship to LRP and Budget:** Project 9110 – Prince William Sound Marine Bird and Mammal Fall and Early Winter Survey is in the proposed FY2026 budget in an amount of \$80,060.
7. **Action Requested of the Board of Directors:** Authorize the Executive Director to enter into a sole source contract with the Prince William Sound Science Center to conduct project 9110 – Marine Bird Fall and Early Winter Surveys in 2024 in an amount not to exceed \$80,060.

Note: This action is contingent upon approval of full funding of this project in the FY2026 budget.

8. **Alternatives:** None recommended.
9. **Attachments:** None.