

Consent Agenda Briefing for PWSRCAC Board of Directors – May 2024

ACTION ITEM

Sponsor: Danielle Verna and the Scientific Advisory Committee

Project number and name or topic: 9110 - Prince William Sound Marine Bird and Mammal Fall and Early Winter Surveys

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 \$78,928 for project 9110. The contract will be to conduct marine bird and mammal surveys in Prince William Sound during fall and early winter months (September and November 2024), falling within the FY2025 budget. 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. It is important to note that 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 contract authorization is contingent upon Board approval of the FY2025 budget, including funding for this project within the budget, at the May 2024 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 Gulf of Alaska data portal and NOAA's Environmental Response Management Application.

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

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Action</u>
Board	5/2/19	Board adopted the FY2020 budget as presented. This project was approved as part of the FY2020 budget and was presented as a sole source contract with the Prince William Sound Science Center. However, the project did not take place in FY2020.
Board	5/21/20	Board adopted the FY2021 budget as presented. This project was approved as a part of the FY2021 budget.

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Board	9/17/20	Board authorized a contract negotiation with the Prince William Sound Science Center to conduct the scope of work for project 9110 Marine Winter Bird Survey at an amount not to exceed \$39,000.
Board	9/16/21	Board accepted the report titled "Marine Winter Bird Surveys in Prince William Sound" by Anne Schaefer and Dr. Mary Anne Bishop of the Prince William Sound Science Center.
Board	5/4/23	Board adopted the FY2024 budget as presented which included funding for project 9110 PWS Marine Winter Bird Survey.

4. **Summary of policy, issues, support, or opposition:** Not applicable.
5. **Committee Recommendation:** The Scientific Advisory Committee supports this project.
6. **Relationship to LRP and Budget:** Project 9110 – PWS Marine Bird and Mammal Winter Survey is in the approved FY2025 annual work plan. The proposed FY2025 budget for project 9110 is \$78,928. This action is contingent upon approval of the FY2025 budget, including this project.
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 – PWS Marine Bird and Mammal Winter Surveys in 2024 in an amount not to exceed \$78,928.

Note: This action is contingent upon approval of full funding of this project in the FY2025 budget.

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