




Copper River Delta and Flats GRS Development Project

*PWSRCAC Board Meeting
September 18, 2025*



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2025 CRDF GRS Project Update

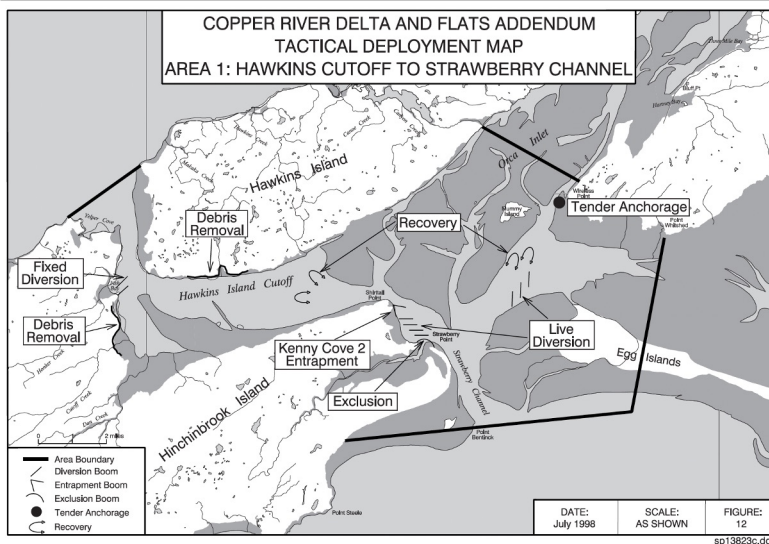
- Project scope and context
- Key themes from outreach and fieldwork
- Next steps

Photo: boat survey work September 8, 2025 / Robida

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Project Scope and Context

- Update Copper River Delta & Flats Addendum to Prince William Sound Contingency Plan (1999)
- Modernizing and updating that work to produce Geographic Response Strategies (GRS)
- Re-socializing GRS development



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Highlights & Key Themes



- Unique location and environment
- Strong interest from diverse group
- Local dedication, experience, and knowledge
- New technologies bring more safety
- Incremental gains
- Prevention

Photo: helicopter survey work September 11, 2025 / Robida

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Photo: Robida

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UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT - different approach -

- Classic fixed booming tactics not appropriate in most places
- Radical changes with tide (mud flats vs a shallow choppy lake)
- Big area, and diverse, but tactics can be generalized into “zones” with corresponding tactics
- Menu of strategies that are zone-appropriate rather than site-specific prescribed tactics

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Photo: boat survey work September 8, 2025 / DeCola

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UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT - tools & weather matter -

- Weather and tides will dictate every aspect of response
- Vessel capabilities critical
- Technology improvements in vessels and navigation = safer
- Local operator experience vital and cannot be replaced by technology

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Photo: helicopter survey work September 11, 2025 / Robida

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STRONG INTEREST - diverse crowd -

- Steering committee & workgroup established in early 2025
- 5 workgroup meetings to date – participation ranging from 27 to 44 (Microsoft Teams)
- 32 organizations have participated in workgroup meetings to date
- Anticipate 2 additional workgroup meetings before project close-out

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Photo: boat survey work September 8, 2025 / Robida

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LOCAL DEDICATION - solution focused -

- Approximately 1/3 of organizations represented in workgroup are located in Cordova
- Open Houses and impromptu meetings reached ~20 individuals
- Positive feedback from time spent in community
- Project is blend of academic, local knowledge, and spill response skills

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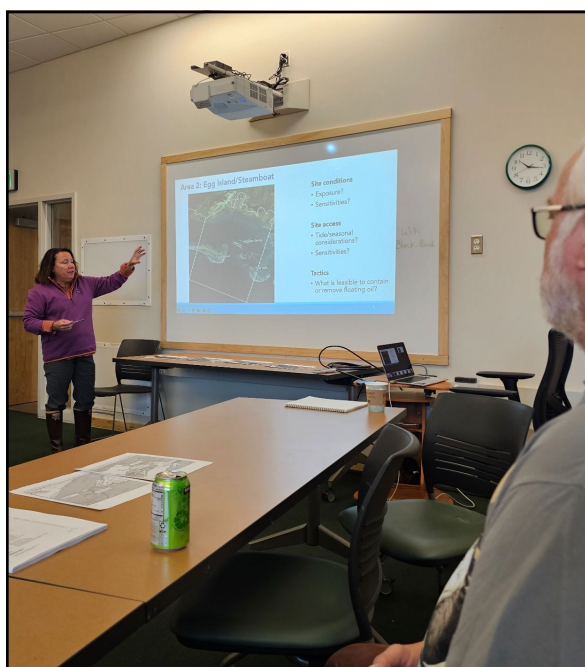
RESPONSE EXPERIENCE - trained and capable -

- Annual SERVS training & exercise program has created high level of literacy about oil spill response tactics and equipment, and incident management
- Locals suggest nearshore tactics & equipment they typically train with, too large, for this area
- Desire to try new tactics and feel challenged

Photo: SERVS working a GRS deployment, in Cordova, with contracted VOO, March 2014 / Robida

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LOCAL KNOWLEDGE - refining past work -

- Drawing from earlier work
- Strategies and tactics are transferable across “zones” of operation – inside waters, bars, outside waters

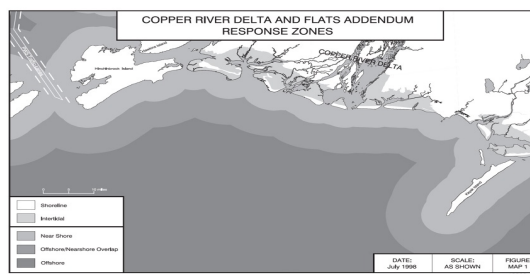


Photo: Open house meeting, September 9, 2025 / Robida

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LOCAL KNOWLEDGE - zone specifics -

We focused on areas behind bars and barrier islands, but below grass banks...

- Gillnet fleet operations can be adapted for spill response (collecting oil instead of fish)
- Tender anchorages behind barrier islands can become response hubs
- Other zones like “bars” are simply areas to avoid

Photo: helicopter survey work September 11, 2025 / Robida

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INSIDE WATER - zone specifics -

- Tide-dependent strategies
- Calmer operating conditions
- Deck-loading response equipment vs. towing it to site
- Some access via channels to avoid higher energy water
- If possible, pre-deploy task forces during high tide, work with the tides to target on-water recovery

Photo: helicopter survey work September 11, 2025 / Robida

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Photo: boat survey work September 8, 2025 / Robida

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GRS INFORMATION - capturing details -

- Channel markers reset annually and removed seasonally
 - Main channel maintained by USCG, Stick/Home channel and Racetrack funded through local organizations and set by fisherman
- Tide delays differ by zone
- Local place names
- VHF channel 6 vs 16

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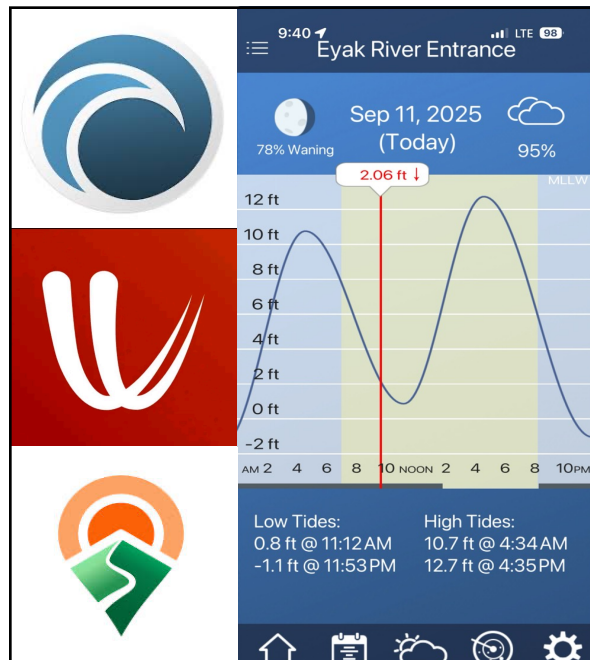
Photo: Screenshot of our tracks from boat survey work September 8, 2025 / DeCola

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NEW TECHNOLOGIES - safer navigation -

- The local fishing fleet makes risk calculations every time they leave the dock, but tools have changed
- Avenza custom base maps produced annually are relied upon heavily

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NEW TECHNOLOGIES - other tools -

- Other online apps in high use
 - Tides in real time
 - Windy weather app
- Local web cameras
- RCAC's own Kokinhenik Bar weather station
- Better cell coverage everywhere

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Photo: Robida

BOATS ARE DIFFERENT – more capable & safer -

- Jets vs outboard “unit” drives
- Aluminum vs fiberglass
- Bigger hulls in general, flat decks
- Better electronics
- More horsepower
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- SERVS and safety focus
- AMSEA training

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Photo: boat survey work September 8, 2025 / Robida

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RESPONSE CAPABILITY - equipment is better -

- High-efficiency skimmers
- Buster style systems
- Novel boom technologies
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- Local helicopter options
- Helicopter sling-load capability
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- Drones and remote sensing

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INCREMENTAL GAINS - filling planning gaps -

- 2 GRS from ~2003 in far western CRDF
- No GRS for most of the CRDF region
- Working with ADEC on appropriate format that's GIS compatible
- High sensitivity and vulnerability

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INCREMENTAL GAINS - thinking smaller -

- Vast area, but can be broken into zones
- Challenging, but not impossible
- Scale down from mini-barge based recovery
- Value in every gallon removed from the system

Photo: helicopter survey work September 11, 2025 / Robida

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PREVENTION - still the priority -

- Ongoing work to protect and enhance watershed and fishery, could be undone by one event
- Increasing tanker traffic with new oil coming online soon
- Maintain vigilance, avoid complacency
- Citizen involvement such an important part of process

Photo: boat survey work September 8, 2025 / Robida

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Next Steps: Project Wrap-up

- Draft GRS for CRDF
 - Zone-based strategies
 - Brief text annex to share local knowledge
- Develop GIS data for incorporation into ADEC database
- Production of GRS dependent on ADEC's internal processes
- Goal: Completed GRS ready approval in early 2026

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Beyond this Project:

- Continue to give this work visibility
- Do known or new technologies have utility in CRDF?
- How do we methodically build spill response skills in this environment, and a better vet tactic & equipment *best guesses*?
- Continue conversations with interested local partners such as OSRI, NVE, CDFU, Copper River Watershed Project, etc.

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**Talk more in
January...**



**THANK
YOU!**

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