



PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND REGIONAL CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

January 2025

Status Report

As of December 13, 2024

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill – 35th Anniversary

Project Manager Amanda Johnson, Outreach Coordinator Maia Draper-Reich, and Director of Communications Brooke Taylor coordinated efforts (online, in print, and in-person) to honor the 35th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. No official project was funded; however, staff used the opportunity to showcase the Council's mission in a variety of ways. A summary of these activities was shared at a recent IEC meeting, and is available online here: <https://tinyurl.com/EVOSupdate35th>. Note that list was current as of late February. Please contact Amanda Johnson for a final list.

3100 – Public Information Program

Objectives: Inform members of the general public, member entities, and agency and industry partners of PWSRCAC projects. Support legal requirements for ongoing updates to the public.

Accomplishments since last report: Staff continues to inform the general public and others about PWSRCAC's projects and mission through publications and online presence.

3200 – The Observer

The Observer: The Council's newsletter, *The Observer*, is produced three times per year in both print and email format. Individual articles are posted to the Council's website. Over 700 folks are subscribed to the email edition, approximately 2000 print copies are mailed to subscribers, and around 250-300 copies of each edition are given out either at the Council's information booth or other events.

Fall/Winter 2024 edition: <https://www.pwsrcac.org/document/the-observer-fall-winter-2024/>

Full archive: www.tinyurl.com/ObserverArchive

3300 – Annual Report

Objectives: Prepare and publish PWSRCAC's Annual Report each year to:

1. Inform the general public, member entities, and agency and industry partners of PWSRCAC projects and activities; and
2. Support legal requirements for ongoing updates to the public.

Accomplishments since last report: The latest annual report (July 2023-June 2024) was completed and released. It has been posted to our website and copies distributed to our mailing list. It has since been available at our booth events as well.

3410 – Fishing Vessel Program Community Outreach

Objectives: For bringing the realities of oil spill response tactics, equipment, and planning to life for citizens within the Exxon Valdez oil spill region communities, the fishing vessel community outreach program is a perfect venue. Each fall and spring SERVS holds its contracted fishing vessel program training in the following communities: Cordova, Valdez, Whittier, Seward, Homer, and Kodiak. The on-water portion of the training, viewed by the public during this outreach tour in partnership with Alyeska/SERVS, shows real-time capabilities of oil spill prevention and response equipment and tactics. This project contracts a local tour boat that will allow interested students, members of the public, and media to observe and learn about oil spill prevention and response.

Accomplishments since last report: The FY2025 tour took place in Whittier on Monday, September 30th. Overall, the tour went extremely well. Included in this status report are a description of the event, event details, and some example feedback comments.

Event Description: We had 96 passengers on board to spend time viewing the different training components in Shotgun Cove. Then we traveled to nearby Pigot Bay to discuss Geographic Response Strategies. Narration was provided by Mike Day and Kate Dugan of Alyeska and Jeremy Robida and Maia Draper-Reich of PWSRCAC staff. All PWSRCAC staff and volunteers on board engaged in informal education such as explaining props and otherwise connecting with attendees about our work.

The Stan Stephens Vessel transited from Valdez which allowed some of our staff, Alyeska staff, and the KVAK media representative to travel from Valdez for the day. It was perfect weather and the tour group saw killer whales in Passage Canal close to Whittier, which was incredible and a rare sighting for that area.

Attendees of Note: Alaska State Senator Cathy Giessel, ADEC Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and Spill Prevention and Response (SPAR) Division director as well as a few other ADEC staff (including our Ex Officio member Ytamar Rodriguez). Attendees from other Council partners included PWS Stewardship Foundation, Alaska Geographic, ADF&G, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Coast Guard.

Media Coverage: Because Whittier is the community with easiest access from Anchorage, Brooke Taylor did reach out to Anchorage and PWS media outlets. We ended up having attendance from Alaska's News Source (KTUU/Channel 2) and ABC/Fox (Channel 13) as well as KVAK from Valdez. She gave and facilitated interviews and all three outlets published stories:

- Alaska's News Source: [Whittier fishing vessels trained as "backbone of spill prevention" in Prince William Sound](#)
- ABC/Fox: [Whittier Oil Spill Training Tour](#)
- KVAK: [Fishing Vessel Training](#)

Youth Engagement: One of our goals for this iteration of the tour was to develop youth engagement activities.

- Voices from the Spill: On board, we had a version of Kate Morse's Voices from the Spill activity which we have facilitated previously on the Youth Involvement Bligh Reef Expedition Boat tour.
- Scavenger Hunt Activity: Maia also created, with encouragement from Andrea Korbe, a scavenger hunt style worksheet for middle and high school age students.
 - This worked very well with the 26 middle school and high school students on board.

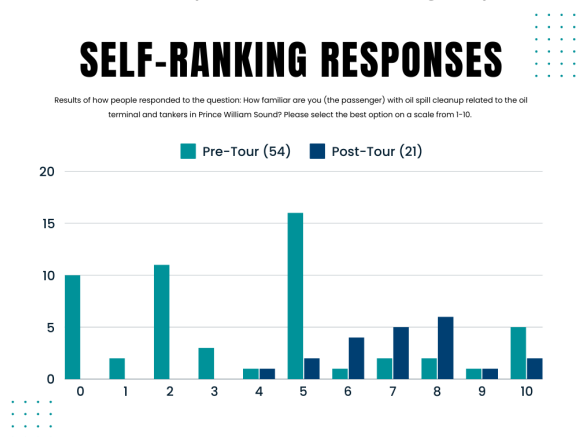
- The activity had the students speak to adults on board to ask questions, which their teacher informed Maia was a highlight for the students when they reflected after the tour:
 - From Whittier teacher Jennifer: "Once we got back to school, we had the students reflect on what they learned and what they thought was cool. They had some great answers. Many were impressed by the spill response training. For others, it was the first time they had ever seen Whittier from a boat, which made the day special for them. And the orcas certainly didn't hurt! Multiple kids also reflected that they appreciated the scavenger hunt and that it made it ok for them to go and talk with adults. Often, teenagers want to engage but don't always know how to break through the barriers. Your activity was perfect for helping them to connect to multiple adults on board the boat."
 - We also received handwritten thank you notes from the Whittier students.

Post-Tour Survey Responses: We received 21 responses through the short online form post-tour survey. This was shared on the boat over the microphone and with posted QR codes and through emailing the survey link to attendees the day after the tour.

In both the sign-up form and the post-tour survey, we asked the question: *How familiar are you with oil spill cleanup related to the oil terminal and tankers in Prince William Sound? Please select the best option on a scale 0-10.*

- ☐ 0 - I know nothing
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2 - I know a little bit, but not very much
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 - I probably know more than the average person in my community
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8 - This is an important topic to me; I know a lot!
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10 - I work in the field or am an expert

Here are the responses from the sign-up form and post-tour survey.



SELF-RANKING AVERAGES

Pre-Tour Average Response:
3.93

Post-Tour Average Response:
7.14

These numbers came from adding all the responses and then dividing by the amount of people who responded for each respective survey.

We asked two open-ended questions in the post-tour survey. Select responses are included here:

- *Overall, what was your impression of the tour on September 30?*
 - "Very well put together and organized. The information provided was also super helpful and "basic" enough that someone who didn't [know] much about any of it really understood what was going on and why."
 - "It was a wonderful tour! Very informative and it really opened my eyes to how much work is done to prevent oil spills."
 - "Really awesome opportunity to engage with locals involved with recreation in the sound - great approachable information as well. SUPER NICE boat."
 - "I'm grateful for the opportunity to participate. The tour helped bring to life different aspects of spill response on PWS."
- *Please share something interesting or important you learned about preventing impacts from oil spills.*
 - "It was helpful to see the fishing (response) vessels and oil spill collection equipment on the water to put into perspective the amount of resources that would be required to adequately respond to a large spill."
 - "The importance of the work the fishing fleet can play in spill response can't be overstated."
 - "I learned that the trainings provided help instruct the vessel crew about personal safety regarding oil exposure; I also learned about the location specific precautions such as identifying salmon streams, specific boom line length needed, and possible bear encounters."
 - "Watching what each of the different vessels contributes"
 - "I found the Geographic Response Strategies my favorite section, as I'm most interested in how the oil changes the ecosystem and surrounding area."

We also gathered a total of **45 Observer email sign ups** through the sign-up form, posting the Observer subscription link and QR code throughout the tour, and our follow up email.

FY2025 FVPCO tour photos by Cathy Hart:







3500 – Community Outreach Program

Objectives: Increase awareness of PWSRCAC and increase communications with member organizations and communities in the Exxon Valdez oil spill region.

Accomplishments since last report:

- **September 10** – Presentation on EVOS/PWSRCAC for [Overfix Ambiental](#), Paranaguá, Brazil
 - This group reached out for an online virtual presentation following a conversation at the International Oil Spill Conference.
- **September 18** – Become a Master of Disaster, Kodiak, AK
 - Hosted at the Kodiak Fisheries Research Center, Kodiak youth and their caregivers experienced seven interactive learning stations on oil spill and marine science topics. Activities run:
 - Oil Spill Clean Up
 - Wildlife Rescue
 - Wind and Waves
 - Build Oil Molecules
 - Where Does Oil Come From?
 - Microscopes: Observing Plankton in Seawater
 - Green Crab Attack
 - Reflection Activity
 - Council volunteers Aimee Williams, Wayne Donaldson, and Cathy Hart along with staff and Youth Involvement contractors Switgard Duesterloh and Patrick Stewart staffed the interactive activities.
 - This was the first iteration of this September Board meeting-associated outreach event in many years due to the COVID pandemic.



Participants at various activity stations during the Kodiak Become a Master of Disaster event.

- **September 19** - Kodiak Public Reception, Kodiak, AK
 - Also hosted at the Kodiak Fisheries Research Center, Council Board, volunteers, and staff gathered with partners and members of the Kodiak community to visit over food and drinks.
 - Attendees could also enjoy the exhibits and touch tank of the aquarium space.



Scenes from the Kodiak Reception. Photos by Nelli Vanderburg.

- **September 30** - Fishing Vessel Program Community Outreach tour, Whittier, AK
 - See full report in FVPCO project status report in this packet.
- **October 10** - Presentation to PWS College students, Valdez, AK
 - Maia Draper-Reich presented via Zoom to students in the Outdoor Leadership program about the Council, EVOS history, and our work.
 - This is a presentation requested annually by PWS College.
- **November 20-22** - Pacific Marine Expo, Seattle, WA
 - Board member Jim Herbert and Maia Draper-Reich traveled to cohost a booth with CIRCAC at this expo event for Pacific fisherman and other maritime professionals.
 - ~300 people stopped by the booth.
- **December 5** - Science Night, Anchorage, AK
 - Science topics relevant to the Council's work and region were presented in person and via Zoom. This year's event theme was *Staying Alert & Proactive in the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Region*.

- The ~127 attendees included board members, volunteers, staff, partners, and other invitees that attended in person and via Zoom. This year, the audience included attendees at partner-facilitated watch parties in Cordova, Homer, and Valdez with good attendance and excitement to host again next year.

3530 – Youth Involvement

Objectives: Select proposals for youth activities, in collaboration with partner agencies and organizations throughout the Exxon Valdez oil spill region. Coordinate activities to facilitate hands-on learning about topics related to the Council's mission. Where appropriate and feasible, participate in mission-relevant youth activities.

Accomplishments since last report: The Information and Education Committee received and reviewed eight project proposals on the RFP released during October-November 2024. Final award announcements will be made by January 31, 2025.

Five contractors completed their summer project's final reporting requirements this fall (by September 30, 2024):

- Alaska Geographic – *Blackstone Bay Marine Stewardship Youth Expedition*
- Alaska Geographic – *Prince William Sound Teacher Course June 2024*
- Copper River Watershed Project – *Bligh Reef Expedition*
- Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area – *Expanding Access to Equitable Outdoor Youth Education*
- Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment – *Copper River Stewardship Program*

Three contracts are currently underway for projects happening during the 2024/2025 school year:

- Alaska Marine Conservation Council/Kodiak Ocean Science Discovery Program – *Kodiak Marine Ecosystems Lessons & Collaborative Outreach*
- Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies - *Elevating Student Advocates & Educators through Afterschool Leadership*
- Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage - *Expanding Access to Equitable Outdoor Education*

One school year project is currently still in the contracting process:

- Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge - *"Tig̕lax̕ in the Bay" School Program*

3600 – Public Communications Program

Objectives: This program disseminates information and increases awareness through the Observer newsletter and the Council's online presence. This work helps publicize information generated from the Council's technical committee projects. Project results and information are disseminated in a format that is easily understood by the general public.

This program funds training for the Public Communications Project Manager to maintain knowledge of the latest technology and best practices for public communication. Recently attended trainings include: Nonprofit Technology Networks' course on AI, Google Analytics and Google's Looker Studio (software for creating dashboard reports on website analytics), search engine optimization, and introduction to U.S. Census' online database.

Nonprofit Technology Network conference: Project Manager Amanda Johnson is preparing to attend the upcoming Nonprofit Technology Network Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, in April 2025. Details about the conference: <https://www.nten.org/gather/ntc>.

3610 – Web Best Available Technology

Objectives: This project helps ensure the Council's websites and web presence using the best and most up-to-date technology available by funding new features, repairs, and upgrades to the Council's websites. This includes regular maintenance and technical upgrades as well as upgrades to such aspects as user experience and branding.

Website data: Website usage for www.pwsrcc.org is tracked through Google Analytics for information such as numbers of visitors, location of visitors, how visitors found the site, which pages are visited most often, how much time is spent on particular pages, whether visitors were engaged enough to visit more than one page and much more. A dashboard report with some basic information is available here: <https://lookerstudio.google.com/reporting/5acb0b03-619c-4b0d-ae5b-e13edeb08a50> Please contact project manager Amanda Johnson if you have questions or need additional details.

3810 – Illustrated Prevention & Response System Outreach

Objectives: Work with artist and author Tom Crestodina to develop artwork for a book and other materials showcasing the oil spill prevention and response system in Prince William Sound.

1. Educate stakeholders and the general public about the importance of spill prevention and response, why the PWS prevention/response system is one of the best in the world, and how it can be kept that way.
2. Create new work partnerships with industry and regulators, similar to how groups collaborate during the fishing vessel training community outreach tours.

Accomplishments since last report: Staff collected input and edits from the project team and industry on the draft materials and is now working to edit the text to the appropriate reading level. Work with Crestodina is planned to start up again in the spring, after he completes other commitments. The tentative plan is to finish the book at that time and go to print by summer 2025.

5000 – Terminal Operations Program

Objectives: The goal of the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Program is to prevent hazardous liquid spills and minimize the actual and potential environmental impacts associated with the operation and maintenance of the Valdez Marine Terminal.

Accomplishments since last report:

VMT Projects and Maintenance Monitoring: The Council continues to follow up for additional information from regulatory agencies on oversight of tank bottom processing, in response to the tank bottom processing fire that occurred in August 2023 in an active dike cell.

Outstanding Requests for Information and Responses to Recommendations: Council staff continue to maintain a track record of all information requests made from 2021 to present. There are several outstanding requests for information needed to complete FY25 projects that, as of December 12, 2024, have not yet been received.

Tank Vent Damage Monitoring: Taku Engineering, LLC made further refinements to their report, titled "2022 Tank Pressure/Vacuum Pallet Damage: Crude Oil Storage Tank Headspace Gas Assessment." This report was drafted in response to Alyeska's October 2023 request for additional information related to Taku Engineering's calculations.

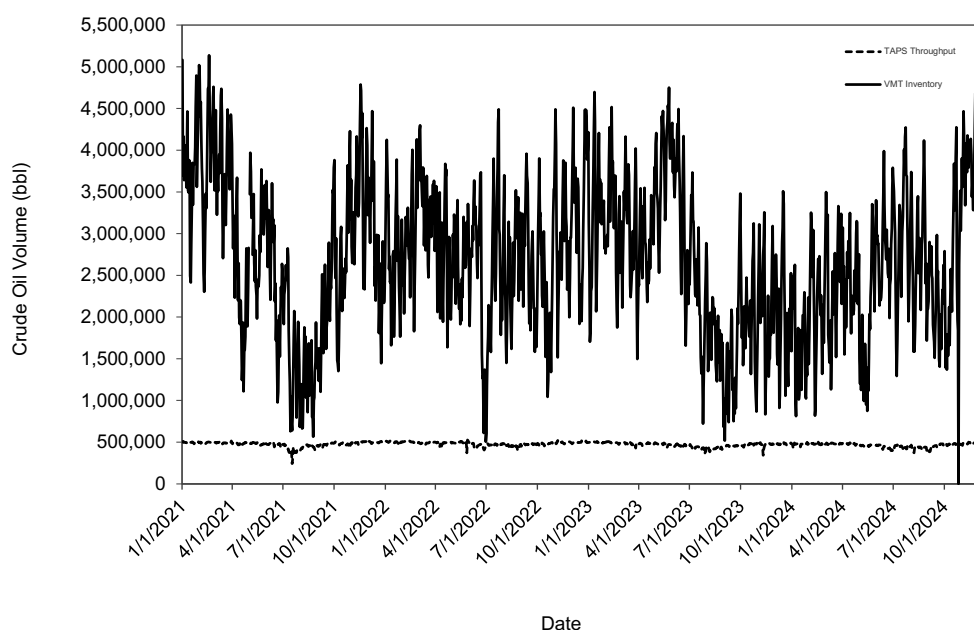
In PWSRCAC's November 3, 2023 response letter, we asked how Alyeska would like to proceed: either by scheduling a meeting mid-December 2023 for a presentation on Taku Engineering's calculations and assumptions, or by providing the outstanding information needed so that the model and report can be refined appropriately. At this time, the Council has not received a response to our November 3, 2023 letter.

This report was recommended by TOEM in October 2024 to be accepted by the Board for their approval at the January 2025 Board meeting.

Attachments: Graphs depicting a variety of data related to the operation and environmental impacts of the Valdez Marine Terminal.

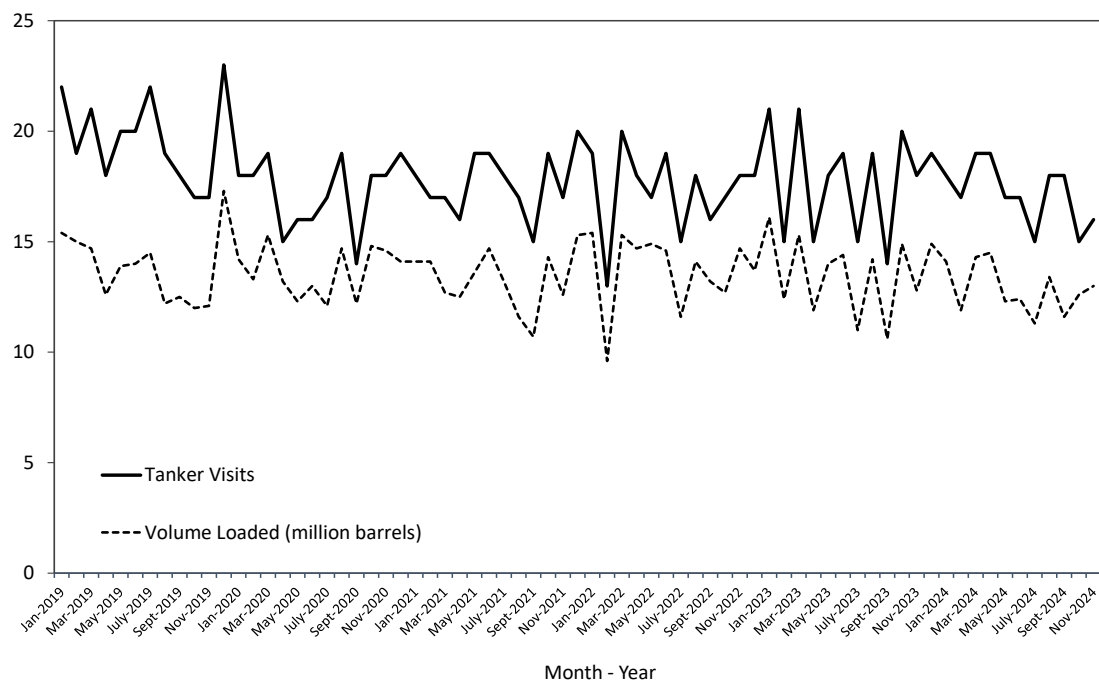
Daily Oil Inventory at the Valdez Marine Terminal and Trans-Alaska Pipeline Throughput

(Source: Alaska Department of Revenue - Tax Division, <http://tax.alaska.gov/programs/oil/production.aspx>)



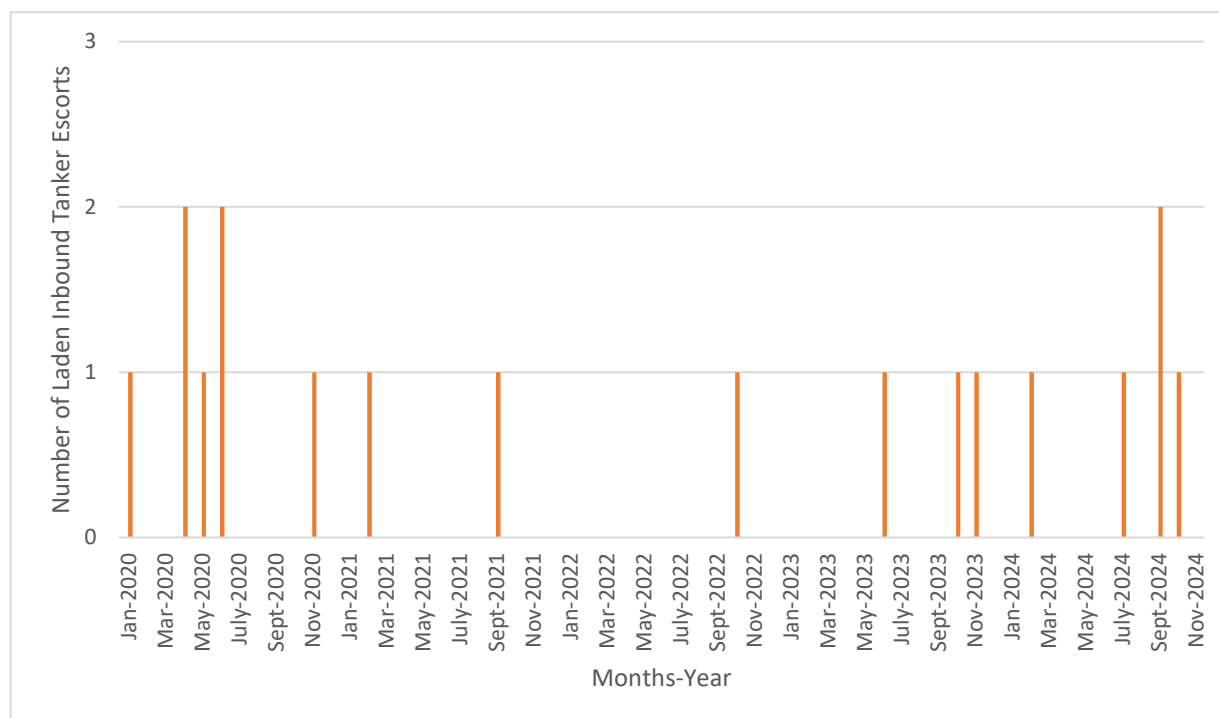
Number of tanker visits and crude oil volume loaded onto ships from VMT

(Source: Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. Partitioned by VMT vessel arrival date.)



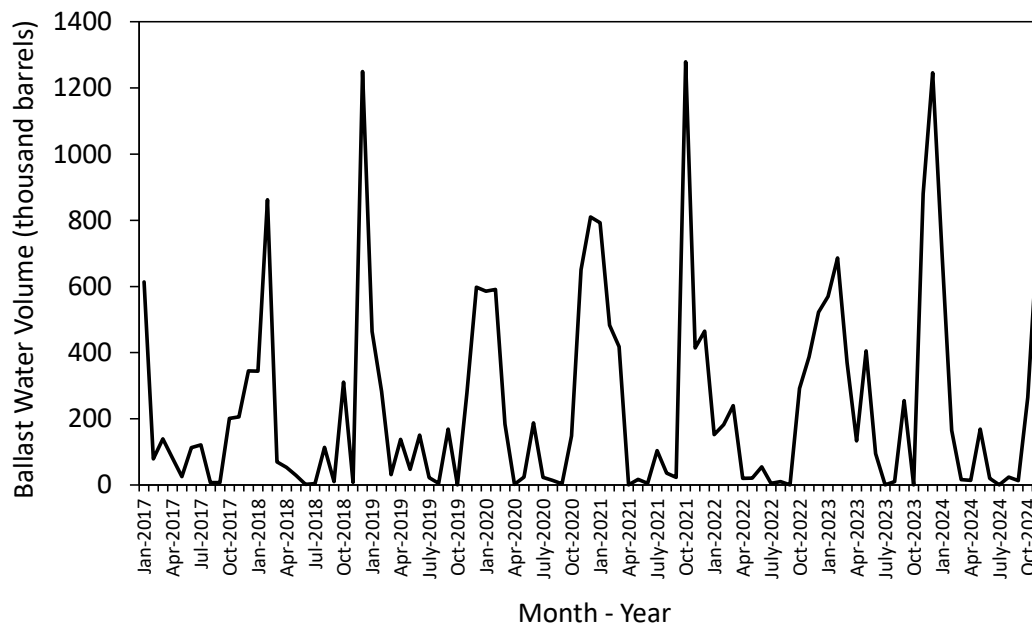
Inbound laden tanker escorts to VMT

(Source: Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. Partitioned by VMT vessel arrival date.)



Monthly ballast water deliveries to Ballast Water Treatment Facility from tanker ships

(Source: Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. Partitioned by VMT vessel arrival date.)



5051 – Water Quality Review of VMT

Objectives: This project entails a review of 2018-2023 water quality data. The goal of this project is to ensure the terms of the Valdez Marine Terminal's water quality permit minimize the environmental impact of wastewater effluent discharged from the facility.

Accomplishments since last report: Fjord & Fish Sciences, the contractor for this project, has reviewed the draft permit and is currently awaiting ADEC's release of the water quality permit for public comment.

5053 – Addressing Risks and Safety Culture at Alyeska's VMT

Objectives: This project will provide a retainer to Billie Garde to provide support to assist the Council in tracking and implementing recommendations identified in the Council-sponsored report, "Assessment of Risks and Safety Culture at Alyeska's Valdez Marine Terminal."

Accomplishments since last report: A report is expected in early 2025 from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on their review of federal and state oversight of the Valdez Marine Terminal. Staff has been following up and consulting with Billie Garde on her recommendations from her 2023 assessment. She is also assisting staff on Process Safety Management information, Alaska Occupational Safety and Health (AKOSH) investigation, human factors in safety management, and developing a protocol on how to handle information received from concerned employees.

5057 – Air Quality Review of VMT

Objectives: This project ensures that Alyeska is mitigating and reducing sources of air pollution at the VMT which may pose adverse environmental and health impacts on residents of Valdez. The goal of this project is to provide actionable, clear, and specific recommendations to advance efforts to reduce sources of air pollution at the VMT.

Accomplishments since last report: Ron Sahu, PhD, the contractor for this project, reviewed available documentation related to the 2022 tank vent damage incident to assess the feasibility of calculating emissions estimates. Dr. Sahu determined that a conservative assessment could be made, and presented to the TOEM Committee and EPA staff, both from Region 10 and EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards. A draft report has been completed and is currently under review by the TOEM Committee.

5081 – Crude Oil Tanks 7 and 2, and Ballast Water Tank 94 Maintenance Review

Objectives: This project would entail performing a technical review of the maintenance of crude oil storage Tank 7 and ballast water storage Tank 94 at the Valdez Marine Terminal. Both Tank 7 and Tank 94 underwent comprehensive internal inspections in 2021. The last time Tank 7 underwent a similar internal inspection was in 2008, and Tank 94's last internal inspection occurred in 2012. The 2021 internal inspections of both tanks will result in a large amount of new information pertaining to the past, current, and future maintenance of each storage tank. Additionally, since their last internal inspections were completed back in 2008 and 2012, Alyeska has gathered and maintained other information, such as cathodic protection system testing records and external inspection results pertinent to the maintenance of Tanks 7 and 94. The new information generated from the 2021 internal inspections and the other, older information must all be considered to continue to safely maintain each of these tanks. This project is necessary to ensure that Alyeska is using industry best practices and considering all the pertinent information in the decisions they make to safely maintain both tanks, now and in the future.

Accomplishments since last report: Taku Engineering, the contractor for this project, completed a review of the preliminary documentation available. Further information was requested from Alyeska on August 27, 2024; these requests are still outstanding.

5595 – Review of VMT Cathodic Protection System Testing Protocols

Objectives: This project funds a review of cathodic protection system testing protocols at the Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT). The goal of this project is to ensure cathodic protection data is being collected in a manner consistent with the Association for Materials Protection and Performance (AMPP) protocols to have an accurate assessment of current cathodic protection levels of steel structures at the VMT.

Accomplishments since last report: The TOEM Committee reviewed six proposals submitted in response to an RFP issued in November 2024. A contractor will be selected in the coming weeks.

5591 – Crude Oil Piping Maintenance Review

Objectives: This project involves a technical review of the internal inspections of crude oil piping that occurred at the Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT) from 2016 through 2018, and a follow-on inspection of the buried crude oil relief piping that occurred in 2022. The goal of this project is to ensure that the

crude oil piping at the VMT is maintained using industry best practices, such that the risks of a spill are minimized.

Accomplishments since last report: The Council requested the necessary information to complete this report in June 2023. The information has not been received as of December 12, 2024. This project is being deferred.

5640 – Alaska North Slope Crude Oil Properties

Objectives: This project entails analyzing the physical and chemical properties of Alaska North Slope (ANS) crude oil and interpreting how those properties would impact the effectiveness of oil spill response measures including mechanical recovery, in-situ burning, and dispersants. A crude oil sample will be obtained then sent to a laboratory for physical and chemical analysis. That data will be reviewed by a spill response subject matter expert to interpret how the oil's chemical and physical properties would influence various spill response techniques.

Accomplishments since last report: On April 16, 2024, the Prince William Sound Response Planning Group shipped an ANS crude sample to Dr. Robert Faragher of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to perform an analysis of the current properties of ANS crude oil. ECCC has agreed to perform this testing free of charge to PWSRCAC. Some testing has already taken place, but the completion of test and resulting report is expected 6 to 9 months from the date that they received the sample. This project is still ongoing, however ECCC recently contacted us about the possible need to extend the timeframe until potentially February 2025. Once we receive the analysis, we will contract with Dr. Merv Fingas to write a report on the findings of the analysis.

6000 – Oil Spill Response Program

Objectives: Through this program, PWSRCAC develops positions and recommendations on oil spill response technologies; reviews state and federal contingency plans (c-plans) and plan-related issues; promotes compliance, enforcement, and funding of existing environmental regulations; and promotes the incorporation of local knowledge of sensitive areas into contingency planning.

Accomplishments since the last report:

Alaska Regional Response Team (ARRT): General information on the ARRT can be found [HERE](#), and meeting summaries and presentations can be found [HERE](#). The next ARRT meeting is scheduled for March 5-6, 2025 in Anchorage.

The Regional Stakeholder Committee (RSC) Task Force completed their work on the job aids for members of the RSC and the RSC Liaison Officer.

PWSRCAC has offered to participate in the Cultural Resources Committee of the ARRT. This committee will be working on updates to the "Alaska Implementation Guidelines" for the 1997 National Programmatic Agreement.

Prince William Sound Area Contingency Plan (PWS ACP): The next PWS Area Committee meeting met on October 8, 2024 in Cordova, followed by a meeting of the Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) workgroup on October 9.

Outstanding Questions or Issues:

BP-Hilcorp Transaction: In 2020, the Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA) issued two orders regarding Hilcorp/Harvest Alaska's purchase of BP's assets in Alaska:

- Order No. 6, issued March 2020, allowed Hilcorp/Harvest Alaska to keep its financial information confidential; and
- Order No. 17, issued in December 2020, approved BP's and Harvest Alaska's transfer application thus transferring TAPS assets (including the Valdez Marine Terminal) from BP Pipelines to Harvest Alaska.

The City of Valdez subsequently appealed both orders to the Alaska Superior Court and ultimately to the Alaska Supreme Court.

On June 27, 2023, the Alaska Supreme Court heard arguments on the appeal from the City of Valdez, the State of Alaska (on behalf of the RCA), and attorneys for Hilcorp and affiliates and BP.

On May 3, 2024, the Alaska Supreme Court issued an opinion to:

1. Reverse the Alaska Superior Court's dismissal of Order No. 6, and
2. Affirm the appeal of Order No. 17.

This means the City of Valdez's argument that Hilcorp/Harvest Alaska's financial information should not be confidential will be remanded back to the Alaska Superior Court. This allows the City of Valdez to continue their quest to have financial information released to the public.

PWSRCAC had planned to submit an amicus curiae brief to the Alaska Superior Court in support of the City of Valdez's appeal of the RCA's March 2020 Order No. 6 back in 2021. As this issue has now been brought back to the Superior Court, PWSRCAC should have another opportunity to submit the amicus curiae brief.

6510 – Contingency Plan Review

Objectives: The purpose of this project is to monitor, review, and comment on state and federal contingency plans (c-plans) for the Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT) and the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) tankers that transit Prince William Sound. Reviewing c-plans is a major task for PWSRCAC as outlined in both the PWSRCAC/Alyeska contract and OPA 90.

The Prince William Sound Tanker Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (PWS Tanker C-Plan) and associated vessel response plans for Alaska Tanker Company, Andeavor (subsidiary of Marathon Petroleum), Crowley Alaska Tankers, Hilcorp North Slope, and Polar Tankers, was renewed on January 31, 2022, and will expire in 2027. Alyeska Pipeline Service Company (Alyeska) Valdez Marine Terminal Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (VMT C-Plan) was renewed on November 15, 2019, and will expire in 2024.

Accomplishments since the last report:

PWS Tanker C-Plan: There have been no major amendments to the Prince William Sound tanker operators in the past several months. The last major amendment, submitted in September 2023, was approved by ADEC on June 21, 2024. The Basis of Decision document can be viewed [HERE](#). This major amendment covered replacement of the Mineral Creek barge with OSRB-5 that is used for lightering and nearshore response storage.

VMT C-Plan Renewal: On November 6, 2024, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) approved the renewal of the Valdez Marine Terminal Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (VMT C-Plan) and issued its Basis of Decision on the renewal. The 5-year renewal is effective as of November 6, 2024 and expires on November 5, 2029. ADEC's approval letter and Basis of Decision document can be found [HERE](#).

ADEC's approval includes five conditions of approval ranging from secondary containment evaluation, to requiring additional details on the greatest possible discharge, providing API 653 inspection reports and supporting documentation, and providing prevention and response training documentation. ADEC also addressed 19 major topics in their Basis of Decision document.

Of particular interest to PWSRCAC is **Condition of Approval #1 East Tank Farm Secondary Containment Area Required Evaluation**. As outlined in Issue #7 in the Basis of Decision document, further analysis of the liners is required. This renewal requires Alyeska to complete the following:

- A. *Submit the final report of secondary containment liner testing method to be used to evaluate the condition of the East Tank Farm secondary containment area by March 1, 2025.*
- B. *Complete liner investigations of the East Tank Farm secondary containment area within the plan cycle (prior to plan submittal of the 2029 renewal).*

This issue was the subject of a Request for Informal Review approved by the Board of Directors on November 26, 2024. PWSRCAC requested the Spill Prevention and Response (SPAR) Director review ADEC's decision and require information provided to ADEC on the liner be subject to public review, creation of a schedule for completing liner inspections, and require corrective action if the liner inspections fail to demonstrate that the existing liner meets the "sufficiently impermeable" standard.

6512 – Maintaining the Secondary Containment Systems at the VMT

Objectives: This project entails promoting methods Alyeska could use to verify the integrity of the secondary containment systems at the Valdez Marine Terminal's (VMT) East Tank Farm, otherwise known as the catalytically blown asphalt (CBA) liner. The goal of this project is to ensure that the buried CBA liner at the VMT will hold spilled oil long enough to be cleaned up prior to ground or surface water contamination.

Accomplishments since last report: The Council received WSP's (Alyeska's contractor) report on the secondary containment pilot test, titled "ELL and ERT Survey at VMT SCS: Pilot Study, West Tank Farm" on November 14, 2024. Dr. Joe Scalia and Dr. Craig Benson were tasked with reviewing this report in detail and will be issuing a report analyzing WSP's findings and conclusions.

6530 – Weather Data / Sea Currents Project

Objectives: This project studies wind, water current, and other environmental factors near the Valdez Marine Terminal, in Prince William Sound, and in the Gulf of Alaska. Weather conditions affect the safe navigation of vessels and aids the ability to prevent, respond to, contain, and clean up an oil spill. Accurate weather data for the region supports research and decision making in areas like oil spill response, traffic management, vessel performance specification, and contingency planning.

Accomplishments since last report: The weather station at Cape St Elias is showing its age. Components have been ordered and on hand in Cordova. A site visit is planned for spring 2025.

A long-time contractor for this project, Micro-specialties, has become difficult to reach. The project manager will work with Dr. Rob Campbell to have PWSSC manage Iridium communications for the Cape St. Elias weather station in the future.

The Kokinhenik Weather Station stopped reporting on November 2 when it ran out of batteries. New batteries have been purchased and Rob Campbell will attempt to make a site visit to install them if his schedule allows.

6531 – Port Valdez Weather Buoys

Objectives: This project originally assembled and deployed, and continues to maintain, two buoys which measure ocean currents and common weather parameters in Port Valdez. The first buoy is installed near Jackson Point [61.0910°N 146.3811°W] in the vicinity of the Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT). The second buoy is installed at the Valdez Duck Flats [61.1201°N | 146.2914°W]. The Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) partners with the Council to facilitate this project.

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 requires the Council to study wind and water currents and other environmental factors in the vicinity of the terminal facilities which may affect the ability to prevent, respond to, contain, and clean up an oil spill.

The Council's Board of Directors has long advocated that robust weather monitoring systems be installed in the vicinity of the VMT. This includes proposals to install ultrasonic anemometers at the loading berths and a weather station at the VMT. On January 22, 2016, the Council's Board passed a resolution expressly requesting a weather station be employed at the terminal.

Weather is a significant factor in the management of safe crude oil transportation through Prince William Sound. Some of these concerns include marine safety, tanker escort operations, oil spill contingency planning, containment boom design, and safe loading of oil tankers.

Accomplishments since last report: The Board and Alyeska have agreed to continue the project for the next two years. Both buoys are in place and operating normally. The next service is scheduled for Spring 2025. Since redeployment of the VMT buoy in August, SERVUS has called twice worried about the buoy drifting close to shore. It was deployed in August with longer scope so the watch circle is larger than the previous five years. A link to a map of recent positions of the VMT Buoy has been added to the Council website.

6536 – Port Valdez Weather Buoy Data Analysis

Objectives: In 2019, PWSRCAC was able to install two weather buoys in Port Valdez, one in the vicinity of the Valdez Marine Terminal and the other near the Valdez Duck Flats. The buoys have collected weather data for most of five years. The buoy websites provide real-time weather information as well as information for the last five days. The data from these buoys is collected and stored, but without periodically analyzing the data much of the value from the buoys will not be realized. The information provided by this analysis will aid in the understanding of the weather and currents within Port Valdez. This information will aid in oil spill contingency planning, potentially in improved oil spill trajectory models, and fill in gaps regarding the weather and currents at the buoy locations in Port Valdez. This project would have been the fourth project to take the data collected in each of the years since the buoys were deployed.

Accomplishments since last report: This project has been deferred and repropose for FY2026 since the VMT Buoy broke free of its anchor last winter and was offline for most of the year until it was redeployed in August 2024. The FY2026 project would cover calendar years 2024 and 2025.

6540 – Copper River Delta and Flats GRS Development

Objectives: The goal of this project is to create ten new GRS's in the Copper River Delta and Flats (CRDF) vicinity. The Consultant is being tasked to coordinate PWS Area Committee leadership, local stakeholders, trustee agencies, and the regulatory community via a workgroup process, to identify and build ten GIS-based GRSs, and move these to ADEC for incorporation into the GRS database. GRS work done circa 1999 in this area was some of the first GRS work done in Alaska, and this material needs to be updated and/or new sites developed in a modern format.

Accomplishments since last report: Additional funds for this project were secured at the special Board meeting on November 26. At this meeting, the Board approved:

The commitment of \$38,000 in the FY2026 budget for project 6540 Copper River Delta and Flats Geographic Response Strategies; and authorized the Executive Director to enter into a sole source contract with Nuka Research and Planning Group, LLC for project 6540 - Copper River Delta and Flats Geographic Response Strategies in an amount not to exceed \$45,000.

FY2025 monies will be used to start the workgroup process, and the protected FY2026 funds will allow for completion of the project, and pay for charter services to do site visits, project manager travel, and the continued facilitation of the workgroup process and construction of the GRS's. Including the additional FY2026 funds, the project cost is \$63,000 in total.

6560 – Peer Listener Training

Objectives: Update the Council's Peer Listener program, which was created and implemented shortly after the Exxon Valdez oil spill to promote community resiliency through a peer-to-peer support network. The update will include assessing the current program, reviewing similar programs nationwide, and revising the Peer Listener Training manual and delivery methods according to contemporary best practices.

Accomplishments since last report: The Peer Listener Project Team has met multiple times to discuss the objectives and anticipated outcomes of this project. A Request for Proposals was distributed, and one proposal was received. The Project Team and SAC recommended working with Agnew::Beck Consulting to develop a distribution plan and outreach tools for the Manual. A contract has been drafted and the first deliverables will be due from the contractor in January.

6575 – Comparison of Windy Application and Seal Rocks Buoy Wind/Wave Data

Objectives: The National Data Buoy Center hosts a weather buoy at Seal Rocks (46061) that is used to determine closure limits for laden tankers outbound from the Valdez Marine Terminal through Hinchinbrook Entrance. Closure occurs when wind exceeds 45 knots of wind (sustained) or waves exceed 15 feet in height. Buoy 46061 has failed several times in recent history and repairs typically take an inordinate amount of time to accomplish. During buoy failures, the SERVS' Hinchinbrook Tug may make weather observations in the vicinity of Seal Rocks.

This project proposes to do a comparison of data from the Windy mobile application (Windy), specific to wind and wave predictions, to data generated by Buoy 46061. The project would then evaluate which forecast model (i.e., ECMWF (European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts Ensemble Model), GFS (Global Forecast System) and Icosahedral Nonhydrostatic) used by Windy most closely matches historic data provided by Buoy 46061 and provide recommendations on the use and efficacy of the Windy application for this purpose.

Accomplishments since last report: Project team had its first meeting on October 22. Before the Seal Rocks Buoy wave sensor stopped functioning, a comparison was made for closure conditions on October 12 showing that ECMWF outperformed GFS in forecasting wave heights. Due to limited availability of data, the project team decided not to move forward with an RFP at this time. Project manager will work on wave height forecast comparisons between ECMWF and GFS and the Seal Rocks Buoy going back to 2021 as time allows. Comparisons will also be made for wind speed closures.

If wind speed closure conditions at Hinchinbrook Entrance look likely, the project manager will make comparisons between forecast models and wind speeds at the Seal Rocks Buoy. Similar comparisons will be made for wave heights once the wave sensor is operational again.

7000 – Oil Spill Response Operations Program

Objective: This program encompasses monitoring and reporting on the activities related to the operational readiness of the oil spill response personnel, equipment, and organization of the TAPS shipping industry. The program also encompasses monitoring actual oil spill incidents within our region and evaluation of overall response readiness.

Accomplishments since last report: Fall fishing vessels training was completed. Robertson attended training in Cordova and Robida covered Whittier. There were operational readiness exercises in each port following usual classroom, hands-on time, and on-water training. PWSRCAC's community outreach boat ride was tied to the Whittier training, and it was a very well received outreach effort with much participation.

Robida traveled to Cordova for the PWS Area Committee meeting on October 8 and spoke about the Copper River Delta and Flats GRS development project. Robida spoke with several attendees who wanted to participate in the workgroup process, and it was a good opportunity to build momentum for efforts that will be starting in early 2025.

Though staff did not attend, OSPR chair and Board member Jim Herbert shared some feedback on the SERVS wildlife training in Homer with staff, and this was passed to Alyeska. The training was for a smaller subset of Homer and Seward contracted vessels. Herbert offered some suggestions for improvement and observations.

The Regional Stakeholder Committee (RSC) Task Force met on December 11 and finalized the Task Force developed RSC job aids which will be included under the Western Alaska and Arctic Area Plan that is going out for public comment in early 2025. The job aids (one specifically designed for the Liaison Officer and the other for RSC members) will eventually be referenced in all four of Alaska's area plans. However, the Western Alaska and Arctic area plan is the first to be revised and move to a new architecture convention. The job aids will specifically be verified as a new addition.

Staff is very happy with the finalized job aids and intends to offer comments to this effect with the public comment period. The Task Force is expected to meet again and adjudicate any RSC-specific public comments that are received.

The end product will be a basic RSC description included in the area plans, and the “how to” job aids referenced on the State of Alaska tools and references website.

7520 – Preparedness Monitoring

Objectives: PWSRCAC's Drill Monitoring Program falls under a broader program called Oil Spill Response Operations. Objectives for the Drill Monitoring Program are to promote oil spill response operational readiness within the EVOS region by observing, monitoring, and reporting on oil spill prevention and response drills, exercises, and training; to provide citizens, regulatory agencies, and responders (Alyeska and the shippers) with independent observations and recommendations to improve preparedness; and provide citizen oversight. Tasks to be completed include:

- Monitor and report on regular oil spill drills and training exercises at the VMT and throughout the Exxon Valdez oil spill region to citizens, the Board, industry, and regulatory agencies
- Provide quarterly recommendations to the PWSRCAC Board of Directors
- Keep PWSRCAC's standing committees (OSPR, TOEM, POVTS, IEC, and SAC) informed
- Produce an annual report on effectiveness and progress of the regularly monitored drills and exercises
- Continue developing and implementing staff training for drill monitoring

Recent Exercises

Tug Challenger U/J Deployment Exercise – November 1, 2024: SERVS conducted a U/J deployment exercise with the tug Challenger in Port Valdez. These are performed with the tug and the onboard workboat using the tug's boom and skimmer.

Marathon PWS Shipper's annual Exercise – October 15-17, 2024: Marathon conducted the annual PWS Shipper's exercise in October in Valdez at the SERVS Valdez Emergency Operations Center (VEOC). The exercise included a transition from SERVS to Marathon and a field deployment of two nearshore oil recovery systems and aerial drones.

Whittier Nearshore Operational Readiness Exercise – October 1, 2024: SERVS conducted an operational readiness exercise in conjunction to the annual Whittier fishing vessel training for 2024.

VMT Oiled Wildlife Stabilization Demonstration – July 31, 2024: Alyeska demonstrated the new oiled wildlife stabilization modules they built for oiled birds and sea otters. These are state of the art for the initial processing and stabilization of wildlife before they are transported to longer term care facilities.

Upcoming Drills and Exercises

Polar Tankers Annual Shipper's Exercise – May 13-15, 2025

Alyeska VMT Equipment deployment – July 23, 2025

Alyeska VMT Functional Exercise – October 8, 2025

8000 – Maritime Operations Program

Objectives: This program reviews port organization, operations, incidents, and the adequacy and maintenance of the Coast Guard Vessel Traffic System, and coordinates with the Port Operations and

Vessel Traffic Systems (POVTS) Committee. Major program components include participation with the Valdez Marine Safety Committee (VMSC), monitoring changes to the tanker escort system, reviewing Best Available Technology documents for the tanker escort system and the Vessel Emergency Response Plan (VERP), participating in monthly SERVSP/WSRCAC and ADEC/WSRCAC communication meetings, and supporting maintenance for the NOAA weather stations.

Accomplishments since last report: Working with the previous project manager, the transition into this position is complete. Alan Sorum remains available for support. The Project Manager relocated to Valdez in October. The Project Manager participated in the Marathon Shipper Exercise in October, acting as an evaluator for the on water portion involving fishing vessels, current busters and mini barges. The Project Manager works with the OSPR Committee on weather-related projects.

8250 – Assessing Non-Indigenous Species Biofouling on Vessel Arrivals

Objectives: Two main mechanisms of non-indigenous species (NIS) introduction via commercial ship traffic are the intake and release of ballast water and biofouling on a vessel's submerged surface areas. This project will characterize the risk from NIS biofouling on vessel arrivals using vessel gross tonnage (GT) as a function of wetted surface area (WSA). Gross tonnage is a nonlinear measure of a ship's overall internal volume. Wetted area is the area of the watercraft's hull which is immersed in water. Each arrival within this temporal and spatial analysis will be analyzed for a vessel arrival profile to consider additional variables that affect the potential likelihood of NIS introduction for a given arrival. Additionally, this project proposal builds from the Master of Science in Environmental Science thesis project for a graduate student at Alaska Pacific University (APU) under the supervision of the Fisheries, Aquatic Sciences, and Technology (FAST) Lab, and advised by Dr. Danielle Verna, WSRAC's Environmental Monitoring Project Manager.

Accomplishments since last report: A purchase order has been issued and the selected contractor presented their preliminary results at the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership Workshop in Fairbanks the week of November 11. Contractor has completed work quantifying the total wetted surface area and now focusing on calculating the likelihood of an introduction for vessels arriving in the Exxon Valdez region. The contractor is on schedule to deliver a final report to the POVTS Committee in March and make a presentation at the May Board meeting in Valdez.

8520 – Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts

Objectives: Seeking to identify and address various causes of miscommunication, the proposed project will provide a comprehensive perspective by collecting information on the linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic needs and practices of native and non-native English-speaking mariners in Prince William Sound. The proposed project would entail the first two of four phases.

Accomplishments since last report: The Committee received the Phase 2 Report at the end of August and the final report in the middle of November. Both reports have been recommended by the POVTS Committee to be forwarded to the Board for acceptance. After the Phase 2 Report and final report have been accepted by the Board, a new contract will be established to begin work on Phase 3.

Dr. Nicole Ziegler made a presentation at the September Board meeting in Kodiak that was well-received by attendees from the Council as well as outside organizations.

9000 – Environmental Monitoring Program

Objectives: Coordinate projects developed and overseen by the Scientific Advisory Committee and obtain scientific knowledge and technical information about issues related to the actual and potential environmental impacts of the Valdez Marine Terminal and associated crude oil tankers. The notable tasks to be accomplished under this program are as follows:

- Project manager to attend at least one technical scientific conference
- Plan and complete budgeted environmental monitoring and scientific research projects
- Conduct PWSRCAC Science Night

Accomplishments since last report: Projects managed under this program continue to be planned and executed successfully. Science Night 2024 was held on December 6th in Anchorage and virtually with positive feedback. The project manager attended the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership annual workshop in Fairbanks and also attended the first and second workshops on the Gulf-Alaska Knowledge Exchange: Evaluating Community Response, Advancing Transformative Recovery, and Enhancing Proactive Preparedness for the Impacts of Future Oil Spills, sponsored by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, in Anchorage, AK, and Thibodaux, LA.

9110 – Monitoring Spatial Variability of Marine Birds During Winter in PWS Tanker Escort Zone

Objectives: Provide up to date information on winter marine bird density and distribution throughout the Prince William Sound tanker transit zone, including under-surveyed areas such as the open waters and adjacent bays in and around Port Valdez, Valdez Arm, Tatitlek Narrows, Port Fidalgo, and Port Etches. The notable tasks to be accomplished under this project are as follows:

- Perform winter bird surveys in Prince William Sound for three consecutive years
- Analyze data obtained during winter bird surveys and report the results of the analysis
- Make winter bird survey maps readily available for use by spill response managers

Accomplishments since last report: Contractors from the Prince William Sound Science Center conducted winter marine bird surveys in Prince William Sound in and around the tanker lanes in September and November 2024. Results will be reviewed by the Scientific Advisory Committee in January.

9510 – Long-Term Environmental Monitoring Project

Objectives: Comprehensively monitor the actual and potential environmental impacts related to the Valdez Marine Terminal and associated crude oil tankers and provide the Council with information about the presence and effects of hydrocarbons generated by the terminal facility and associated tankers. Here are the notable tasks to be accomplished under this project:

- Obtain environmental samples in Port Valdez: marine sediments, mussels, and passive sampling devices
- Analyze environmental samples
- Interpret and report results of sample analysis
- Present analytical findings to the PWSRCAC Board of Directors
- Maintain Environmental Monitoring Project plan

Accomplishments since last report: Laboratories provided results from analyses of samples collected in Port Valdez (adjacent to the Valdez Marine Terminal, Gold Creek, and Valdez small boat harbor) and sites on the northern Gulf of Alaska coast (Aialik Bay, Windy Bay, and Shuyak Harbor) in 2024. Dr. Morgan Bender of Fjord & Fish Sciences reviewed the results and drafted a summary report and

technical supplement, as well as a summary of metals in sediments, and presented this information to SAC. The final reports will be presented to the Board for approval at this meeting.

9520 – Marine Invasive Species

Objectives: Understand and minimize the environmental impacts of invasive species potentially arriving in the PWSRCAC region from tanker ballast water and hull fouling. Here are the notable tasks to be accomplished under this project:

- Obtain plankton samples in Port Valdez at three sites: the small boat harbor, Valdez Container Terminal, and Valdez Marine Terminal
- Perform metagenetic analysis on plankton samples to identify variability in the plankton community between locations and through time, and identify any nonindigenous species
- Interpret and report results of plankton metagenetic analysis
- Conduct monitoring of invasive crab and tunicate species in Valdez, Cordova, and Kodiak

Accomplishments since last report: Dr. Greg Ruiz from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center submitted the final report and gave a presentation for this project at the September Board meeting.

9521 – Marine Invasive Species Internship

Objectives: Support local students to monitor for invasive species potentially arriving in the PWSRCAC region from tanker ballast water and biofouling. Target species include European green crab and tunicates in the communities of Valdez, Cordova, and Kodiak.

Accomplishments since last report: Student interns completed monitoring for invasive green crab in the communities of Cordova, Valdez, and Kodiak in summer 2024. No green crab were detected. The project manager submitted the data to various databases.

9700 – Social Science Workshop

Objectives: The goal of this project is to host a workshop with community members from our region to identify social science data needs and projects that fit within the PWSRCAC mission and could be supported by SAC. The workshop will be a 1–2 day event held in a spill-affected community. Representatives from spill-affected communities will gather for a facilitated event to share ideas, needs, and desires related to social science questions that affect the region and identify clear project ideas that are forward looking and benefit the region.

Accomplishments since last report: The Council will co-host the annual Subsistence Memorial Gathering with the Chugach Regional Resources Commission in Anchorage on March 27, 2025. SAC member Davin Holen with Alaska Sea Grant and Council staff will facilitate a workshop at the Gathering for Tribal and other community members in attendance.