



PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

REGIONAL CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

May 2026

Status Report

As of March 19, 2026

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.

Almost 900 people are subscribed to the email edition and approximately 2000 print copies are mailed to subscribers. Approximately 250-300 copies of each edition are given out at the Council's information booth or other events. All editions can be found on our website: www.tinyurl.com/ObserverArchive

3300 – Annual Report

Objectives: Prepare and publish PWSRCAC's Annual Report each year to: Inform the general public, member entities, and agency and industry partners of PWSRCAC projects and activities; and support legal requirements for ongoing updates to the public.

Accomplishments since last report: The latest annual report (2024-2025) was distributed in November 2025. Development of the next annual report with the contracted graphic designer will start in May-June 2026.

3410 – Fishing Vessel Program Community Outreach

Objectives: This project brings the realities of oil spill response tactics, equipment, and planning to life for citizens within the Council's region. 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: Since the January Board Meeting, PWSRCAC staff, an IEC Project Team, and Alyeska/SERVS staff have been collaborating on final development and implementation for an alternative outreach event format to share about the fishing vessel program with Kodiak community members. Educational tours of the SERVS Fishing Vessel Program equipment stations will be held for various audiences in Kodiak on April 6 & 7. Formal narration and information/education will be provided by PWSRCAC staff and Alyeska/SERVS staff. At time of writing this report, staff is working on

engaging key audiences from the Kodiak community, including local leaders, students, media, and the general public.

3500 – Community Outreach Program

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

Accomplishments since last report:

- **February 2-6, 2026** – Alaska Forum, Anchorage, AK
 - SAC member Dr. Davin Holen and Outreach Coordinator Maia Draper-Reich presented about the Peer Listener project and community resources as part of a session titled “Compassion in Crisis.”
 - Maia moderated a presentation titled “Marine Oil Spill Planning and Response in Remote Alaska” planning and response for shipping of oil in Alaska.
 - PWSRCAC cohosted can exhibitor booth with CIRCAC staffed by Maia, Shaylon Cochran (CIRCAC), Project Manager Assistant Peter Casey, and IEC member Ruthie Knight.
 - Maia participated on the planning committee for this event focused on the Disaster and Oil Spill Response track of sessions.



*Peter Casey, Ruthie Knight, and Shaylon Cochran at the shared PWSRCAC/CIRCAC booth during the Alaska Forum 2026.
Photos by Maia Draper-Reich.*

- **March 10-11, 2026** – Mariculture Conference of Alaska, Anchorage, AK
 - Maia and Project Manager Jeremy Robida hosted PWSRCAC’s booth at the [Mariculture Conference of Alaska](#) held in Anchorage. The event gathered mariculture farmers, researchers, and associated industry, agency, and nonprofit attendees from across the state and beyond. Maia and Jeremy had a variety of conversations with attendees including those working within the EVOS region. They touched on topics like geographic response strategies, hydrocarbon monitoring (LTEMP), and invasives species in addition to sharing generally about the Council’s mission and work. It was also a good opportunity to listen to the variety of presentations and hear about the current topics of interest in the mariculture community.



*The Mariculture Conference of Alaska (right). Jeremy Robida at the PWSRCAC booth during the conference.
Photos by Maia Draper-Reich.*

- **March 18, 2026** – The Annual Subsistence Memorial Gathering, Anchorage, AK
 - Maia will host a partner booth at Chugach Regional Resource Commission’s annual event which includes workshops, traditional art, a Traditional foods potluck dinner, Native Youth Olympics demonstrations, and dancing. This event provided opportunities to connect with attendees from tribal communities in the EVOS region and associated partners and build upon connections started last year when the Council hosted our Social Science Workshop at this event.
- **March 27-29, 2026** - Alaska Ocean Sciences Tsunami Bowl, Seward, AK
 - Board member Jim Herbert will attend to serve as a competition official for the quiz bowl game play by high school teams studying marine science.
- **April 6-7, 2026** – Fishing Vessel Program Community Outreach, Kodiak, AK
 - See 3410 Project Status report update.
- **April 8-9, 2026** – Additional outreach opportunities to be determined in Kodiak and in one of the Kodiak area villages, tentatively Port Lions.
- **April 16-18, 2026** – ComFish Alaska, Kodiak, AK
 - Staff and volunteers will host a booth at the fishing and marine expo and conference event in Kodiak.

April and May is a very busy season for outreach events in our region. At the time of writing this report, staff is working planning for additional events not listed here including events launching the “Protectors of Prince William Sound” illustrated book.

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:

There are currently four contracts ongoing set to close by June 30, 2026:

- Community Science Education: Student Engagement at the Cordova Science Gathering University of Alaska Anchorage/Prince William Sound College
- Out of Our Time: Volume II Cordova School District/Cordova Jr./Sr. High School

- Enhancing the Ocean Science Discovery Program with RCAC Curriculum “Web of Life” Alaska Coastal Observations and Research
- Ecological Stewardship for Kids: A Hands-on Application of History, Ecology, and Leadership Fireweed Academy Charter School

Six Youth Involvement projects will take place during the 2026 Spring/Summer season and are currently in the contracting process at time of writing this report:

- “Tiġlaġ in the Bay” School Program Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge
- Engaging Youth as Environmental Stewards: High School Internships & Camp Opportunities Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies
- KMTA and PWSRCAC – Expanding Access to Equitable Coastal Education Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area
- Coastal Connections Camp Kodiak Parks & Recreation
- Copper River Stewardship Program: Moving Mountains- Exploring Impacts of Glaciers on Ecology and Community Prince William Sound Science Center
- Oil monitoring and Marine Stewardship in the Homer Harbor & Lower Cook Inlet University of Alaska Anchorage/Kenai Peninsula College/Kachemak Bay Campus

A RFP for 2026-2027 School Year Youth Involvement projects is currently open for submissions through May 22, 2026.

3555 – Communities in Focus

Objectives: This project is funding a contractor to collect up-to-date publicly available demographic information for our region (communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill). This information can help us make data-driven decisions when planning and developing materials related to Council projects. A more evidence-based approach can help us better tailor our plans, methods, and/or materials to the specific populations we represent, when appropriate. The contractor will present the data in a MS Excel spreadsheet that can be filtered and sorted in various ways, depending on the information needed.

Accomplishments since last report: The contractor recently completed the interactive MS Excel spreadsheet that can be filtered and sorted in several ways, depending on the information needed. The final product will be presented at the next Executive Committee meeting for acceptance.

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.

Accomplishments since last report: 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 Network’s annual conference (virtual attendance), which included sessions on AI, change management, contact management tools, project management, data management and security, adapting website content for AI area, and data visualization, among other topics.

3610 - Web Best Available Technology

Objectives: This project helps ensure the Council's websites and web presence use up-to-date technology and best practices 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. Recent work has focused on:

- A new plugin that has improved navigation in some sections of the website. Notable changes include the Reports and Documents section of the website, which now highlights the top downloaded resources and a feed of recently approved reports; and improvements to the navigation in the database of educational lesson plans and the Regional Stakeholder Committee Resources. The new section highlighting the Peer Listening Manual will also feature this navigation when the campaign is launched.
- Training Project Manager Amanda Johnson in Google's new website analytics (GA4) and subsequent updates to optimize site according to recent changes.
- Ongoing improvements to website content to improve site search and optimized for search engines.
- Ongoing improvements to documentation of technology and procedures for all websites.

Website data: Website usage for www.pwsrca.org is tracked through Google Analytics 4. 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. Details are available in a Looker Studio dashboard report: [Website Statistics \(General Info\)](#). 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. Educate stakeholders and the general public about the importance of oil 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. 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: After Board acceptance of the materials at their January 2026 meeting, staff completed design/layout work and coordinated with the printer on set up. The primary deliverable, a published book, went into production in March and copies are anticipated to arrive in mid to late April. After the books arrive in Alaska, they will be distributed to town and school libraries in the Council's region, and other stakeholders. Launch events are also being tentatively planned to coincide with the May Board meeting, hopefully with Tom Crestodina in attendance. The ebook file is being created and will be launched on the Council's website at the same time as the physical books. Staff are working to setup up systems for potential sales of the book for those in region that would like more than one copy and for those out of region.

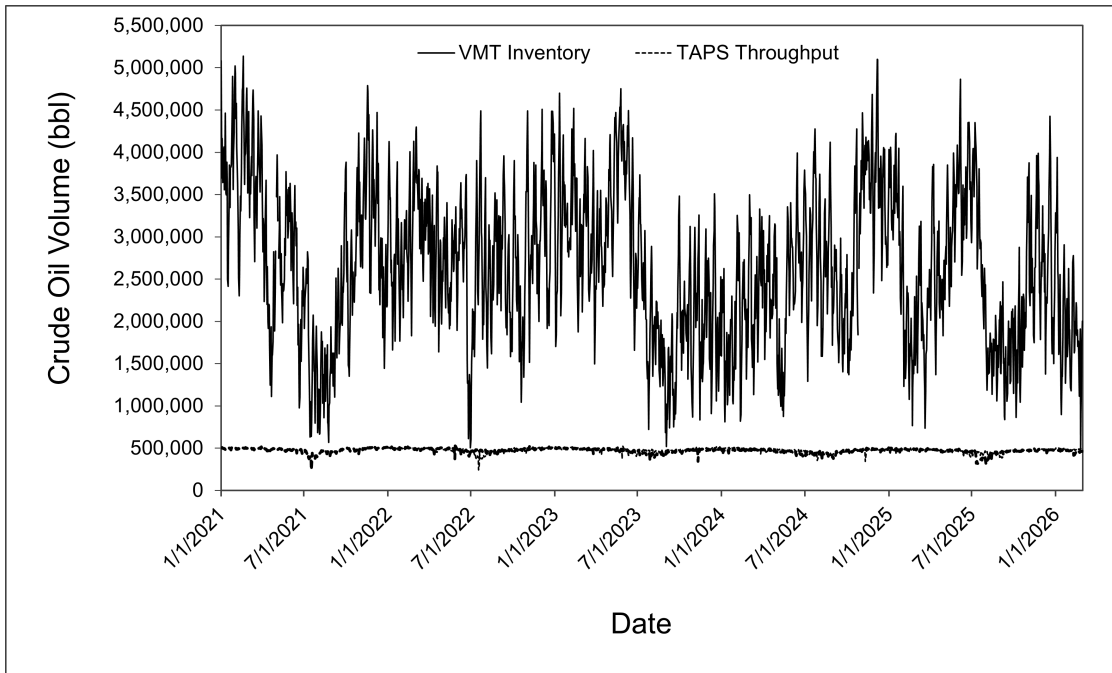
5000 - Terminal Operations Program

Objectives: The goal of the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Program is to help 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: 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.

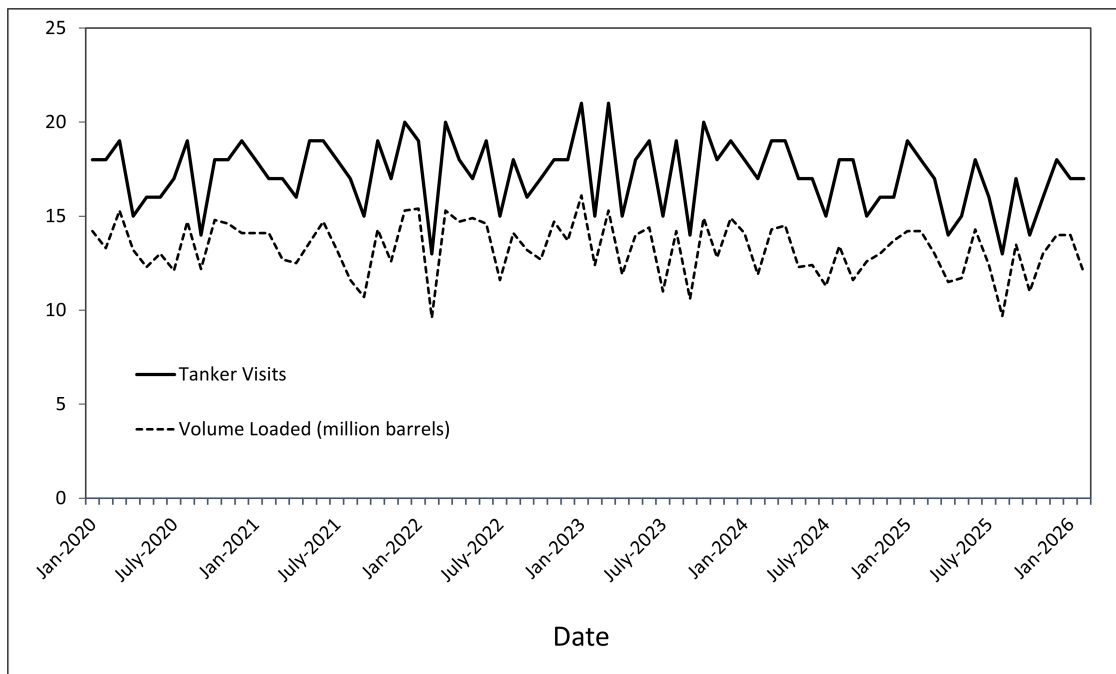
Daily Oil Inventory at the Valdez Marine Terminal and Trans-Alaska Pipeline Throughput

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



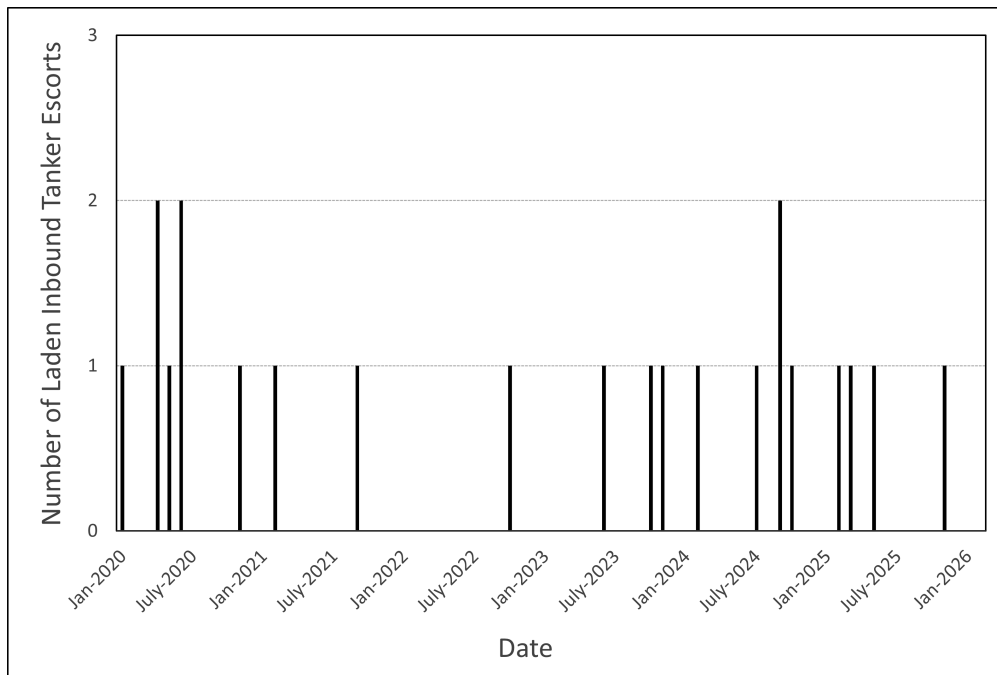
Number of tanker visits and crude oil volume loaded onto ships from VMT

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



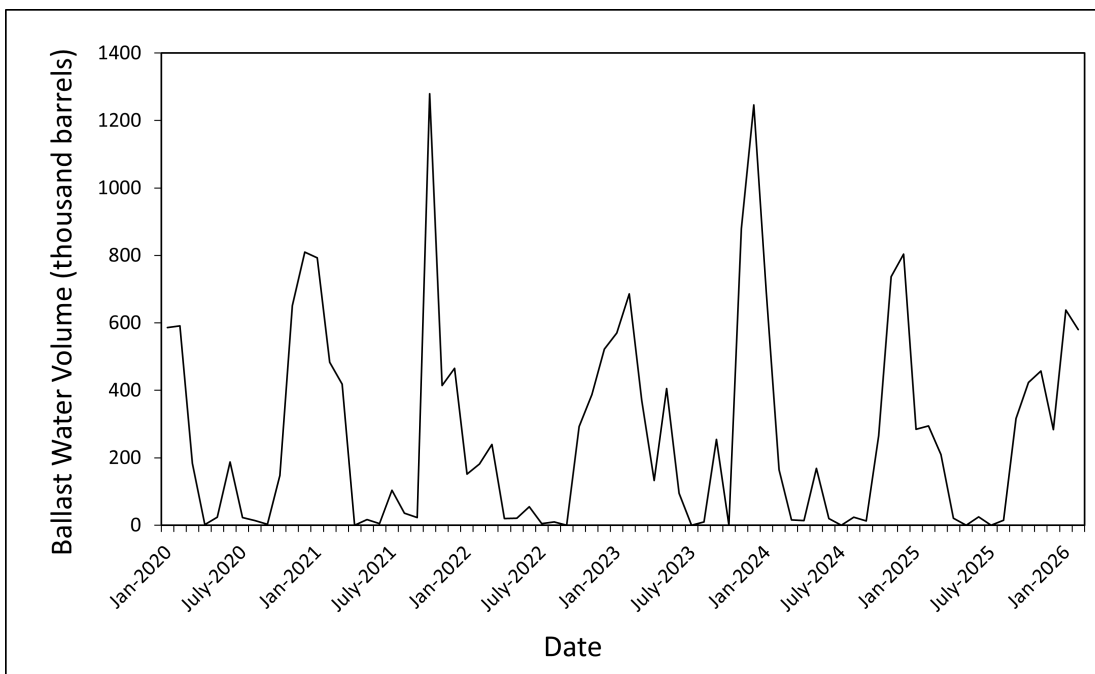
Inbound laden tanker escorts to VMT

(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.)



5541 - Review of Tank Bottom Processing Best Practices

Objectives: This project is intended to investigate industry best practices related to tank bottom processing at the VMT and the tank bottom processing fire within an active dike cell that occurred in August 2023.

Accomplishments since last report: Staff will work with the TOEM committee and/or project team to develop a possible scope of work and RFP for this project.

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. This release timeline has been extended from 2025 to early 2026.

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: The existing contract with Billie Garde has expired and TOEM continues to consider next steps with this project.

5057 - Air Quality Review of VMT

Objectives: This project verifies 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, Ph.D., the contractor for this project, continues to prepare for the release of the VMT Title V Air Quality permit, and provide the Council with ad-hoc advice and recommendations related to VMT air quality.

5081 - Ballast Water Tank 93 Maintenance Review

Objectives: This project entails performing a technical review of the maintenance of ballast water tank 93, during its out-of-service inspection and repairs in 2023.

Accomplishments since last report: This project has been completed following the acceptance of the report titled "Review of Ballast Water Tank 93 Out-of-Service Inspection Report and Tank Repairs" by Taku Engineering, LLC at the September 2025 Board Meeting.

5082 - Timeline of VMT Tank Repairs and Inspection Intervals

Objectives: This project is intended to provide an overview of the current and projected status of VMT East Tank Farm tank repairs and internal inspection intervals from 1990 (the date of initial API 653 internal inspections) to present.

Accomplishments since last report: The draft report “Review of VMT Tank Inspection Timelines” by Taku Engineering, LLC has been received and reviewed by staff, and the contractor is working on finalizing the draft.

5595 - Review of VMT Cathodic Protection System Testing Protocols

Objectives: This project seeks an independent review of current VMT CP protocols and data collection for the VMT crude oil storage tanks in order to verify that corrosion is being effectively mitigated by well-functioning cathodic protection systems.

Accomplishments since last report: The contractor for this project, Kevin Garrity of Mears Group Inc., is working on the draft report, which is expected shortly.

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 and sent to a laboratory for physical and chemical analysis. The 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: The final report was accepted by the Board at the September 2025 meeting. This project is complete.

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](#). The ARRT meeting scheduled for March 5, 2026, was postponed until further notice.

Prince William Sound Area Contingency Plan (PWS ACP): Staff submitted comments on the PWS ACP in 2025. The plan is under review, and an updated PWS ACP is expected to be available later in 2026. The Prince William Sound Area Committee is scheduled to meet in Cordova on April 22, 2026. Staff member Jeremy Robida is working on Geographical Response Strategies in the Copper River Delta that will be appended to this plan at a future date.

6510 – Contingency Plan Review

Objectives: The purpose of this project is to monitor, review, and comment on state and federal C-plans for the VMT and the 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.

Currently, the Prince William Sound Tanker Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (PWS Tanker C-Plan) consists of the Core Plan, SERVS Technical Manual, and associated vessel response plans for the following shippers:

- Alaska Tanker Company, LLC,
- Andeavor LLC, (wholly owned subsidiary of Marathon Petroleum),
- Fairwater Tankers Alaska,
- Hilcorp Alaska, LLC,
- Polar Tankers, Inc.,
- Oil Search (Alaska), LLC, a subsidiary of Santos Limited,
- Repsol Trading USA, LLC,
- SeaRiver Maritime LLC, and
- Teekay Services Limited.

The PWS Tanker C-Plan approved in 2022, expires in January 2027, and the VMT C-Plan approved in 2024, expires in 2029.

Accomplishments since the last report:

PWS Tanker C-Plan: The 5-year renewal process for the PWS Tanker C-Plan began in February 2026. Comments on proposed changes are due on March 31, 2026. Alyeska took over the administration of the Tanker C-Plan in 2025. The new plan structure follows the plan covering the VMT C-Plan. There are four parts to the renewal: the individual company Vessel Response Plans and the reformatted Tanker C-Plan (CP-35-3), that consists of three volumes (regulatory, scenarios, technical manual). Plan review documents can be accessed [HERE](#).

VMT C-Plan Renewal: ADEC's 5-year renewal of the VMT C-Plan was issued on November 6, 2025, and expires on November 5, 2029. ADEC issued five conditions of approval and addressed 29 issues in the Basis of Decision document. The approval letter and Basis of Decision document can be viewed [HERE](#).

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: Dr. Craig Benson continues to provide the Council with ad-hoc advice and recommendations related to the VMT Contingency Plan Condition of Approval and Alyeska's testing plan for the VMT East Tank Farm secondary containment liner.

6530 – Weather Data / Sea Currents Project

Objectives: This project studies wind, water currents, and other environmental factors near the Valdez Marine Terminal, in Prince William Sound, and in the Gulf of Alaska, which may affect the ability to prevent, respond to, contain, and clean up an oil spill.

Accomplishments since last report: The Cape St. Elias Station is on-line and reporting good data. The Kokinhenik station has been off-line since February 25, likely due to drained batteries.

Dr. Campbell is currently working with Ridgeline Aviation in Cordova to plan a site visit to Kokinhenik to restore the station by swapping batteries and installing a temporary solar panel. A refurbishment and slight relocation is planned for this station after the start of FY2027 on or around July.

6531 – Port Valdez Weather Buoys

Objectives: This project is to assemble, deploy, and maintain two buoys capable of measuring ocean currents and common weather parameters. The first buoy is installed near Jackson Point in Port Valdez [61.0910°N 146.3811°W]. The second buoy was installed at the Valdez Duck Flats [61.1201°N | 146.2914°W], though it has since been pushed off station and a new site is currently being evaluated (see status update 6538). The Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) partners with the Council to facilitate this project.

Congress mandated formation of the Council in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. The Act 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.

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 VMT Buoy is on-station and functioning. A site visit by Dr. Campbell will be made before the end of FY2026 to service the buoy. At that time, in addition to the regular service items, we will lift the anchor to replace a number of pin-type shackles on the ground tackle with safety shackles as well as perform a visual inspection of all items.

6536 – Port Valdez Weather Buoy Data Analysis for Years 2024-2025

Objectives: This project is to assemble, deploy, and maintain two buoys capable of measuring ocean currents and common weather parameters. The first buoy is installed near Jackson Point in Port Valdez [61.0910°N 146.3811°W]. The second buoy was installed at the Valdez Duck Flats [61.1201°N | 146.2914°W], though it has since been pushed off station and a new site is being evaluated (see status update 6538). The Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) partners with the Council to facilitate this project.

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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: A contract has been signed with the Prince William Sound Science Center to analyze data from the Port Valdez Weather Buoys for 2024, 2025, and through the beginning

of 2026. A draft report is scheduled to be delivered June 1, a final report June 28, and a presentation given at the Board meeting in September 2026.

6538 - Duck Flats Buoy Relocation

Objectives: Since 2019, the Council has operated two weather buoys in Port Valdez with logistical support from the Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC). In February 2024, the buoy located at the Duck Flats was pushed off station by ice. After it grounded near Silver Bay Seafoods in Port Valdez, the mooring line parted while attempting recovery, losing the anchor, mooring line, and associated hardware. Rather than immediately redeploing, the OSPR Committee agreed that the data collected by the buoy in its original location had limited utility. There was committee support to relocate the buoy to a position on the east side of Naked Island, in a similar location to a previously deployed buoy funded by the Council. A buoy in this location could provide more accurate wind and wave data representative of conditions in the middle of Prince William Sound (PWS) than the NDBC Buoy in West Orca Bay (46060), located about 6 nautical miles east of the outbound tanker lane and protected from northerly winds in the winter. Wind and wave data from this buoy would benefit the safety of tankers and escort tugs transiting through the middle of Prince William Sound and in the event of an incident, to the smaller vessels mobilized for spill response.

Accomplishments since last report: Work on this project has just begun. A fiberglass repair to the buoy hull has been scheduled and the repair is expected to commence in March. The project manager is in the process of receiving a quote for a replacement wave sensor, and working on sourcing other sensors and ground tackle. New permits from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the United States Army Corps of Engineers will be required for the deployment. A contract with the Prince William Sound Science Center is being drawn-up to facilitate the installation of a new wave sensor, the relocation of the solar charge controller on the buoy, completing the necessary rigging, and the ship time required to redepoly. It is possible that Trident Seafoods might be willing to transport the buoy from Cordova to Naked Island using one of their tenders as a donation.

6540 - Copper River Delta and Flats GRS Development

Objectives: The goal of this project is to create 10 new Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) in the Copper River Delta and Flats (CRDF) vicinity. The Consultant is tasked with coordinating PWS Area Committee leadership, local stakeholders, trustee agencies, and the regulatory community via a workgroup process, to identify and build 10 GIS-based GRS, and provide them to ADEC for incorporation into the GRS database. GRS work completed circa 1999 in this area was among the first conducted in Alaska, and this material needs to be updated and/or new sites developed in a modern format.

Accomplishments since last report: The seventh, and last, project workgroup meeting took place on March 6. Two draft GRS examples were viewed and discussed. One of these examples was a "traditional" GRS that made use of exclusion boom tactics. The other example employed free oil recovery tactics and was based on Fishing Vessel Tender anchorages in the Copper River Delta vicinity. This "non-traditional" GRS was an example of the response zone concept that grew out of the field visits and in-person Cordova outreach meetings. The draft Tactics Supplement, meant to accompany the developed GRS, was also reviewed by the group. The Tactics Supplement explains the zone concept, how to adapt response tactics to the area, and gives navigation and area information.

After the meeting, workgroup participants were sent the nine (2 traditional, 7 non-traditional) developed draft GRS and the draft Tactics Supplement via email for review and any final comment. The Council's contractor, Nuka, and Project Manager Jeremy Robida intend to review additional comments, convene the steering committee if required to discuss more complex feedback, and ultimately finalize these materials by mid-April. The GRS and Tactics Supplement will then be given to ADEC. It's envisioned the PWS Area Committee will approve these materials next, before materials move to the ADEC GRS webpage alongside the other statewide GRS.

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 evaluating overall response readiness.

Accomplishments since last report:

The OSRBs continue their regulatory-required dry dock inspections. This work is being done in Seward at the JAG shipyard, and each barge is out for approximately one month. The OSRB-5 barge is being used for mitigation, and skimmers and buster systems were set on board the OSRB-5, and respective crew trained prior to any barges leaving. The barges have been going out in numerical order, with OSRB-1, 2, and 3 already completed. The OSRB-4 was out as of the writing of this updated and is expected to be back in service by March 26. The Valdez Star will go out for its regulatory-required dry dock inspections next and this would be the last vessel for this immediate timeframe.

There's been various Arctic and Western Alaska (AWA) Area Plan meetings that Project Manager Jeremy Robida has attended since the last Board meeting. As the bulk of USCG personnel in Alaska work under Sector Anchorage, there's been a lot of work being driven by the AWA that's filtering out to other area plans, and AWA involvement has been important.

The project to digitize GRS across the state has been an ongoing work that Robida has kept up with. While work has been accomplished and there is momentum, this project has been ongoing for years and has been more complex than originally anticipated. ADEC's Mike Donnellan, project lead, addressed the different tasks in motion and provided a Gantt chart with completion ETAs at the most recent GRS subcommittee meeting on February 26. Along with the conversion of PDF files to GIS, other big projects, such as fine tuning the phone app meant to allow for GRS updates in the field, and meeting ADA compliance, have added additional complexities to the overall management of GRS. CIRCAC and Seirra Fletcher with Nuka, also presented at the February 26 meeting and spoke about how other coastal states manage their GRS programs. The presentation spurred some good discussion. Nuka noted they'd continue to work with CIRCAC to better catalog the backlog of GRS that have been submitted to ADEC with suggested changes (such as when SERVS does their five GRS sites per year), but have not yet been approved or updated. Nuka wanted to work with this backlog to create an approval process that could be duplicated in other Area Plan committees such as PWS, as this process had not yet been finalized.

The AK Regional Response Team (ARRT) meeting scheduled for March 5 was canceled due to government shutdown that includes the Department of Homeland Security. Robida was on the agenda to present on the Copper River Delta GRS project. The meeting should get rescheduled, and hopefully there will be a chance to still present on the GRS project.

Project Managers Robida, Linda Swiss, and Robbin Capers attended the quarterly VMT C-Plan Coordination workgroup on February 18. Staff appreciated the maintenance and project update that Weston Branshaw, VMT Manager, provided. There was also discussion about the underwhelming results from Alyeska's trials to use snowblowers on tanks roofs. Weston reported they didn't throw snow as far as they hoped for, but that crews would continue to experiment and look for efficiency gains. Weston also noted that snow removal in the tank farm was being kept up with.

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

Care and Rehabilitation of Oiled Sea Otters Training – March 13, 2026 - A one-day training for veterinarians and others that will be capturing and caring for oiled sea otters for Alyeska and the Prince William Sound Shippers in the event of an oil spill. This annual class was held in Anchorage on March 13, 2026.

2025 Drill Monitoring Report (Draft) – March 10, 2026 - Annual report summarizing past Alyeska and Prince William Sound Shipper drills and trainings from 2025.

Upcoming Drills and Exercises

- Fairwater Annual PWS Shipper's Exercise – May 12-14, 2026
- VMT Field Deployment - July 8, 2026
- VMT Functional Exercise and Field Deployment - October 7, 2026

8000 - Maritime Operations Program

Objectives: This program reviews port organization, operations, incidents, and the adequacy and maintenance of the 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), and supporting maintenance for the NOAA weather stations.

Accomplishments since last report:

The Seal Rocks Buoy and the Cape Suckling Buoy are both still functioning properly. The NDBC C-Man (terrestrial) stations at Bligh Reef, Potato Point, and Middle Rock suffered a brief outage for two weeks

in September and October 2025. NDBC personnel were contacted when the stations stopped reporting. They were aware of the problem and a site visit was made to restore functionality. All NDBC assets in the Prince William Sound region are currently working, with the exception of the Cape Cleare buoy. Council staff were also recently informed that upcoming appropriations for NDBC were increased by \$5,000,000 over their previous level.

The project manager has worked with the Contingency Plan project team to provide public comments on the recently submitted Santos, Teekay, Repsol, and SeaRiver plans. At this time, all new shipper plans have been approved by ADEC. The project manager has been kept up to date on the status of the Tanker One Plan and the transfer of the core Prince William Sound tanker plan from the RPG to Alyeska as acting administrator. The public comment period for the renewal of the Prince William Sound tanker plan and the individual shipper plans has just begun.

At the January 2026 Board meeting, Santos revealed that production at Pikka will start in March, and they will be ready to start selling and moving oil in May.

The project manager provided assistance to the Secondary Containment project team, including helping draft the 10-page confer letter submitted to ADEC. The project manager has also been kept abreast and provided assistance in the work leading up to the legislative exemption granted to Vessels of Opportunity in Alaska that was passed with the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act.

In November, the project manager replaced an equipment module at the NOAA tide station at the Kelsey Dock to ensure that their back-up tide gauge kept working.

8021 – Prince William Sound Tanker Reference Guide

Objectives: Creation of a tanker “guidebook.” Those in our region often see these vessels transiting but have limited ability to learn more about them. The finished product should be a compact, paperback edition (larger than tide books but smaller than 8.5x11) that can be easily kept on boats or used by tour companies for reference. Additionally, an electronic version should be available for online access through the Council's website.

Accomplishments since last report: The project manager has created an outline for the guidebook and is currently working on content development. A rough draft of content is nearly complete and a project team will be created soon to further develop the initial draft.

8060 – Tanker-Mounted Thermal Imaging Camera

Objectives: This project would promote the environmentally safe operation of Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) tankers by installing a thermal imaging camera on a tanker in an effort to learn more about the frequency of whales in the tanker traffic lanes and to help reduce vessel whale strike risks. The Council recently sent letters to the Response Planning Group (RPG) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) requesting a voluntary slowdown of tanker traffic in the Prince William Sound region towards this effort. In their replies, RPG and NOAA indicated that there was not enough information to support a voluntary slowdown. The proposed camera system would notify the officers on the bridge of whales in the tanker's path at a distance of up to 3.5 nautical miles. This would allow time for the tanker to slow down or make slight course adjustments to avoid a potential whale strike. In lieu of the establishment of a voluntary slowdown area by regulators, this proposed

technological intervention provides a possible way to reduce vessel whale strikes while allowing the TAPS tanker fleet to maintain current operational efficiency.

Accomplishments since last report: The project manager is still in the process of finding a partner for camera installation. Initial discussions with Polar Tankers indicated they might be willing to support an installation but ultimately declined to participate. Outreach has been made to Alaska Tanker Company and Fairwater but a definitive answer has not been received. Dr. Zitterbart and Mr. Henry made a presentation showcasing their technology at the January Board meeting. If a partner from the TAPS shipping companies cannot be identified, the project manager will discuss next steps and alternatives with the POVTS Committee to determine the future of the project.

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 project manager is still in the process of contacting and waiting for replies from Alaska Tanker Company, Fairwater, and Marathon to determine whether or not they will participate in Phase 3 of this project. SWAPA has been contacted a number of times, including by POVTS Committee member Richard Frost, but has not confirmed participation. At this time, it is unlikely that any of the TAPS shipping companies or SWAPA will participate. As of last month, Dr. Ziegler had completed 25 interviews with retired masters and pilots in North America, and has more lined up with international participants after a well-received presentation at an international maritime conference in Croatia this fall. Dr. Ziegler has begun additional outreach on social media platforms to solicit participants. A draft report is due by May 1, 2026.

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.

Accomplishments since last report: Projects managed under this program continue to be planned and executed successfully. The Project Manager attended the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in Anchorage in January.

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.

Accomplishments since last report: A second year of fall and early winter marine bird and mammal surveys took place in September and November 2025, in Prince William Sound along transects in and around the tanker lanes by contractors from the Prince William Sound Science Center. A final report will be presented to the Board at this meeting.

9510 – Long-Term Environmental Monitoring Project

Objectives: Monitor the actual and potential environmental impacts of 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 tankers. This includes monitoring hydrocarbons in Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska through marine sediments, mussel tissue, and passive sampling devices.

Accomplishments since last report: Planning for the 2026 Port Valdez samples is currently underway. Sampling will include passive samples devices deployed and retrieved in the water column from three sites; blue mussels collected at four sites; and marine sediments collected at two sites. All sampling sites are located in Port Valdez this year. The project manager is arranging agreements with vessel charters, laboratories, and contractors, and will lead field work outings in May and June. SAC is actively discussing a proposed placer mine adjacent to Gold Creek and potential contamination at the Gold Creek reference sampling site; selection of an additional reference sampling site is being considered.

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: Contractors from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center deployed settlement panels throughout Kachemak Bay in early June 2025. The panels were retrieved in late August and early September and assessed for native and invasive species. A Plate Watch workshop was held in Homer on August 22, and a community outreach event was held in Homer on September 6. A draft report with results from the survey is due in late spring 2026.

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: The project manager is recruiting student interns in the communities of Valdez, Cordova, Kodiak, and Whittier. Internships are scheduled to begin in May or June 2026, with field work taking place between May and September. A staff member or local point of contact will provide training to the students as needed. The project manager and project manager assistant will deploy settlement panels at the Valdez Marine Terminal this spring as usual.

9522 – Analysis of Ballast Water Treatment Efficacy in Commercial Vessels

Objectives: Assess the efficacy of ballast water treatment systems on board tankers arriving at the Valdez Marine Terminal by measuring the concentration of zooplankton present in ballast water, and

assess the current ballast water activity and management practices of commercial vessels arriving in Alaska ports, including tankers.

Accomplishments since last report: The Board approved a budget modification for this deferred project to commence in FY2026 and authorized a sole source contract with the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. Staff from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center are planning to carry out sampling during a three-week period this spring.

9550 - Dispersants

Objectives: The Council has a long history of supporting dispersants-related projects, commenting on proposed regulations, maintaining an extensive literature database, and maintains a position statement with supporting materials on the use of dispersants in the Exxon Valdez oil spill region. The goal of this project is to retain a dispersants expert who can assist the Council in being knowledgeable of current changes to regulations and stockpiles of dispersants that could be authorized for use in our region.

Accomplishments since last report: The Council has a time and materials contract with Dr. Merv Fingas of Spill Science, LLC this fiscal year. Dr. Fingas continues to provide monthly updates on dispersants related news to the project manager. A newly listed dispersant on the National Contingency Plan Product Schedule, Dasic EcoSafe OSD, is now stockpiled in Anchorage and replaces Corexit 9500A.

9850 - Transcriptomics

Objectives: To continue the use of transcriptomics to assess the genetic response of hydrocarbon exposure on blue mussels collected at LTEMP sites. This genetics assessment compliments the traditional chemistry analyses conducted on blue mussels, which have formed the base of the LTEMP dataset over the past 30+ years.

Accomplishments since last report: Blue mussels were collected in 2023 and 2024, at all 13 LTEMP sites in Prince William Sound and Gulf of Alaska for dissection and preservation. The blue mussel tissue samples were shipped to contractor Dr. Liz Bowen at USGS in California. Dr. Bowen and her colleagues are in the process of developing a 24-gene panel and analyzing the mussel tissues. A report containing results and recommendations is expected to be presented to the Board at the September 2026 meeting.