



PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND REGIONAL CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

September 2026

Status Report

As of August 10, 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 requirements for ongoing updates to the public.

Accomplishments since last report: Work for the latest annual report (2025-2026) began in June 2026. Staff are currently coordinating on the draft content and developing layouts with the contracted graphic designer.

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 typically 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. An alternative format for Kodiak was created in 2026, as it was logistically not possible to do an on-water tour. This alternative format could be used in other communities in the future, if needed.

Accomplishments since last report: Work for the FY2027 iteration of this project has not yet begun. Maia Draper-Reich will begin preliminary work on community selection and scheduling later in early fall. However, we will not be able to finalize until we know the spring SERVS schedule, which is typically available in December or January.

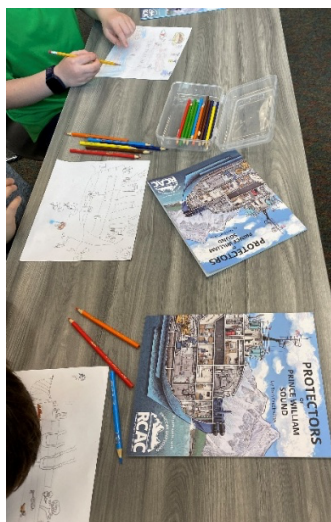
3500 – Community Outreach Program

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

Accomplishments since last report:

Protectors of Prince William Sound Book Launch events

- **May 6, 2026** – Guest Lessons at Herman Hutchens Elementary School, Valdez, AK
 - Author Tom Crestodina and staff taught all five of the 4th and 5th grade classes including presenting about the Council and the “Protectors of Prince William Sound” book. Tom shared about himself and his art, and led a drawing activity. He also signed books for each individual student and teacher.



- **May 6, 2026** – Community Reception + Book Signing, Valdez, AK
 - At the Council's Community Reception, Tom met, chatted with, and signed books for a variety of attendees including Council members, partners, those who work in the industry, and other Valdez community members.



- **May 7, 2026** – Guest Lesson for Homeschool Students at Valdez Consortium Library, Valdez, AK
 - Tom and staff taught the same guest lesson for Valdez homeschool students gathered at the Library, including signing copies of “Protectors of Prince William Sound” for those in attendance.



- **May 7, 2026** – Author Talk at Valdez Consortium Library, Valdez, AK
 - Tom presented about himself, his artistic process, and his books at the Valdez Library. We distributed copies of “Protectors of Prince William Sound.”



- **May 8, 2026** – Peksulineq Festival, Tatitlek, AK
 - Maia and Tom attended the festival on the final day of Tatitlek’s Culture Week to distribute copies of “Protectors of Prince William Sound” to youth and other attendees from across the Chugach region.
 - We were grateful to be able to participate in the celebrations and have transportation on the passenger vessel chartered by Fairwater.



- **May 11-12, 2026** – Prince William Sound Natural History Symposium, Whittier, AK
 - Amanda Johnson traveled to distribute books at the *Coffee with a Scientist* evening event.
 - Maia presented about “Protectors of Prince William Sound” sharing the project’s goals, processes, and outcomes. This presentation will be available online.
 - Maia and Brooke Taylor hosted a booth to distribute copies to attendees.



Other Outreach Events:

- **June 2, 2026** - Valdez Guides Training, Valdez, AK
 - PWSRCAC hosted our annual evening training event to orient Valdez-based guides and deckhands to the Valdez Marine Terminal, tankers, and oil spill prevention and response assets in Valdez. We also covered EVOS history, PWSRCAC information and science, and distributed copies of “Protectors of Prince William Sound” as well as our other publications.



- **June 13, 2026** – Copper River Nouveau, Cordova, AK
 - A group of attended the annual gala benefitting the PWS Science Center.



(L) Current staff and volunteers in attendance: Scott Pegau (SAC), Donna Schantz, Brooke Taylor, Kate Morse (IEC), and Robert Beedle (Board). (R) Pictured from left to right are Brooke Taylor, founding Board member and former Deputy Director Marilyn Leland, Donna Schantz, Robert Beedle, and former Director of Administration Walt Wrede.

- **July 17-18, 2026** – Copper River Salmon Jam, Cordova, AK
 - Board members David Janka and Robert Beedle, and Maia hosted a booth at the music and arts festival including launching the “Protectors of Prince William Sound” book and participation in the Small Fry Youth Education event.



Upcoming Outreach Events: Planning is underway for the Council's Fall schedule of outreach events including continuing the distribution of "Protectors of Prince William Sound" as appropriate. The schedule includes the following:

- **September TBD** – Outreach events in association with the Whittier Board Meeting including the Become a Master of Disaster youth education event.
- **November 19-21, 2026** – Pacific Marine Expo, Seattle, WA
 - PWSRCAC will host an informational booth in the Alaska Hall.
- **December 3, 2026** – Science Night, Anchorage, AK
 - PWSRCAC will host our annual Science Night event in person in Anchorage and online via Zoom.

Maia will be coordinating watch parties in region communities hoping to expand to communities we have not yet reached.

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:

At the recent IEC meeting on July 14, 2026, the committee accepted final reports and deliverables for five contracts that closed 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
- "Tiġlaġ in the Bay" School Program Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge

There are currently three contracts ongoing set to close by September 30, 2026:

- 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
- Copper River Stewardship Program: Moving Mountains- Exploring Impacts of Glaciers on Ecology and Community Prince William Sound Science Center

Three Youth Involvement proposals were reviewed and accepted by the committee. The programs will take place during the 2026-2027 school year and are currently in the contracting process at the time of writing this report:

- Weaving the RCAC curriculum "Web of Life" into a 4th grade marine science fieldtrip Alaska Coastal Observations and Research
- "Tiġlaġ in the Bay" School Program Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge
- Stewardship, Storytelling, and Citizen Science with Whittier High Schoolers Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area

A RFP for 2027 Summer Youth Involvement projects will be released in October.

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: updates to Google Ads Network, Nonprofit Technology Network's online community virtual trainings, webinars on AI, AirTable contact management, and writing for websites, 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.pwsrcac.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.

3650 – A Voice For Citizens: PWSRCAC ArcGIS Storymap

Objectives: This project will fund an ArcGIS Storymap, using Esri's ArcGIS mapping software platform to tell the story of how the Council represents our region. A contractor will be hired to create an informational storymap-style landing page (long-form web page that the user will scroll through and interact with elements in the page) that will convey the geographic focus of the organization in a visually engaging and dynamic way.

Accomplishments since last report: As of the time this report was written, staff was preparing to release a Request for Proposals seeking a contractor.

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.

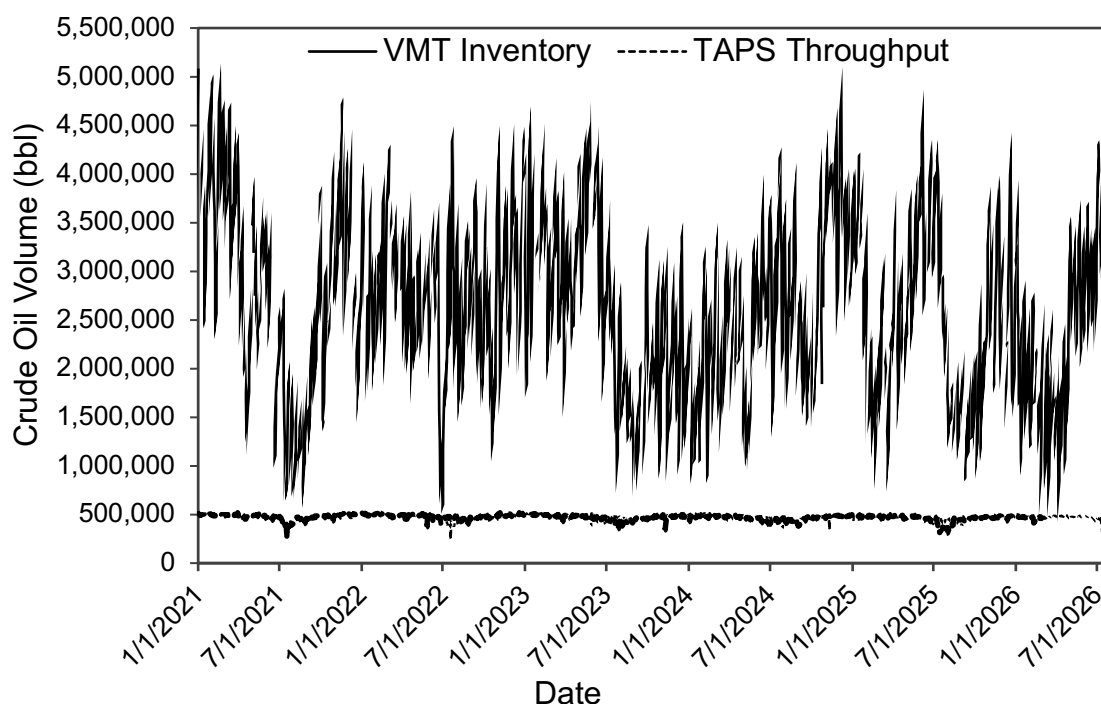
Accomplishments since last report: Graphs depicting a variety of data related to the operation and environmental impacts of the Valdez Marine Terminal. Daily oil inventory at the Valdez Marine Terminal and trans-Alaska pipeline throughput.

Timeline of VMT Tank Repairs and Inspection Intervals: The report "Review of VMT Tank Inspection Timelines" was accepted by XCOM at the June 25 meeting, following a presentation of findings by Bill Mott of Taku Engineering, LLC.

Maintaining the VMT Secondary Containment Liner: TOEM continues to provide advice and recommendations to both Alyeska and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) throughout the VMT Condition of Approval process associated with Alyeska's final secondary containment liner testing plan for East Tank Farm.

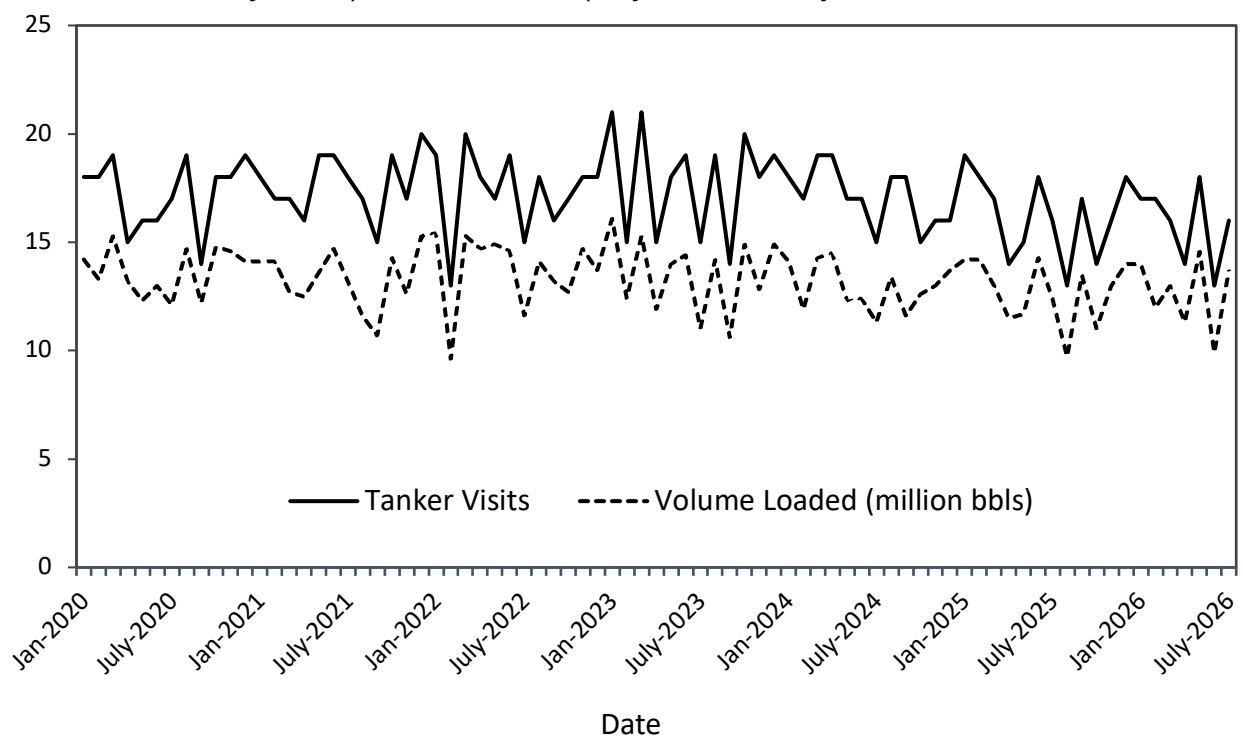
Outstanding Requests for Information and Responses to Recommendations: Council staff continue to maintain a track record of all information requests made from 2021 to present. There are several outstanding requests for information needed to complete FY2026 projects that, as of August 5, 2026, have not yet been received.

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>)



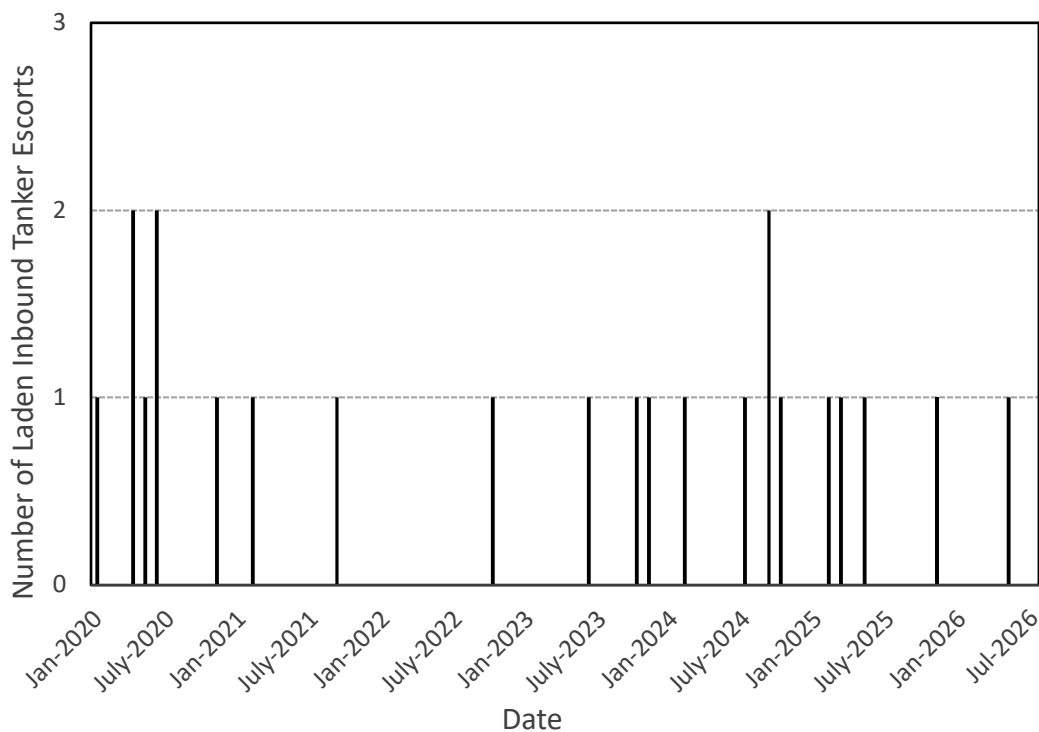
Number of tanker visits and crude oil volume loaded onto ships from VMT

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



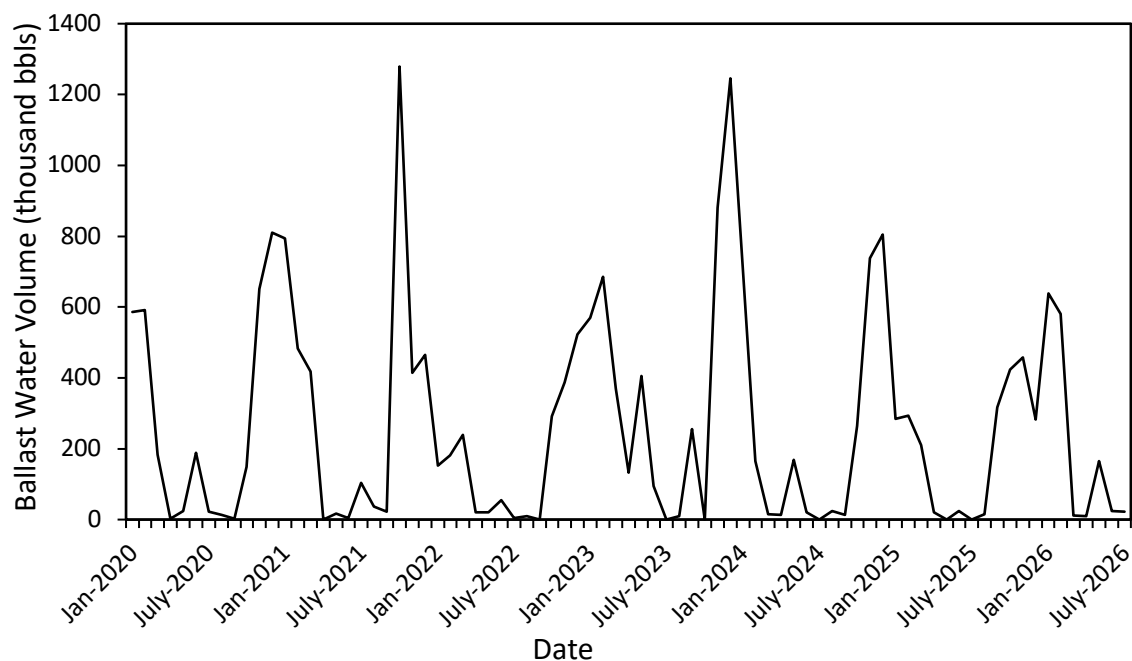
Inbound laden tanker escorts to VMT

(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. This release timeline has been extended to 2027.

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 eventual release of the VMT Title V Air Quality Permit, and provide the Council with ad-hoc advice and recommendations related to VMT air quality issues.

5081 – Crude Oil Storage Tank 5 Maintenance Review

Objectives: This project entails performing a technical review of the maintenance of crude oil storage tank 5, during its out-of-service inspection and repairs in 2025.

Accomplishments since last report: Alyeska has provided the engineering reports necessary for the completion of this project. The contract with Taku Engineering, LLC is being drafted and work will begin soon on the analysis and report.

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 report “Review of VMT Tank Inspection Timelines” was accepted by XCOM at the June 25 meeting, following a presentation of findings by Bill Mott of Taku Engineering, LLC. The report will be transmitted to Alyeska and regulatory agencies in the near future.

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: A Request for Proposals was drafted and issued in June, and the TOEM Committee is reviewing proposals received for this project.

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: Mears Group, Inc. has submitted their draft report for this project. Staff and TOEM Committee members are currently working through the review process.

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 met on June 11, 2026, in Anchorage (which was delayed due to the federal government shutdown). Jeremy Robida presented on the Prince William Sound Copper River Delta Flats Geographic Response Strategies. The next meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2026.

Prince William Sound Area Contingency Plan (PWS ACP): The Prince William Sound Area Contingency Plan, version 2026.0, was signed in June 2026, by CDR Sarah Rousseau, USCG, and Anna Carey, SOS/ADEC, and is available on ADEC’s website [HERE](#). The architecture of the plan was updated, and some information was removed to source documents. Content that was appropriate for prevention,

preparedness, training, or general background has been removed. That content is available on ADEC's References and Tools webpage [HERE](#).

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 Tanker C-Plan is currently in the process of its 5-year renewal that began in February 2026. The proposed new plan, administered by Alyeska, consists of four parts: each individual shipping company's Vessel Response Plan, and the reformatted Tanker C-Plan CP-35-3, that consists of three volumes (regulatory, scenarios, technical manual). Plan review documents can be accessed on OSPR's webpage [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 when the plan was approved on November 6, 2024. The approval letter and Basis of Decision document can be viewed [HERE](#).

Condition of Approval #1: East Tank Farm Secondary Containment Area Required Evaluation requires Alyeska to determine a method to evaluate the condition of the secondary containment liner and to complete the investigations before the next renewal of the plan. The table below is a timeline of actions taken since the plan was approved in 2024 on this issue:

Date	Action
Nov 2024	• ADEC issues VMT C-Plan approval • PWSRCAC files Request for Informal Review on CBA liner
Dec 2024	• ADEC (SPAR) determines PWSRCAC Request for Informal Review on the CBA liner has merit
Feb 2025	• ADEC (SPAR) issues final decision on PWSRCAC's request for informal review • Alyeska selects Electrical Leak Location (ELL) as liner testing method

Mar 2025	- PWSRCAC files Request for Adjudicatory Hearing on informal review request decision (1) COA should require changes to inspection schedules and corrective actions be subject to a major amendment, (2) schedule for starting inspections should begin by 2025 for completion by 2028, and (3) corrective actions should be required if liner does not meet “sufficiently impermeable” standard - City of Valdez and Alyeska file adjudicatory hearing requests
Apr 2025	ADEC Commissioner issues decision on adjudicatory hearing requests remanding decision to SPAR Director and directing the parties to confer
Apr-May 2025	- ADEC requests technical information from Alyeska that supports inspecting 5% of the liner with deadline for response - Alyeska submits their Final Evaluation Method Selection Report using ELL to ADEC
June-July 2025	- ADEC defines “confer process” to all parties - ADEC requests additional information, deadlines extended - Technical analysis continues
Aug 2025	Alyeska selects Hydro-Test as new testing method
Sept-Nov 2025	Technical analysis of hydro-testing method continues
Dec 2025	- PWSRCAC submits comments on Alyeska’s proposed hydro-test on Dec 1 - Confer process meeting with ADEC on Dec. 18 - ADEC response letter sent on Dec. 24 to Alyeska on hydro-test, reply due Jan 13 - ADEC letter to PWSRCAC and City of Valdez on confer process, comments due Jan. 28 to Alyeska’s response to ADEC
Jan 2026	- Alyeska responds to ADEC’s requests for technical information on Jan 13 including Revision 1 to testing plan - PWSRCAC submits comments on Alyeska’s proposed hydro-testing method
Feb 2026	ADEC issues conditional approval for hydro-test on Feb. 24, amended testing plan due March 30
Mar 2026	- PWSRCAC sends letter to ADEC letter on March 9 seeking clarification on acceptance criteria, margin of error - Alyeska submits Revision 2 to testing plan
April 2026	- ADEC responds to PWSRCAC’s letter seeking clarification - PWSRCAC to receive weekly updates on project, Revision 2, and participation in field visits during testing - Hydro-testing will be done between July 1 and October 15
July 2026	PWSRCAC staff working with contractors to observe hydro-test
August 2026	PWSRCAC staff and subject matter expert observe hydro-test in Dike Cell 4 on Aug. 1

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 detected and cleaned up prior to ground or surface water contamination.

Accomplishments since last report: Staff members Joe Lally, Robbin Capers, and John Guthrie attended the first hydro-test with Geosyntec consultant Olga Stewart. This test, in East Tank Farm Dike Cell 4, took place August 1. Results will be reviewed when they are made available. Three additional dike cells are scheduled to be tested this fall.

6520 – Weather Station on Seal Rocks

Objectives: Current operational guidelines direct the United States Coast Guard (USCG) to close Hinchinbrook Entrance to laden oil tankers when wind speeds exceed 45 knots or wave heights exceed 15 feet in the vicinity. Typically, these measurements are provided by the National Data Buoy Center (NDBC) Seal Rocks Buoy (46061). However, the buoy is often inoperable for sustained periods, forcing the USCG to make closure decisions based on weather reports from nearby vessels, other buoys, or spot forecasts. PWSRCAC has long been interested in a redundant system in the area, either in the form of a buoy or a terrestrial weather station on Seal Rocks. Working with the Marine Exchange of Alaska (MXAK), who have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the USCG, would allow the Council to establish a weather station on the USCG Aid To Navigation (ATON) on Seal Rocks. The anemometer on the station would allow PWSRCAC to compare wind speed data with the NDBC Buoy, and in the case of a prolonged buoy outage, provide an autonomous wind measurement in the area.

Accomplishments since last report: The project manager is continuing outreach with MXAK and USCG to gauge their interest. Discussions with the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding permitting have begun. Seal Rocks is a Steller's Sea Lion rookery so any work will need to occur outside pupping season which typically lasts from May through August.

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 online and reporting good data. There is an issue with one of the meteorological sensors preventing the reporting of relative humidity, barometric pressure, and solar radiation. A site visit is planned to restore the function of these sensors.

The Kokinhenik station has been offline since February 25. A site visit to enact temporary repairs to restore service was scheduled for this past May but did not happen due to incompatible personnel schedules and lack of adequate flight weather. All the equipment for a replacement station has been ordered and a Purchase Order has been issued for Dr. Rob Campbell with the Prince William Sound Science Center to complete the work as his schedule allows in the next few months. The station will be relocated slightly to the west and inland. It is likely this station will need to be relocated every 2-3 years.

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 service visit was completed in April. During redeployment, Dr. Campbell replaced the pin-type shackles on the ground tackle with safety shackles. The buoy was also relocated slightly to the Northwest to decrease its watch circle at the request of SERVS personnel.

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

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. This project would be the fifth project to take the data collected in each of the years since the buoys were deployed and perform an analysis to determine any weather trends throughout the year and seasonally. Each project reviews the most current yearly data as well as the cumulative data collected to that point. The analysis should include direction and speed information for currents and wind, wave direction and heights, and other pertinent information that can be obtained from the weather data. Alyeska has agreed to allow access to the VMT buoy through 2028. This project will provide an analysis of the weather and currents for the years 2024 and 2025.

Accomplishments since last report: Dr. Campbell delivered the draft report which has now been finalized and recommended by the OSPR Committee for Board acceptance. Dr. Campbell will provide a presentation at the Board meeting in September.

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 redeploying, 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: A contract has been signed with the Prince William Sound Science Center to perform the work. The necessary fiberglass repairs were completed last spring. All sensors and ground tackle have been received in Cordova. The new wave sensor has been installed and appears to be functioning properly pending a test in the Cordova boat harbor. Deployment tentatively scheduled for the week of August 17.

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:

Annual SERVS Fall FV training will begin shortly after the PWSRCAC Board meeting ends. Whittier is slated for 9/21-9/23, and Cordova, 9/25-10/1. Jeremy Robida will cover Whittier, and Roy Robertson will cover a portion of the Cordova training.

At the May board meeting, Robida and Elise DeCola with Nuka presented on the completed **Copper River GRS development project**. Below are some updates for the Board.

- A total of 9 GRS (in PDF form) and an area-specific Tactics Summary were provided to ADEC in early June, after some revisions to the Tactics Summary were made. The online storefront for the “Avensa” navigation software used and referenced quite a bit during the project changed this spring, and it seemed prudent to make that edit versus referencing old information. The next step is for the PWS Area Committee to formally recognize this material, and then post it online, alongside the other GRSs.
- Robida submitted a proposal to continue Copper River Delta GRS work to the Oil Spill Recovery Institute (OSRI) in Cordova. The ask and suggested project was for funding to rent vessels and invite equipment manufacturers and/or OSRO’s to supply equipment, and exercise tactics and logistical concepts found in the completed GRS and Tactics Summary. OSRI will review proposals in early fall. Proposals that are selected and approved will then result in the development of Requests for Proposals that will be broadly announced in later fall.
- DeCola and Robida also submitted a proposal to present on the project at the International Oil Spill Conference (IOSC) in spring of 2027. It’s envisioned that the presentation would highlight the workgroup process, the importance of local knowledge, and the collaboration aspects of the project more than the tactical or technical details.
- Finally, Robida gave a presentation on this effort to the Alaska Regional Response Team (ARRT) on 6/11. Considering that no other maritime GRS have been built for 10+ years, it seemed prudent to communicate to the ARRT why PWSRCAC funded this work, and explain the lengthy but consistent and well-attended workgroup process that resulted in completed GRS.

Robida and Jereme Altendorf (former USCG, now with UAA’s Arctic Domain Awareness Center; bio here: <https://www.adacarctic.com/researcherprofile.php?n=altendorf>) also submitted a **proposal to IOSC on the Regional Stakeholder Committee (RSC)**. Altendorf was a member of the Regional Response Team RSC Task Force that built job aids for the Liaison and RSC members. With formal job aids in place, and

the fact that the RSC is unique to Alaska, a presentation at IOSC would be a good way to highlight this potential engagement tool.

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 Champion U/J-Boom and Skimmer Deployment – July 16, 2026

The tug Champion tried to conduct a U/J-Boom and skimmer exercise on July 16. This is an annual exercise that is a refresher training for the tug crews but a mechanical issue caused the training to be stopped.

Valdez Duck Flats Sensitive Area Protection Training – June 25-26, 2026

SERVS conducted a two-day training course for the deployment of the Valdez Duck Flats protection strategy. The first day is classroom and site visits, and the second day is the deployment of half of the tactic's booming requirements.

Tug Champion U/J-Boom and Skimmer Deployment – June 8, 2026

The tug Champion conducted a U/J-Boom and skimmer exercise on June 8. This is an annual exercise that is a refresher training for the tug crews.

Fairwater Tankers Alaska Annual Shipper's Exercise – May 11- 14, 2026

Fairwater held the annual Prince William Sound shipper's exercise at the SERVS' Valdez Emergency Operations Center in May. This exercise was a combined physical and virtual based exercise that focused on transitioning from Alyeska to Fairwater's management of large-scale spill response in PWS.

Polar Enterprise Emergency Towing Exercise – April 11, 2026

Polar Tankers and SERVS conducted an emergency towing exercise in mid-Prince William Sound on April 11 with the tugs Commander and Champion,

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.

Upcoming Drills and Exercises

VMT Field Deployment – August 14, 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 Cape Suckling Buoy is functioning properly. The Cape Cleare Buoy was serviced and restored to function in June. In the middle of June, the anemometer on the Seal Rocks buoy stopped working; however, the wave sensor is still operational. Fixing the anemometer is listed on the weekly maintenance report but no repair date is provided. Project manager contacted NDBC about the anemometer and NDBC indicated that the cause of the anemometer failure should not affect any other systems.

Project manager examined the entire record of wind and wave data from the Seal Rocks Buoy and could only find 11 hourly reports where wind speed exceeded the closure threshold but wave height did not. This is out of roughly 250,000 hourly measurements since the buoy was established in 1995.

The project manager participated in the Fairwater shipper's drill in May, observing and evaluating the operations sections as well as the field deployment at the Valdez Marine Terminal that consisted of a variety of tactics including a freshwater deluge of a beach.

The Prince William Sound Tanker Contingency Plan is currently in the renewal process. Plan holder responses to ADEC's Request for Additional Information were due at the end of July.

Fairwater Tankers chartered the foreign-flagged vessel Maritime Glory to load crude from the VMT this spring. The tanker was just leaving the berth during the VMT tour at the May Board meeting. This has been the only foreign-flagged charter so far in 2026, although we do expect Santos to move oil this way in the next few months.

Santos and Repsol announced first oil through the pipeline from Pikka on May 17, 2026, reaching 20,000 barrels per day on June 23, and slowly ramping up to 80,000 barrels per day in September. To our knowledge, Repsol will be selling its oil at the VMT, and Santos has yet to load crude.

The project manager has provided assistance to the Secondary Containment project team, including attending a pilot test of Ground Penetrating Radar technology in the West Tank Farm performed by Logic Geophysics in June. We are still awaiting the results from that pilot test. The project manager also attended the first hydrotest in dike cell 4 of the East Tank Farm on August 1.

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 nearly finished a rough draft of content for the guidebook and hopes to complete that in the next couple of weeks. Once content has been reviewed by Council staff, a project team will be set up to solicit feedback from Board members and volunteers before guidebook design occurs.

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 previously sent letters to the Response Planning Group (RPG) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in support of this effort, 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 POVTS Committee and Board approved a change in scope of this project to install the camera on the Alaska Marine Highway System vessel Aurora. The project manager was unable to finalize the purchase of a camera by the end of Fiscal Year 2026 because an agreement on language in the Memorandum of Agreement could not be reached between PWSRCAC, AMHS, and WhaleSpotter. WhaleSpotter had requested additional stipulations in the MOA between PWSRCAC and AMHS, subjecting AMHS to many of the same requirements of the contract between PWSRCAC and AMHS. Those stipulations have been sent to AMHS, and the project manager is awaiting their response. If AMHS agrees, the project manager will seek Board approval to access Fiscal Year 2027 funds to continue this project after the financial audit is completed in fall 2026.

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.

Accomplishments since last report: Dr. Ziegler delivered the draft Phase 3 report on August 5 and made a presentation highlighting her work at the August 13 POVTS meeting. POVTS recommended the report for Board acceptance, and Dr. Ziegler will provide a presentation at the September Board meeting. Phase 4 of Project 8520 was funded for Fiscal Year 2027. A contract will be drafted for Phase 4 and work will begin after the completion of Phase 3.

8540 – Analyzing Underwater Acoustic Noise Using Hydrophones in the Vicinity of Hinchinbrook

Objectives: This project was proposed by Dr. Hannah Myers, an Assistant Professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The project will seek to develop a baseline of underwater anthropogenic noise from tankers and escort tugs in the vicinity of Hinchinbrook Entrance. Dr. Myers will leverage an existing 7-year record of acoustic recordings made by hydrophone moorings in Zaikof Bay on Montague Island to

monitor killer whale vocalizations to quantify the underwater noise from vessels transiting the region. Automatic Identification System data showing vessel traffic in the region can be correlated to the acoustic recordings to determine the contribution that noise from tankers and escort tugs makes to the general underwater acoustic environment.

Accomplishments since last report: A contract has been drafted and reviewed by PWSRCAC staff. It is currently under review with the UAF Office of Grants and Contracts Administration.

8560 – Prince William Sound Potential Places of Refuge Update Project

Objectives: This project will seek to update the list of Potential Places of Refuge (PPOR) in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Area Contingency Plan. PPOR are pre-identified locations to move a vessel in distress if an incident occurs; however, the final location still needs to be approved by Unified Command. The PPOR for PWS were originally developed through a workgroup process in the mid-2000s and have not been updated since. POVTS funded a project in the late 2010s conducted by Safeguard Marine using the simulator at AVTEC and input from local mariners that determined a number of these PPORs were inappropriate and posed navigational safety concerns for large tank vessels. PWSRCAC is working with Nuka Research and Planning Group, LLC on this project to facilitate a new workgroup process with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and other stakeholders to recommend PPOR updates to the Area Committee.

Accomplishments since last report: A sole-source contract with Nuka Research and Planning Group, LLC is currently being drafted.

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. Planning is currently underway for Science Night 2026, to be held on December 3 in Anchorage and virtually. Watch Parties will be held in Council communities in collaboration with local partners.

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 final report on the fall 2025 and early winter marine bird and mammal surveys was presented to the Board at the May 2026 meeting. The third year of fall and early winter marine bird and mammal surveys will be conducted in September and November 2026, in Prince William Sound along transects in and around the tanker lanes by contractors from the Prince William Sound Science Center.

9310 – Chemical Characterization of the Dispersant Dasic EcoSafe OSD

Objectives: Identify a contractor to characterize the chemistry and toxicity of Dasic EcoSafe OSD and determine its similarity to Corexit 9500A. The purpose of the comparison is to determine whether the literature on Corexit 9500A can be used to understand the potential impacts of Dasic EcoSafe OSD, since both dispersants contain the same ingredients, though in different quantities. This is a two-year project and will be considered a protected project in the FY2028 budget (\$75,000).

Accomplishments since last report: A meeting of the dispersants project team was held in to discuss the scope of work for this project. A request for proposals will be developed and shared with the project team for their review and input prior to distribution.

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 PWS and the Gulf of Alaska through marine sediments, mussel tissue, and passive sampling devices.

Accomplishments since last report: Field work for the 2026 season was carried out successfully in May and June. The 2026 Port Valdez samples included passive sampling devices deployed and retrieved in the water column from three sites; blue mussels collected at four sites; and marine sediments collected at two sites. Samples were shipped to laboratories for analysis. Results are expected to be received this fall and will be shared with a contractor for interpretation and report writing. SAC will review the results and draft report this fall and winter, and a final report will be transmitted to the Board in January.

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 2025, and assessed for native and invasive species. A draft report with results from the survey was presented to SAC, and the final report will be presented to the Board at this meeting by Dr. Greg Ruiz.

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: Council staff deployed settlement panels at the Valdez Marine Terminal in spring 2026. Student interns are monitoring for invasive green crab in Valdez, Kodiak, and Whittier throughout the summer. The Whittier internship is new this year; Council staff traveled to Whittier for site selection and to provide training. No green crab have been detected in our region to date.

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: Staff from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center came to Valdez for three weeks in spring 2026 to sample ballast water from tankers at the Valdez Marine Terminal. Eight ships were successfully sampled during their stay. The samples will be analyzed this summer and a draft report will be presented to SAC this fall.

9550 – Dispersants

Objectives: The Council has a long history of supporting dispersants-related projects, commenting on proposed regulations, maintaining an extensive literature database, and maintaining a position statement with supporting materials on the use of dispersants in the EVOS 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: A dispersants project team meeting was held in July 2026 to discuss a report written by Dr. Merv Fingas, a trip report from Joe Lally following his recent trip to the OHMSETT facility, and the scope of work and request for proposals for project 9310 - Chemical Characterization and Toxicity of the Dispersant Dasic EcoSafe OSD. The Council has a time-and-materials contract with Dr. Merv Fingas of Spill Science, LLC for fiscal year 2027 to assist us with any dispersants-related work that may arise.

9850 – Assessment of Containment Exposure Using Transcriptomics of Mussels

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 complements 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 the 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 later this fiscal year.