PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND
REGIONAL CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

January 2026
Status Report
As of December 12, 2025

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 800 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:

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

Accomplishments since last report: The latest annual report (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: In FY2026, if possible, we will develop and implement an alternative outreach event format to share about the fishing vessel program with Kodiak community members. Staff is meeting with Alyeska/SERVS staff in December to discuss what is logistically possible with their Kodiak training schedule and then the project team will reconvene to further shape the format of a Kodiak outreach event for implementation in Spring 2026.

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:

- **September 15** – Invasive Species Monitoring Fieldwork with Youth, Cordova, AK
  - Project Manager Danielle Verna did end of season invasive species fieldwork with assistance from Copper River Watershed Project (CRWP) high-school interns.
- **September 16** – Tuesday Night Talk at PWS Science Center, Cordova, AK
  - Danielle also presented a talk in the Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) Tuesday evening series titled "Policy in Practice: How OPA 90 Shapes Science in the Sound." The talk was well attended by partners and community members both in-person and online. The recording of this talk is available on PWSSC's YouTube channel.
- **September 17** – Become a Master of Disaster youth education event, Cordova, AK
  - PWSRCAC volunteers and staff were joined by staff from PWSSC and the Copper River Watershed Project (CRWP) to host our youth education event at the Mt. Eccles Elementary School.
  - Youth and their caregivers moved through hands-on stations covering a variety of oil spill and marine science topics including:
    - Tankers
    - Oil spill clean-up
    - Personal Protective Equipment (PWSSC)
    - Remote-operated vehicles (PWSSC)
    - Marine invasive species monitoring
    - Wildlife rescue
    - Geographic Response Strategies activity (CRWP), contributed by IEC member & CRWP Executive Director Kate Morse and her staff

Cordova students complete activities during Master of Disaster. Photos by Maia Draper-Reich and Amanda Johnson.

- **September 18** – Cordova Public Reception, Cordova, AK
  - PWSRCAC hosted a Public Reception at the Reluctant Fisherman Bar & Restaurant to visit and connect informally with partners, contractors, and Cordova community members over food and refreshments.
  - Repsol provided a sponsorship for this event.

Set up and people visiting with each other during the Cordova Reception. Photos by Maia Draper-Reich.

- **September 19** – PWSSC tour for PWSRCAC Board, volunteers, and staff
    - PWSSC President and CEO Katrina Hoffman gave PWSRCAC Board, volunteers, and staff a tour of the new Science Center facilities. She shared with the group about the building, new laboratory features, and current scientific projects.
- Thank you to David Janka for providing tours for volunteers and staff throughout the week in Cordova aboard his boat!

Photo by David Janka.

- **October 30** – Presentation to PWS College Outdoor Leadership Students, Valdez, AK
    - Maia presented about EVOS, PWSRCAC, and her role connecting with communities and a variety of audiences via Zoom for the Outdoor Leadership students at PWS College.
    - This is a presentation the Outreach Coordinator is invited to do each fall.
- **November 7** – Ocean Sciences Festival, Cordova, AK
    - Board members David Janka and Robert Beedle joined Danielle to participate in this event organized by the PWS Science Center. They hosted an activity table for students and community members to examine and dissect mussels and learn about Long-Term Environmental Monitoring.
    - Danielle and Maia worked to develop this new explainer activity and it was successfully piloted at this event.


Photos by David Janka

- **November 20-22** – Pacific Marine Expo, Seattle, WA
  - POVTS member Max Mitchell and Maia traveled to cohost a booth with CIRCAC at this expo event for Pacific fisherman and other maritime professionals.
  - ~390 people stopped by the booth.
- **December 4** – Science Night, Anchorage, AK
  - Science topics relevant to the Council's work and region were presented in person and via Zoom. This year's event theme was *Staying Alert & Proactive in the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Region*.
  - The ~186 attendees included Board members, volunteers, staff, partners, and other invitees attended in person and via Zoom including the watch parties listed below.
  - The talks are available on our website and YouTube channel.
- **December 4** – Science Night Community Watch Parties, Cordova, Kodiak, & Valdez, AK
  - Hosted by Prince William Sound Science Center in Cordova, Alaska Sea Grant in Kodiak, and Prince William Sound College in Valdez, AK, these watch parties facilitated community members gathering to watch the Science Night presentations and enjoy food together. These events expanded our audience by an additional 56 people.
  - In Cordova and Kodiak, hosts offered a local presentation or activity during the 30-minute intermission.

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: IEC accepted the following projects as complete and meeting their deliverables:

- Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area - *Expanding Access to Equitable Outdoor Education*
- Alaska Marine Conservation Council - *Kodiak Marine Science and Exploration Summer Program for Youth*
- Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies - *Continued Engagement of Youth as Environmental Stewards: High School Internships & Camp Opportunities*
- Copper River Watershed Project - *Copper River Stewardship Program: Into the Future: Copper River Watershed 2125*

- Kenai Mountains - Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area - *KMTA and PWSRCAC - Expanding Access to Equitable Coastal Outdoor Education*
- Prince William Sound Science Center - *Sound Connections: Building Bridges through Birding*

There are currently two contracts ongoing during the 2025-2026 school year:

- 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*

IEC voted to fund eight Youth Involvement projects during the 2026 Spring/Summer season from the most recent request for proposals (RFP). Award announcements will be made by January 31, 2026, followed by staff working through the contracting process for these contractors. An RFP for 2026-2027 School Year Youth Involvement projects will open for submissions in April.

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 will 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. The contractor will present the data in a MS Excel spreadsheet that can be filtered and sorted again and again in a number of ways, depending on the information needed.

A Request for Proposals was issued this fall. A project team consisting of IEC members and staff evaluated proposals and selected the Stellar Group as the contractor for this project. The work is just beginning; however the timeline is fairly short, and the project is expected to be completed this winter.

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 Amanda Johnson to maintain knowledge of the latest technology and best practices for public communication. Recently attended trainings include: Nonprofit Technology Networks' course Google Analytics 4, webinars on Google's incorporation of AI features into their Looker Studio (software for creating dashboard reports on website analytics), search engine optimization, and webinars on various website plugins. Johnson is planning to attend the Nonprofit Technology Network's conference in Detroit in March 2026.

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.

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: Staff have coordinated with Crestodina, the Council Project Team, and industry representatives from Alyeska/SERVS, Polar Tankers, and SWAPA to work towards finalized content. The intent is to bring final content to the Board for acceptance at the January 2026 Board meeting, after which staff with complete design/layout work, and move to publish and/or print materials. The primary deliverable, a published book, will then be distributed to town and school libraries in the Council's region, and other stakeholders. Launch events are also being tentatively planned for the spring.

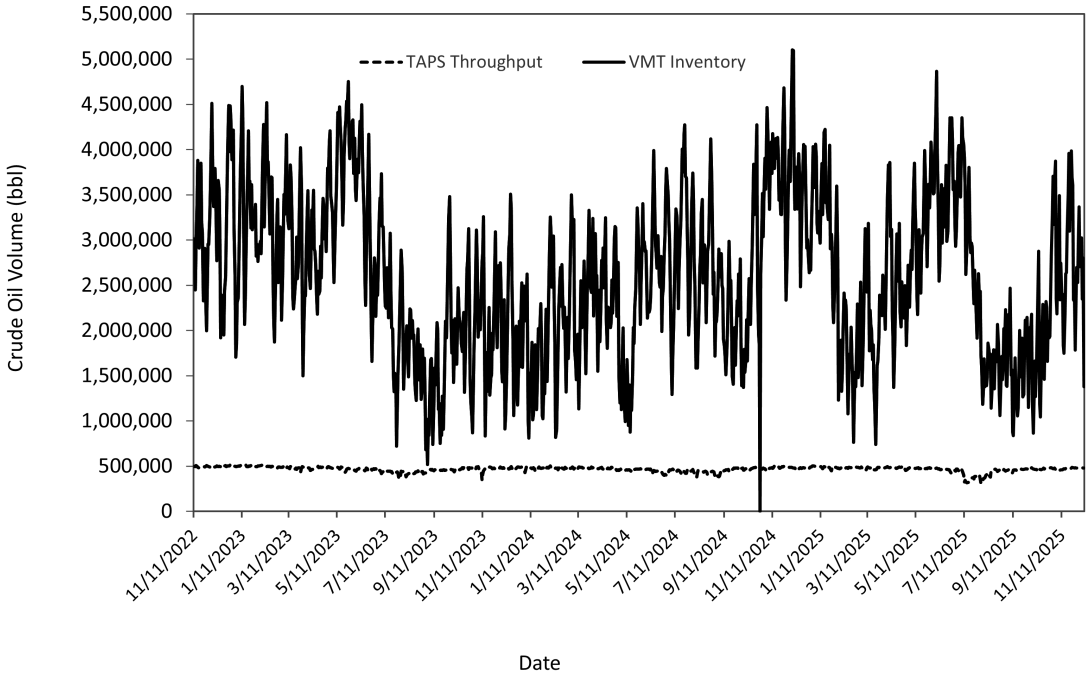
5000 – Terminal Operations Program

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

Accomplishments since last report: 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:

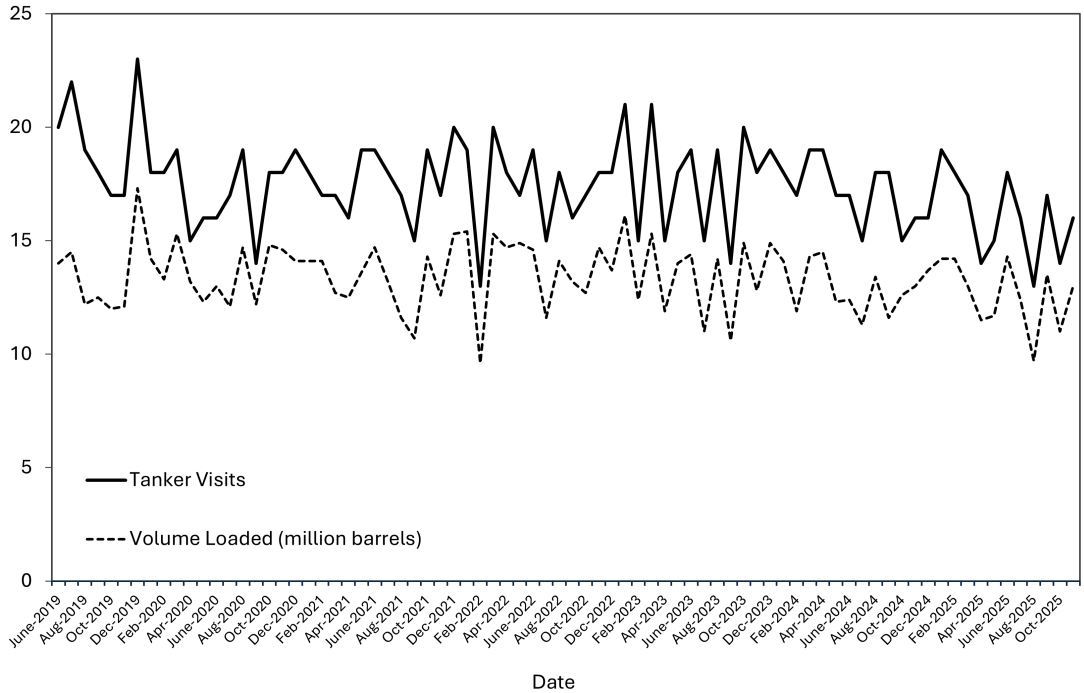
Daily Oil Inventory at the Valdez Marine Terminal and Trans-Alaska Pipeline Throughput

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



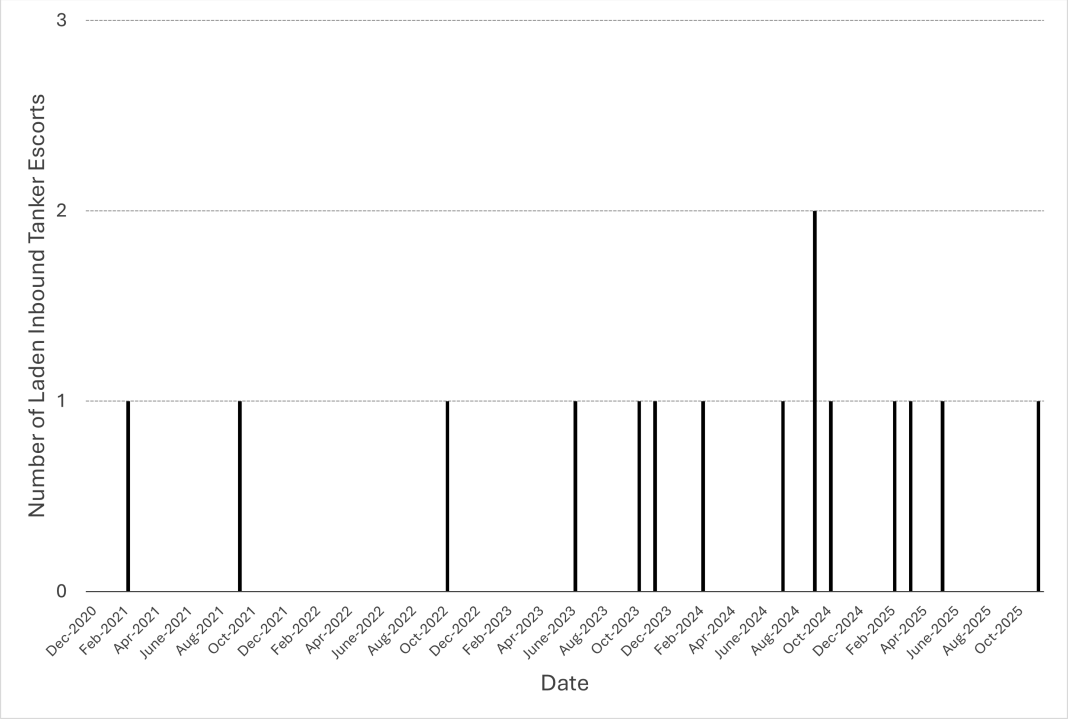
Number of tanker visits and crude oil volume loaded onto ships from VMT

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



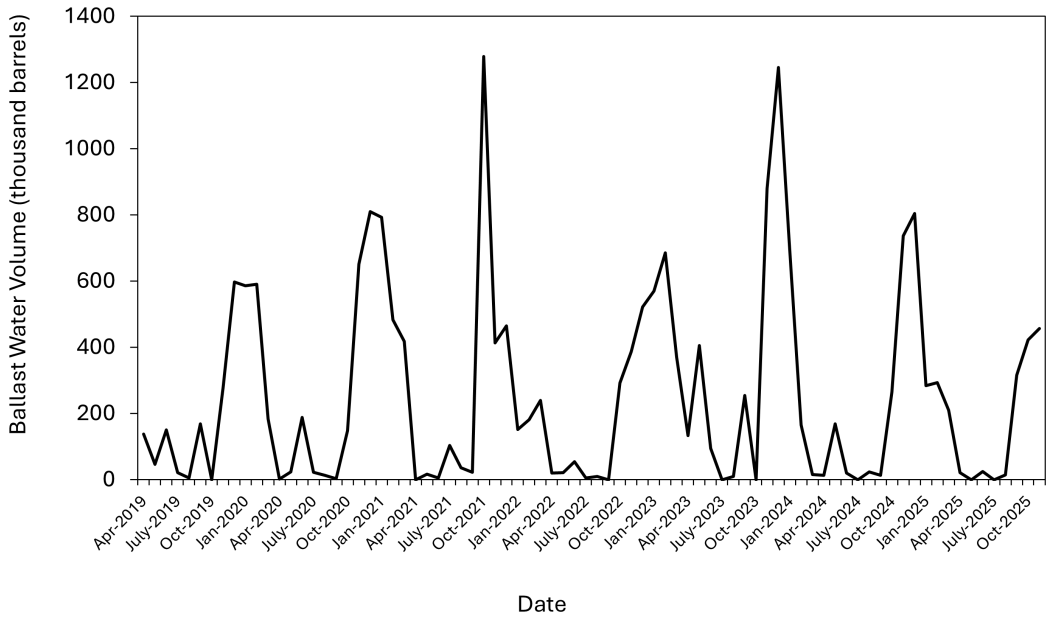
Inbound laden tanker escorts to VMT

(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: A Request for Proposals has been drafted to identify a contractor to complete this work. The new Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring project manager will be focusing more effort on this project going forward.

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: Garde continues to be available to support the Council with follow-up and additional work related to the recommendations from the report as needed.

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: At its September 2025 meeting, the Board accepted the report titled "Review of Ballast Water Tank 93 Out-of- Service Inspection Report and Tank Repairs," by Taku Engineering, LLC, dated July 2025, as meeting the terms and conditions of contract number 5081.25.01, and for distribution to the public.

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: Historical documentation related to this project has been compiled and transmitted to Taku Engineering, LLC, the selected contractor for this work. Additional tank inspection documents needed by the contractor for the completion of this project have been requested from Alyeska but have not been received yet.

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 Council transmitted a letter to Alyeska on May 29, 2025, requesting a meeting between Alyeska's cathodic protection subject matter experts and Council contractor, Kevin Garrity, of Mears Group Inc. This meeting is intended to clarify questions related to Alyeska's VMT CP testing protocols and data collection methods. The Council's request for a meeting was denied on September 3. Staff provided Garrity with additional historical information and met with him on December 11 to discuss his progress on a comprehensive report.

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: At its September 2025 meeting, the Board accepted the report titled "Review of the 2024 Alaska North Slope Oil Properties Relevant to Environmental Assessment and Prediction," by Dr. Merv Fingas of Spill Science as meeting the terms and conditions of contract 5640.25.01, and for distribution to the public. 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 is scheduled to meet on Thursday, March 5, 2026, in Anchorage. From the ARRT website, it is noteworthy that ARRT meeting summaries will only be available internally and not available to the public.

Prince William Sound Area Contingency Plan (PWS ACP): Staff submitted comments on the PWS ACP on August 2, 2025. The updated PWS ACP is expected to be available in the near future. 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.

Arctic and Western Alaska (also known as Sector Western Alaska and U.S. Arctic) Area Contingency Plan (AWA ACP): Comments on this plan were submitted on April 11, 2025. Inclusion of job aids for the Regional Stakeholder Committee (RSC) and the RSC Liaison Officer were part of this review. The updated AWA ACP can be found on ADEC's website: HERE.

6510 – Contingency Plan Review

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

Accomplishments since the last report: The Prince William Sound Tanker Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (PWS Tanker C-Plan) and associated vessel response plans for Alaska Tanker Company, Andeavor (subsidiary of Marathon Petroleum), Fairwater Tankers Alaska (formerly Crowley Alaska Tankers), Hilcorp North Slope, and Polar Tankers, was renewed on January 31, 2022, and will expire on January 30, 2027. The newest shippers in Prince William Sound include Oil Search (Alaska) d/b/a Santos, Teekay Services Limited, and SeaRiver Maritime whose plans expire on January 30, 2027. There is also a pending plan approval for Repsol Trading USA. Alyeska Pipeline Service Company (Alyeska) Valdez Marine Terminal Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (VMT C-Plan) was renewed on November 6, 2024, and will expire in 2029.

PWS Tanker C-Plan: In 2025, the following shippers became members of the Response Planning group whose plans expire on January 30, 2027: (1) Oil Search (Alaska) d/b/a Santos, (2) SeaRiver Maritime, and (3) Teekay Services Limited. Addition of Repsol Trading USA is pending.

PWS C-Plan renewal documents are due for review by ADEC 365 days before the current plan expires so this means plan documents are due sometime in January 2026.

VMT C-Plan: Staff continues to work on Alaska's final evaluation method on the secondary containment liner. A timeline of activities since 2019 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 evaluated and provided his expert advice on Alyeska's plans to use hydro-testing to verify the integrity of the CBA liner. There will be an update at the Board meeting on recent activities.

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 Kokinhenik Weather Station was offline briefly in September. Dr. Rob Campbell made a site visit to swap the batteries out and clear sand and vegetation away from the solar panels. He also moved the solar panels up slightly higher on the tower to mitigate this issue. Due to dune movement, it's possible this site might need to be relocated in the future. The Cape St. Elias Weather Station was re-established with new equipment in October, co-located with the AIS station operated by the Marine Exchange of Alaska. We are currently using data telemetry and power provided by the Marine Exchange. The stations were also relocated into a more exposed area to the south of the original deployment site. Preliminary analysis indicates that winds at the new location are more representative of winds at the water's surface. There have been occasional gaps in data telemetry. Dr. Campbell is currently troubleshooting the issue.

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 is installed at the Valdez Duck Flats [61.1201°N | 146.2914°W]. The Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) partners with the Council to facilitate this project.

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: Dr. Rob Campbell made a site visit to perform the biannual service for the VMT buoy in November. The service went as planned and the buoy is currently on-station and functioning properly. Discussions with Alyeska to extend the agreement to deploy the buoy at the VMT past 2026 have begun. If successful, an ROV inspection of the ground tackle will be made by Global Diving in Spring 2026. The Duck Flats buoy is still in Cordova. The OSPR Committee proposed a project to deploy it on the east side of Naked Island for FY2027.

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

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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: The project manager is working on completing a contract and will have a draft contract delivered to the Prince William Sound Science Center on January 1st, 2026. Dr. Rob Campbell will begin the analysis once the contract is completed.

6540 – Copper River Delta and Flats GRS Development

Objectives: The goal of this project is to create ten 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 ten 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: Staff presented on the Cordova field work and open house meetings at the September Board meeting, just one week later. These events in Cordova marked a major project milestone, and the project has shifted to the actual build out of GRSs versus information gathering. The task as of late has been to merge the (predominantly) Regulatory and Resource Trustee Agency knowledge and perspectives gathered during the beginning of the workgroup effort, with local knowledge and the first-hand field visit information gathered while in Cordova. There has been much conversation with ADEC on how to do this, and it is exciting to report that draft GRSs are being constructed as of typing this update.

There were several sites identified which will lend themselves to “traditional” looking GRS, which will look very familiar to people in the SERVS training program and the generally consistent format used across Alaska. ADEC has helped build a mock-up of one of these sites, Boswell Bay. While suggested tactics may need refinement, and not all information is fully populated, this draft will be reviewed and discussed at the next workgroup meeting. It will serve as a good starting point for discussion.

For the Flats and Delta region to the East of Cordova, the thought is to build out a text-based addendum which would accompany GRSs built around more flexible tactics that are based on the using the common fishing vessel tender anchorages as hubs of activity. The workgroup knew from the beginning that this area would not benefit from the traditional rigid GRS structure. The addendum will include context and additional information which will be important for responders to know, given the dynamic nature of the area. There is a plan for how to show this information on a map, and the addendum would also be readily available on ADEC’s website.

As noted above, the workgroup process continues, with six meetings having taken place so far. Draft GRSs will be shown at this meeting and the concept of response zones based on tender anchorages discussed. Additional workgroup meetings will be needed to provide a feedback loop once these products are further finalized.

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: Robida had a quick meeting with a local UAV service provider, AK Drone, in Valdez, to better understand what services and hardware the company can provide and generally talk spill response. The individuals who run this business have been doing video work for 15+ years with their sister company, Seed Media, around the state. They have filmed different SERVS training and equipment videos that have been used during training. As UAV's have become a better filming tool and more capable, Seed Media began to use them in earnest too, eventually splitting off a separate business that is more UAV-focused.

AK Drone has several lines of business. They are a hardware supplier and sell UAVs and parts (Flybotix, DJI, and Wingtra). They facilitate "Part 107" trainings and help people prepare for the written FAA test to obtain a Part 107 license, which is required to do anything commercial with UAVs. They also offer UAV services themselves and can fly a drone for a specific mission or need. For example, AK Drone gathered some imagery during the 2020 Admin Sump spill.

AK Drone works with many UAV platforms. There are smaller, more typical looking UAVs that a home consumer has access to, but also a bigger quadcopter with bigger payload capacity. They also have a tethered "drone in a box" that could hover above a scene and stay on station for a long time. AK Drone can produce standard optical imagery, infrared imagery via a UAV-mounted FLIR camera, and they also have Lidar capability and are able to make high-resolution 3D models of a structure for example, or scan through vegetation to show the topography of a hillside covered in brush. More information is available on their website at https://www.akdrone.com.

Annual Fall SERVS training has ended. Robida covered a small portion of the Cordova training when he was in town with the Copper River Delta GRS development project. Robertson attended the full Whittier training after the Cordova Board meeting. Both locations saw additional Operation Readiness Exercises beyond the normal training.

SERVS completed their annual large-scale GRS deployments between October 1-55. The PWS Shipper plan commits to the deployment of five GRSs (at a minimum) in a given year, and these deployments typically occur in the fall. Unfortunately, staff was not able to attend. This year, it was a mix of Cordova and Whittier-based vessels (four total + respective crews) that conducted the deployments. Sites included 1) Point Eleanor, 2) Fairmount Bay, 3) Long Bay, and 4) Billy's Hole, all areas to the North of Glacier Island. Greg Gudgell, the SERVS Response Coordinator, led the deployment. Robida will follow up to gather documentation and look at suggested changes.

There was some delay from the originally anticipated dates, but the four OSRBs are beginning to go for their regulatory-required dry dock inspections. This work is being done in Seward, AK at the JAG Alaska, Inc. shipyard, and each barge will be out of service for approximately one month. The OSRB-5 barge is being used for mitigation as this work occurs. The OSRB-1 went out of service on September 20 and is expected to return to service October 21. OSRB-2 will be next, followed by 3 and 4 respectively. It also takes a tug to move the barges back and forth, and there's several days of transit on each side of the trip that a tug is also out of region. https://jagalaska.com

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

Alyeska Valdez Marine Terminal IMT Exercise – October 8, 2025

Alyeska conducted their annual incident management team (IMT) exercise with a field equipment deployment for the Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT) on October 8th. The scenario was the worst-case scenario from the VMT's oil spill response contingency plan and included field demonstrations focused on oil spill containment and recovery at the settlement ponds on the terminal.

Whittier Operational Readiness Exercise (ORE) – September 23, 2025

SERVS conducted an ORE the day after their annual fishing vessel training in Whittier. This exercise included 8 of SERVS Tier-1 response vessels towing boom in Shotgun Cove.

Valdez Marine Terminal Skimmer Deployment Exercise – July 23, 2025

Alyeska conducted a skimmer deployment exercise using Berth 5 as the simulated oil spill site. Three different skimmer types (Marco, JBF, and weir) were demonstrated on what turned out to be a very foggy morning.

OSRB-5 Open Water Demonstration Exercise – July 9, 2025

SERVS conducted an open water oil recovery exercise on July 9 to demonstrate the ability to function as an open water oil recovery vessel. SERVS installed the same oil recovery system that are installed on the other OSRB barges, on the OSRB-5 as a mitigation measure to allow the other OSRBs to leave Prince William Sound to go to dry dock for inspections and maintenance.

ATC Alaskan Legend Emergency Towing Exercise – May 29, 2025

The ATC tanker Alaskan Legend conducted an emergency towing exercise in central Prince William Sound on May 29th with tugs Courageous and Challenger.

Port Valdez Sensitive Area Protection Training Exercises – May, June, and July 2025

Alyeska has conducted several sensitive area protection training exercises with the TCC crews to demonstrate the Valdez Duck Flats and the Solomon Gulch Hatchery protection strategies. These are excellent training events.

Upcoming Drills and Exercises

Fairwater Annual PWS Shipper's Exercise – May 12-14, 2025

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 and Cape Suckling weather buoys 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. 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.

The project manager has worked with the C-Plan project team to provide public comments on the recently submitted Santos, Teekay, Repsol and SeaRiver plans. At this time, the Santos, Teekay and SeaRiver plans have all been approved by ADEC. The project team is waiting on the approval of Repsol's plan. 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 project manager has provided assistance to the Secondary Containment project team, including helping draft the 10-page confer comments submitted to ADEC. The project manager has also been kept abreast and provided assistance in the ongoing work surrounding Vessels of Opportunity.

In November, the project manager replaced an equipment module at the NOAA tide station installed 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. Once a rough draft of content development has been completed, a project team will be created to further develop the initial draft, shortly after the January Board meeting.

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 reduce vessel whale strikes. 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 to accomplish this. 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 up to 3.5 nautical miles.

This would allow time for the tanker to slow down or make slight course adjustments to avoid a whale strike. In lieu of the establishment of a voluntary slowdown area by regulators, this proposed technological intervention provides a 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 but a definitive answer has not been received. The project manager plans to contact Fairwater next. 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. POVTS Committee member Richard Frost brought attention to the project to his contacts at the Southwest Alaska Pilots Association and they have expressed interest to participate. Teekay Tankers has also agreed to participate. As of last month, Dr. Ziegler had completed 10 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 and the project manager are currently planning to seek participants on a variety of social media platforms, hoping to engage former or retired mariners who worked on tankers or tugboats in Prince William Sound.

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. Science Night 2025 was held successfully on December 4 in Anchorage and virtually. The Project Manager is registered to attend 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. Results will be presented to the Scientific Advisory Committee this winter.

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: The 2025 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. Results from the analysis were received from laboratories and shared with Dr. Morgan Powers of Fjord & Fish Sciences for interpretation and report writing. Dr. Powers will present her final report at this meeting.

9520 – Marine Invasive Species

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

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

Accomplishments since last report: 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 22nd and a community outreach event was held in Homer on September 6th. 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 and project manager assistant retrieved settlement panels in the Valdez small boat harbor and the Valdez Marine Terminal. The project manager met with two students in Cordova to retrieve settlement panels from the small boat harbor. Kodiak intern John Paul presented his green crab monitoring internship with a recorded presentation at the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership workshop in November. 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 onboard tankers arriving at the Valdez Marine Terminal by measuring the concentration 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: At its December 11 special meeting, 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.

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 shared an update on the latest dispersants policy and stockpile at the September Board meeting. SAC will discuss other possible tasks for Dr. Fingas at its January meeting. 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 later this fiscal year.