

THE OBSERVER

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Oil spill response training focuses on nearshore and sensitive area protection

By JEREMY ROBIDA

Council Project Manager

On March 15 and 16, Alyeska's Ship Escort Response Vessel System, known as SERVVS, conducted an oil spill response training in Cordova.

A total of 27 vessels were involved, including Cordova-based vessels, three Valdez fishing vessels, the nearshore support barge known as the "500-2," and its accompanying tug. Many of the vessels spent the night on scene as part

of the training, with exercise activities taking place during daylight hours in Nelson Bay, a small, protected bay approximately five miles from Cordova.

Equipment and tactics used included a mix of nearshore oil recovery and sensitive area protection strategies. Responders had a chance to work with the equipment to determine which systems worked best for their vessels and crews. Vessel tasks varied each day to keep responders engaged and to provide a wider range of training.

Protection of sensitive areas

Sensitive area protection has recently been given greater emphasis following changes to the Prince William Sound Tanker Contingency Plan, commonly called a "C-Plan", in 2012. The 2012 C-Plan identifies

See page 5, *Oil spill response training*



Three fishing vessels practice working with oil spill boom. The "current buster" system is in picture-perfect formation. Photo by Jeremy Robida.

Personal stories of Exxon Valdez spill to be preserved in University of Alaska Fairbanks' oral history archives

By ALICIA ZORZETTO

Digital Collections Librarian

Twenty-five years after the Exxon Valdez disaster, the voices of 20 local citizens are being preserved as part of the Oral History Program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The university created this archive of stories, known as "Project Jukebox," to preserve audio and video recordings related to aspects of Alaska's history and its people. This year, the council is partnering with the university to create an Exxon Valdez oil spill portion of the archive. Funding is provided by the council as well as a generous contribution from the Institute

of Museum and Library Services.

Oral history projects change the way we look at an event. The Exxon Valdez oil spill oral history project will help us broaden our understanding of this tragic incident by incorporating the voices of those who lived throughout that long-standing turmoil.

This emotionally driven exhibit provides a comprehensive picture of the oil spill by outlining the consequences of the spill from those who experienced the effects first-hand. The narrators' experiences provide a unique perspective

See page 5, *Personal stories*



Homer and Seward educational events raise awareness of oil spill prevention and response. Here, a Homer student demonstrates the use of absorbents to soak up oil. More on page 4.

Coast Guard receives 78 support letters for council

The Coast Guard has recertified the citizens' council as meeting its responsibilities under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

In a March 15 letter to the council, Rear Admiral Thomas Ostebo, commander of the Coast Guard's District 17 in Juneau, notified the council of the recertification.

The 1990 Act requires the council to be recerti-

See page 6, *Recertification*

Council meets with elected officials in DC and Juneau

By STEVE ROTHCHILD

Administrative Deputy Director

For two days in March, council board members Dorothy Moore and Robert Beedle, accompanied by staff members Mark Swanson and Steve Rothchild, visited our nation's capital in an effort to highlight some of the council's major

See page 6, *Legislative affairs*

AK Chamber of Commerce - AK Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Assoc. - Chenega Bay - Chugach Alaska Corp. - Cordova - CDFU - Homer - Kenai Peninsula Borough - Kodiak - Kodiak Island Borough - Kodiak Village Mayors - OSREC - Port Graham Corp. - PWS Aquaculture Corp. - Seldovia - Seward - Tatitlek - Valdez - Whittier

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Volunteer Spotlight

Gordon Scott tells his story of “Life at half a knot”

On March 23, 1989, Prince William Sound fisherman Gordon Scott didn’t know a thing about oil spills, and if you had asked him that day, he probably wouldn’t have been too interested.

“I was in Anchorage selling shrimp when the Exxon Valdez hit the rocks.”

On Friday morning, March 24, he saw the headlines about the spill. He didn’t fish near Bligh Reef, so at first he wasn’t worried. On his rounds delivering shrimp, however, all the customers he talked to were asking if this would affect him. Would he still be able to keep fishing for shrimp?

“Of course,” he told them, “this isn’t going to affect me! I’m a fisherman, that’s an oil spill, it’s a tanker.”

All their questions piqued his interest, so he headed back to his boat, the Early Times, at the dock in Whittier. He and his crew took off on Saturday morning to take a look at the spill.

Gordon and his crew were 80 to 100 miles away from the Exxon Valdez when they first noticed a smell. As they came closer, the smell got worse and worse.

“It was awful,” Scott said.

In denial, and still thinking it wasn’t too bad, he ran into someone he knew and asked what was going on. The answer was “nothing.”

“Well, it wasn’t nothing,” Scott said. He found workers with a large skimmer full of seaweed.

“Mainly they were trying to figure out how to make it work.”

Scott offered to help. He was told to go to Valdez and add his name to the list. He ran into an uncoordinated mess.

The Early Times’ first assignment was burning oil. These efforts were unsuccessful, so they were put to work collecting oil with boom. The next problem they encountered was that once the oil was collected, there was no place to put it.

“Stand by,” was commonly heard on the radio when calling for orders.

Scott said some vessels stood by as ordered, but he and a few others proactively went looking for oil instead of waiting. They’d call and tell headquarters to send them a skimmer if they collected a boom full of oil.

At the beginning of the spill, an expert demonstrated the basic technique for collecting oil with the boom, but the details were left to each

crew to figure out on their own. Scott and his crew got creative with ways to corral the oil. They developed techniques using equipment on hand, such as throwing lights from their fishing gear into the water ahead of the vessel so they could follow streaks of oil at night.

“We figured out a lot of things, a lot of little tactics, many of which are in use today,” Scott said, “RCAC developed a lot of those and got them into the fishing vessel response tactics.” These tactics are now used by Alyeska’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System.

Slow days on the water

“I’ve always said if I wrote a book about the oil spill, it would be titled ‘Life at half a knot’.”

When collecting oil, the vessels can’t move faster than half a knot [a little over half a mile per hour] or the oil will flow out from under the boom and be lost.

The spill responders were frustratingly slow getting skimmers to the vessels who had collected oil. Scott and his partner boat finally started calling the boats with skimmers directly and scheduling their own pickups.

“They pulled the skimmers out from under us; we weren’t any good if we couldn’t get it [the oil] out of the water.”

“Once you start collecting, you can’t just leave the oil.”

If a skimmer and storage vessel weren’t ready and nearby when his boom was full of oil, he was stuck. He had to keep moving at half a knot or they’d lose the oil they had collected.

“Our longest tow I think was 4 days,” Scott said, “because we couldn’t get a skimmer.”

Frustration with the system

“The biggest thing was how frustrated we were out there by the system that we had. It really never ended, we kinda got used to it.”

Scott had what he refers to as “animated” talks with the Exxon bosses, usually a manager from Houston. “It was like talking to a wall.”

“‘This is the most wonderful thing to happen to the state of Alaska!’ Oh yeah. That’s pretty much a direct quote from one of these guys,” Scott said, “It was a pretty disheartening thing to deal with.”

At one point, the Early Times was assigned to report to an Exxon manager who was assigned to an area of the Sound with no oil.

“We tried to sneak out of there so many

times. He was on to us; he kept us under his thumb. He didn’t want to get rid of us, in case any oil came down there, because he knew we’d get it.”

Meanwhile, Scott was hearing over the radio about oiled areas that were not being cleaned up, so they’d try to sneak off again. They didn’t want to get fired, but they were frustrated and driven to do everything they could.

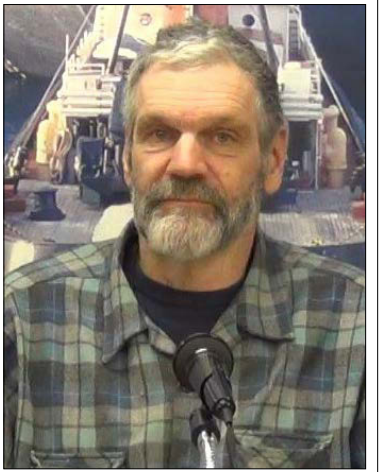
“If we could get out there and get on the oil, they couldn’t really say anything to us.”

“My wife, or wife to be, came out and visited several times during the spill; spent a few days with us. It was interesting, her perspective. This was something she wrote to her parents... I got to see it later. She said ‘It’s amazing how excited they are when they’ve got some oil to collect. But when there wasn’t any oil around, they were just chafing at the bit. It was just like fishing.’”

Scott has been volunteering with the council’s Oil Spill Prevention and Response advisory committee for over 20 years. You will be able to hear his entire story in his own voice at the Project Jukebox archives, a joint effort with the University of Alaska Fairbanks. More stories from Scott include:

- Futile efforts to burn oil in the early days of the spill
- Hear about how the Early Times took a “wave of oil” over the bow of the boat
- A sickening incident in which they were told to dump a boom full of oil
- His thoughts on how the current response system could handle a response today

[Editor’s note: You can find Scott selling Prince William Sound spot shrimp most Saturdays during shrimping season at Spenard Farmer’s Market in Anchorage. Do yourself a favor and go get some of the best shrimp you have ever tasted if you are in the area.]



Gordon Scott

Intern helps council develop suggestions to improve fishing vessel program

By ZACHARY VERFAILLIE
Council Intern

As an Emergency Management major at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, I was excited for the opportunity to work in Valdez as an intern with the council.



Zachary Verfaillie

The project I was given involved using the Fishing Vessel Availability reports from Alyeska’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System, known as SERVS, to determine which vessels were available to respond in the unfortunate

event of an oil spill in Prince William Sound.

With the help of council staffers Roy Robertson and Jeremy Robida, we classified the vessels by type as well as how they could be most efficiently used. This process involved using the Alaska Department of Fish and Game’s database to find out specific information on the boats such as size, horsepower, and fuel capacity. Different tactics required different capabilities of the boat. For example, towing boom in open water would require a larger boat with better sea keeping abilities.

Most oil spill scenarios are interested in events until 72 hours after a spill. However, we based our analysis on the numbers of required boats by starting with SERVS’ number of boats needed in the first 73 hours because vessels that would need to start working at 73 hours after a spill would need to be underway prior to hour 72.

After comparing the number of boats

required against the number of boats available, we found several suggestions that could possibly strengthen the emergency operation plans dealing with a worst case scenario oil spill. For example, we found that an increase in the number of tenders and landing craft could make for a more efficient recovery. Landing craft are unique in that they can easily land on beaches, providing a faster response time. The large size of tenders makes them particularly useful as supply vessels.

In addition to this project, I had several opportunities to learn about the work the council does through my attendance at monthly meetings with SERVS and a council board meeting in Anchorage. I gained a lot of experience about the way emergency management is used in real life. This internship was a great experience for me and everything I learned will continue to be beneficial in my future with emergency management.

From the Executive Director

What have we learned in the last 25 years?

This past spring, with the 25th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, virtually everyone associated with that spill or connected to current spill prevention and response activities encountered media representatives asking some variation of: What happened 25 years ago? What have we learned since that environmental disaster? Those are tough but natural questions that defy a ready or pat answer.

In our last Observer newsletter we partially answered that first question by highlighting many of the highly visible improvements in oil spill prevention and response. These changes were hammered out and put into place by industry, government regulators, and activist citizens. The second question calls for a bit more thought.

Because of the unprecedented magnitude of the impacts of the 1989 spill, many folks from all walks of life were profoundly shaken up and sufficiently motivated to introspectively analyze what had gone wrong and how such a disaster might be avoided in the future. Causes of the accident and deficiencies in the response were examined. Solutions were proposed, debated, advocated and in large measure adopted. The federal government passed perhaps the most significant and sweeping environmental regulations ever in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. The Act contained many new and innovative ideas like tug escorts for tankers, double hulls, citizen oversight, comprehensive spill response plans, and even increased regulatory and navigational oversight by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The State of Alaska similarly implemented improvements such as the incorporation of best available technologies and a requirement for extraordinarily robust oil spill response capabilities. State spill response requirements far exceeded federal requirements, and were

based on the size of the real spill that folks had just experienced, rather than more optimistic smaller spill volumes. The oil industry, citizens, and local fisherman joined forces to expand on an innovative spill response tactic involving the use of fishing vessels to create a standing and permanent spill response capability. These fishing vessel crews are now trained and prepared to quickly lend a hand in case of a spill.

Twenty-five years ago, folks took a hard look at the terrible consequences of being unprepared for an oil spill of this magnitude. They did something about it to the benefit of Alaska and the entire crude oil transportation industry.

In 2010, 21 years after the Exxon spill, an even larger oil spill occurred in the Gulf of Mexico. The spill was offshore this time, involving a significantly larger volume of oil and arguably doing even greater environmental damage. Commissions were formed and reports were written that investigated and examined that incident's causes and the response that followed. As after the 1989 spill, solutions and improvements have been proposed, debated, and advocated.

The difference today is that the majority of the proposed improvements coming out of the 2010 spill have not been, and may never be, implemented. Time has passed and other issues have captured our collective attention.

This is unfortunate and should be of great concern to all of us.

Many of those proposals are national in scope and would improve our preparedness and response policies and capabilities here in Alaska. The silver lining to the disaster of the Exxon Valdez oil spill is that everyone, oil industry, state and federal government, citizens, and stakeholders, accepted the need to change and learn from our litany of mistakes. Everyone

committed to a sustained focus on preventing disasters and combating complacency. The tragedy of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill is that it demonstrates that we as a country have not continued to acknowledge the necessity of learning from our mistakes. Until we do, we are likely to repeat them.

So what have we learned? In this region and with this Trans-Alaska Pipeline oil trade route, we have collectively learned and accomplished quite a lot including a focus on prevention and avoiding complacency while advancing both prevention and response measures, but maybe we haven't quite learned the most important public policy lesson: We need to continue to acknowledge and learn from our mistakes and accidents and implement the changes needed in order to prevent the next one.

The U.S. Coast Guard's Kulluk incident report came out in early April with a lot of hard lessons about the value of good weather information and the challenges of towing in rough Alaskan waters. We have yet another opportunity to learn and improve. Let's make sure we take it.

- Mark Swanson is the executive director of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council.



Mark Swanson

From Alyeska Pipeline

Safety stewardship from shore to sea

Crowley is a key partner in Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System. The company owns and operates the tugboats that escort tankers through Prince William Sound and docks them at the Valdez Marine Terminal. Crowley also maintains and staffs the other vessels in the system, like the oil spill response barges located around the Sound. There are over 100 Crowley employees on shift and ready to respond at any given time. These employees may be separated by several miles of land and ocean, but their commitment to safety is bridged from shore to sea.

That bridge is personified by the Safety Advocate Program, started in 2009. Safety Advocates are usually long-time vessel captains or crew who take on year-long assignments to facilitate and improve safe practices in the fleet. Longtime advocate and Crowley Master Richard Frost says he's a liaison between deck and shore, observing jobs with a keen eye towards safety, and raising concerns from the fleet.

In a normal six-week shift, Frost is in the field about half the time, tagging along on tanker escorts, crew changes, mid-Sound tether drills and other jobs. Crowley has recently

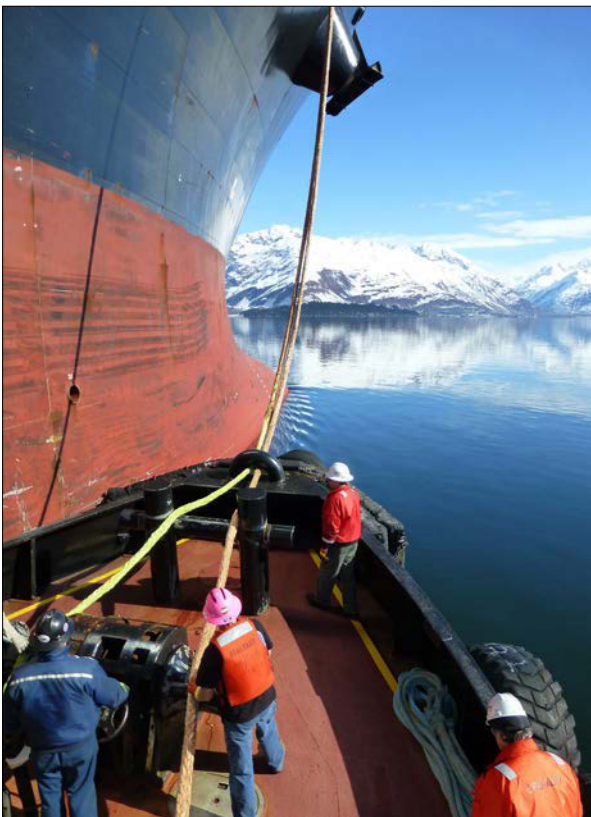
implemented a ship visit program, where deck officers from Crowley will visit a tanker and exchange perspectives. Frost credits these visits with a recent reduction in line handling incidents. Crews consistently sit down before each job - no matter how routine - and go over roles, risks and concerns. This ensures that everyone is on the same page before heading to work.

"I continue to be impressed by participation," said Frost from his shore-side office. "Everyone is very conscious now."

Feedback runs in both directions. In December, a tug crew brought up an issue: much of their personal protective equipment had water-sensitive lights that would activate if they ever fell overboard, but their work vests did not. Frost went to work researching available models and two weeks later sent two choices into the field for testing. The crew performed a thorough assessment, made a recommendation, and several weeks later Frost distributed lights to crews around the Sound.

"Having crews see their input taken is important," noted Frost. "It makes them take the process seriously."

- Submitted by Alyeska Communications.



Crowley personnel at work in Prince William Sound. Photo courtesy of Alyeska.

Homer students present program on effects of oil spills

By JESSICA RYAN

Kachemak Bay Research Reserve

Fifth and sixth grade students from Fireweed Academy, a charter school in Homer, created the first ever student-led public Discovery Lab program on the topic of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, titled “25 Years After the Spill”.

Fireweed Academy students are known to engage in the old adage “learn by doing.” The students learned about the effects the Exxon Valdez oil spill by researching the history of the spill and its subsequent impacts to Alaska’s wildlife and human communities. Kachemak Bay Research Reserve educator Catie Bursch and Fireweed Academy principal/teacher Kiki Abrahamson, and teacher Kris Owens guided the students.

Bursch, Abrahamson and Owens encouraged students to interview their parents and others who lived through the spill, and to use the web to find information about the lasting impacts of the spill. The students then developed written content, activities and games to convey this information to the public; advertised the event; and presented the information at the public Discovery Lab on February 5.

Students posted flyers and notified parents and friends. They set a goal to have the highest attendance ever at a winter Discovery Lab. The public responded with enthusiasm, and on the

day of the event the Discovery Lab classroom at the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center was buzzing with participants. 125 visitors walked in the door in addition to the 24 students, setting a new winter attendance record!

In preparation for the big event, students set up and ran through the lab with 60 Fireweed Academy students in grades 3 and 4 at their school. The colorful, hands-on displays included:

- Demonstrations of oil dispersal and cleanup methods
- A life-sized oil spill worker with appropriate safety gear and symptoms of what could happen if the gear wasn’t used
- A wildlife recovery matching game
- Information about different kinds of oil and oil dispersants.

To test student comprehension, Research Reserve education coordinator Jessica Ryan conducted a six-question pre-test in November, before students began this project, and a post-test with the same six questions at the conclusion of the February program. The improvement in test scores was dramatic. Before the event, only half of the students could even name the vessel that caused the spill. By the conclusion of the lab, all of the students knew not only that the Exxon Valdez had caused the spill, but the date of the spill, how much oil was spilled, and the type of oil spilled. Students learned not only about



Fireweed Academy students with a mock spill worker dressed in protective garb. Photo by Jessica Ryan.

effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill through their development of the lab activities, but they also focused on improvements to spill prevention and response since that time through activities that taught about double-hulled tankers systems and bioremediation.

Fireweed’s Abrahamson felt that this opportunity for students to develop and present their own Discovery Lab program was a worthwhile use of their time and dove-tailed nicely with several of their curriculum goals.

Research Reserve oversight of partnership between the Reserve and the school was made possible thanks to funding support provided by the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council.

Students design remotely operated oil spill response vehicles in Seward ocean science competition

By MARITA KLEISSLER, Education Specialist at Prince William Sound Science Center, and WIL TUSHAUS, AmeriCorps Member at Prince William Sound Science Center.

Since 2012, Prince William Sound Science Center educators have taken remotely operated vehicle, known as “ROV,” kits to the Alaska



The first place winning team from Homer working together to create their ROV. Photo by Ryan Johnson.

Tsunami Ocean Sciences Bowl in Seward, where teams from across Alaska participated in the ROV Challenge.

This science bowl is a regional competition for Alaska high school students on topics related to the study of the oceans. Winning teams go on to compete against teams from across the United States. The challenge was one part of the bowl.

Students constructed the ROVs out of PVC piping. Bilge pumps were used as motors. To simulate the navigational precision and maneuverability needed for an oil spill cleanup, students maneuvered the ROVs through hula hoops, picked up a neutrally buoyant ring and placed it on an underwater hook, retrieved a beach ball and brought it poolside, and hovered in front of a target.

Teams were judged on how well they completed each task and how well they worked as a team. Homer, Dillingham, and Petersburg teams placed first, second and third, respectively.



Council staffer Lisa Matlock helping the Seward team troubleshoot problems with their ROV. Photo by Ryan Johnson.

Everyone had a great time designing, building, and driving their ROV.

“I came here for this,” one student commented, “Thank you very much.”

The ROV Challenge was made possible by funding from the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council and the Oil Spill Recovery Institute, and with the assistance of Cordova High School student volunteers.

Council study reviews remote operations at Valdez Marine Terminal

A recent council study looked at issues associated with the remote control operations of Alyeska Pipeline Service Company’s Valdez Marine Terminal. Alyeska controls some operations for the terminal and pipeline from its Operational Control Center in Anchorage.

The council began the project in part to follow up on a recommended action contained in a risk assessment by Det Norske Veritas, and in part because of concerns highlighted by a 2010 pipeline incident at Pump Station 9, near Delta Junction. In that incident, remotely located operators lost their ability to “see” and control operations at the pump station. The causes of that incident raised concerns that similar vulnerabilities with the controls for the terminal could elevate risks for an oil spill at the terminal.

While the council’s mandate stops at the gate of the terminal in Valdez and does not include the Trans-Alaska pipeline system and pump stations, the same control system that is used to control the pipeline also has controls over the terminal.

The council’s efforts to independently assess concerns with the Anchorage center’s control of the oil terminal were substantially limited by the access to personnel and documentation relative to the control system provided by Alyeska in response to requests by the council’s contractor. The center still remotely controls many critical operations at the terminal but no longer is physically located in Valdez. The council believes there is a compelling case that citizens have oversight over the Anchorage center’s operation, which several entities have recommended

be independently examined. The need for this independent oversight is especially compelling following the decade long alarm concerns at the control center revealed by Alyeska employees in recent testimony to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

At the conclusion of this review, the council encouraged both Alyeska and regulators to take the actions appropriate and necessary to address the issues explored, but ultimately unresolved, in the report.

The full report was approved by the board in January and is available on our website. The lengthy appendices contain reference material for issues cited in the report, and are available upon request from the council.

Link: www.bit.ly/RemoteControlOfVMT

Personal stories: Oral histories of oil spill to be preserved in university archives

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that helps us understand the diverse effects of technological disasters.

The project tells the stories of an assortment of people including children, fishermen, clean-up workers, industry representatives, and political activists.

Recordings come from a variety of sources including:

- Newly recorded videos
- Audio recordings of interviews for the council commissioned book “The Spill: Personal Stories of the Exxon Valdez Disaster”
- Historical videos from the collections at Alaska Resources Library and Information Services.

These diverse perspectives allows for a more complete interpretation of the spill. The project launch date is July 31, 2014 and will be available via: www.jukebox.uaf.edu

Marilyn Leland, Cordova District Fishermen United

“As soon as the word got out (about the oil spill) on the street, we had fishermen coming into the office wanting to help. And initially, in the earliest days, I really felt that the attitude was one neighbor helping another neighbor because we had a problem. Money wasn’t even brought up at all.



And when I would talk to different people to tell them we had boats, the most memorable conversation for me was someone at Alyeska responding with ‘we can’t afford the liability of using amateurs.’ And my response to them was that the amateurs are the ones who have just flown in from Houston. I’m talking about fishermen who have spent their entire lives out in Prince William Sound hauling seines and gill nets. Trust me. They are not amateurs, and they are perfectly capable of doing this work.”

Gary Bader, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.

My first reaction was one of...I think we all were almost stunned. We were surprised not only that it happened, but that it could happen. Our culture at the time was one of believing that it wouldn’t happen, it couldn’t happen. The second reaction was that it wouldn’t take long to clean it up. That we’d have it cleaned up in three or four days so it’s not such a big deal. Even though there was a lot of oil. But we had no idea that in fact we weren’t ready....”

“...And then a north wind came through as the north winds do in March in Valdez. And it just blew that oil everywhere. Just blew it

everywhere. I mean it was done. It was out of control at that point. There was no amount of boom that was going to keep that oil contained.”

“The window of opportunity was in the first 48 hours. And for the first 48 hours we were trying to figure out what to do. Not do it, but figure out what to do. And we became in Alyeska, insulated within ourselves. Instead of moving outward to get the help we needed, we moved inward.”



Rick Steiner, Cordova

“On behalf of Cordova District Fishermen United, I organized a meeting with all the tanker owners in May or early June of 1989 here in Anchorage; two and a half months after the spill had occurred. It was really fresh, and the time to strike was then. So we got the tanker owners together with a number of the fishing representatives in a small room we



rented in the basement of the Captain Cook Hotel...This was their first face-to-face meeting with Prince William Sound fishing organizations, whose lives and businesses they had just turned upside-down through their collective negligence. At that meeting we had a list of demands. They were not nice suggestions; they were demands from the fishing industry of the Prince William Sound as to how to prevent this from happening again...”

“...We knew we couldn’t do much to clean it up or to restore the damage caused, but at the minimum, we had to do everything possible to prevent another oil spill. One central tenant

Walter Meganack, Port Graham

Except from the speech “The Day the Water Died”, read by Elenore McMullen at an Oiled Mayors Conference in Valdez, June 1989.

“...The roots of our lives grow deep into the water and land. That is who we are. We are like our brothers the bear and the deer. We live on the land and our food is mostly from the water. The bear eats the fish, the deer eats the seaweed, Natives eat all of the life in the sea and the water. The land and the water are our sources of life. The water is sacred. The water is like a baptismal font and its abundance is the holy communion of our lives. Of all things that we have not lost since non-Natives came to our land, we have never lost our connection with the water. The water is our source of life. So long as the water is alive, the Natives are alive...”

...We have lived through devastations. Our villages were almost destroyed by chicken pox and tuberculosis. We fight the battles of alcohol and drug abuse and we survive. A wise white man once said, ‘where there is life, there is hope.’ And that is true. But what we see now is death, death not of each other, but of a source of life, the water. We will need much help, much listening in order to live through the long barren season of dead water, a longer winter than ever before. I am an elder. I am a chief. I will not lose hope. I will help my people. We have never lived through this kind of death, but we have lived through lots of other kinds of death. We will learn from the past, we will learn from each other, and we will live. The water is dead, but we are alive, and where there is life there is hope.”



Oil spill response training: practicing nearshore and sensitive area protection tactics

Continued from page 1

special sensitive area task forces that get out ahead of a slick to protect areas that are most vulnerable. Many such sensitive areas have already been pre-identified such as hatcheries or wetlands. Following these changes to the 2012 C-Plan, SERVS annual fishing vessel training has increased its focus and training on sensitive area protection tactics and gear.

Participants practiced nearshore protection tactics

Specialized oil containment boom called “shoreseal” is sometimes used in conjunction with standard boom to protect beaches, using an “exclusion” response tactic. Exclusion tactics are used to keep oil away from shorelines.

The shoreseal boom is a three chamber type boom with two lower chambers and an upper chamber. The lower two chambers are filled

with water to weigh the boom down and cause it to seal itself against the shoreline at low tide. The upper chamber is filled with air and as the tide moves in and out, this air chamber provides enough float to lift the shoreseal above water, but still seal it against land at low tide.

Two sections of shoreseal are connected to either end of a section of the standard boom. The standard boom, in the middle, is stretched and anchored offshore and the shoreseal boom is attached to land, creating a “U” shape. The open part of the “U” is on the land side of the beach.

This type of exclusion tactic can be used around the mouth of a salmon stream, for example, or a regularly visited public use area to keep oil from reaching the shore.

Lessons learned

Overall, the training went well. A few responders noticed missing small parts, such as floats for hoses and instruction manuals which

should be easily addressed. A few small maintenance issues also came to light. One section of shoreseal boom had a small hole in the upper air chamber. A bad decanting pump was also discovered. Response gear obviously needs to be response ready and one value of this training was to highlight these maintenance issues so that SERVS can better work to prevent future problems. Some lessons focused on the reality of the training scenario. A small SERVS’ landing craft was used extensively to support sensitive area protection beach operations. Two of these craft are stored aboard the 500-2. Since sensitive area protection teams are expected to work well ahead of the main slick and would therefore likely be some distance from the 500-2, it was recommended that the use of these 500-2 based vessels in future sensitive area protection trainings be validated as representative of the types of vessels that would be available.

Community Corner

Taking the long view - why do we involve youth in our programs?

By: LISA MATLOCK
Outreach Coordinator

Since coming on board last year, I have been regularly asked by community members, board members, and even staff: What does youth engagement have to do with “environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers”? This question arises because the council has invested in youth projects focusing on marine stewardship throughout our region. It’s a good question, one which is vital for the future of oil spill prevention and response in our region.



Lisa Matlock

Like it or not, those who remember the Exxon Valdez oil spill firsthand are aging. For many of us 25 years may seem like yesterday, but for the children of the 21st century that sounds like ancient history. Those who responded to the spill, whose lives were forever changed by the spill, are passionate about the work we do for personal reasons. If those of us with that passion do not invest in passing the importance of oil spill prevention and better oil spill response onto the next generation, then we are likely fated to a future involving the sorts of complacencies that contributed to the Exxon Valdez oil spill in the first place.

We need vigilant future stewards for our region, and the council is helping develop them through our youth projects.

The Youth Involvement project, an initiative of the council’s Information and Education Committee, began three years ago. Through it, we work with partners who deliver marine stewardship education directly to students of all ages and teachers. Our partners take existing ocean-focused cur-

riculum and hands-on activities and pull in oil spill science and oil spill history into those programs. Oil spill prevention and response activities provide a fresh perspective into existing marine education. These programs also help further our goals of increasing public awareness of the spill prevention and response system in Prince William Sound and the potential environmental impacts of the terminal and tanker operations. These activities also help give general marine stewardship education a lesson in reality.

Our newest youth project is a pilot internship program. Through this project, high school and college-level students devote time and effort to specific projects identified as council needs. These students gain valuable career experience along with a deeper understanding of the council mission and its vital work. One of the council’s first interns, Zachary Verfaillie recently completed his project, An Analysis of Fishing Vessel Types and Numbers vs. Response Tactics (see page 2 for more). Recruitment for 2015 interns will begin in August. If you would like more information about this, please contact me at lisa.matlock@pwsrccac.org.

Over the fall and winter, the council helped sponsor a variety of youth involvement events on Kodiak Island, and in Homer and Seward (see page 5 for more information on these events). The council’s ongoing work to help the next generation become champions for oil spill prevention in our region will continue in spring and summer, the big season for getting kids outside and in touch with their marine backyard.

Upcoming Youth Involvement Events

- **Spring** – Tunicate monitoring and non-indigenous species education, led by Cordova-based intern, Sarah Hoepfner
- **May & June** – Kachemak Bay Onboard Oceanography led by Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies
- **29 May-7 June** – Prince William Sound Kayaking Expedition led by Chugach School District & Alaska Geographic
- **June** – Valdez Marine Science Camps led by the SPACE program
- **2-30 June** – Kodiak Salmon Camps led by Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges
- **10-15 June** – Prince William Sound Teachers Expedition led by Alaska Geographic & Chugach National Forest
- **12-20 June** – Kachemak Bay Teen EcoAdventure Camp led by Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies
- **16-23 June** – Copper River Stewardship Expedition led by Prince William Sound Science Center & Copper River Watershed Project
- **21-30 June** – Prince William Sound Kayaking Expedition led by Alaska Geographic
- **Summer** – Green crab monitoring led by Cordova-based intern, Sarah Hoepfner

Legislative affairs: Council visits elected officials in DC and Juneau

Continued from page 1

concerns to Alaska’s congressional delegation and several others. The trip was facilitated by the council’s Washington based legislative affairs monitor, Roy Jones.

The purpose of this trip was to continue the general practice of the council over the years of annually meeting with, briefing, and obtaining guidance from members of the Alaska delegation and others in the federal government on council activities and stakeholder concerns from throughout the Exxon Valdez oil spill region.

The group met with senior representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard, the Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Senate and House committees with

jurisdiction relevant to the Prince William Sound oil industry, and the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Oil Pollution Research. The group also met with Alyeska representative Kim Harb, based in Washington, D.C.

Visit to Alaska’s capital

A month previous to this trip, council members Amanda Bauer, Thane Miller and Patience Andersen-Faulkner accompanied staff members Swanson, Rothchild and Lisa Matlock to the State Capitol in Juneau for similar rounds of discussions with state legislators. The council’s legislative monitor in Juneau, Doug Mertz, helped facilitate this trip and attended many of the meetings with the group.

Items discussed during the Juneau visit were more locally focused than during the Washington trip. However, during both trips, the team made sure to highlight the corresponding 25th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill and the numerous prevention measures put in place through the years since the spill in 1989.



From left: Rothchild, Beedle, Sen. Begich, Moore, Swanson. Photo courtesy of Sen. Begich’s office.

Recertification: 78 letters of support for council

Continued from page 1

fied annually by the President of the United States. This responsibility was delegated to the Coast Guard and currently the Council must reapply yearly for the Coast Guard’s approval as the alternate voluntary citizens’ advisory group to the oil industry in Prince William Sound.

Guidelines established in 2002 streamlined the recertification process for two out of three years, with every third year requiring stricter procedures. That process—known as comprehensive recertification—

was used this year. The new recertification expires in February 2015. At that time, the council is scheduled to undergo the streamlined version of recertification. The council received 78 letters of support from organizations; agencies; businesses; Native corporations; six Alaska state legislators; Senators Mark Begich, Lisa Murkowski and Congressman Don Young; and members of the public during the recertification process. You can read these letters on our website: www.pwsrccac.org

Council Board Meetings

The citizens’ council board of directors meets three times annually, in Anchorage, Valdez, and other communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Here is the tentative board meeting schedule for the coming year:

September 25 and 26, 2014: Homer
January 22 and 23, 2015: Anchorage
May 7-8, 2015: Valdez

Find meeting documents and more information about our board meetings on our website:

www.pwsrccac.org

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND
REGIONAL CITIZENS’ ADVISORY
COUNCIL

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council is an independent, non-profit corporation formed after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill to minimize the environmental impacts of the trans-Alaska pipeline terminal and tanker fleet.

The council has 19 member organizations, including communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill and groups representing Alaska Native, aquaculture, environmental, commercial fishing, recreation and tourism interests in the spill region.

The council is certified under the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990 as the citizen advisory group for Prince William Sound, and operates under a contract with Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. The contract, which is in effect as long as oil flows through the pipeline, guarantees the council’s independence, provides annual funding, and ensures the council the same access to terminal facilities as state and federal regulatory agencies.

The council’s mission: Citizens promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers.

Board of Directors

- Pres.: Amanda Bauer - City of Valdez
Vice Pres.: Thane Miller - Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp.
Secretary: Patience Andersen Faulkner - Cordova District Fishermen United
Treasurer: Jim Herbert - City of Seward
- Robert Beedle - City of Cordova
Al Burch - Kodiak Island Borough
Emil Christiansen - Kodiak Village Mayors Association
Pat Duffy - Alaska State Chamber of Commerce
Jane Eisemann - City of Kodiak
Larry Evanoff - Community of Chenega Bay
Nick Garay - City of Homer
Cathy Hart - Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association
Blake Johnson - Kenai Peninsula Borough
Andrea Korbe - City of Whittier
Steve Lewis - City of Seldovia
Dorothy Moore - City of Valdez
Walter Parker - Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition
Diane Selanoff - Port Graham Corporation
David Totemoff - Chugach Alaska Corporation
Roy Totemoff - Community of Tatitlek

Staff

Mark Swanson, Executive Director

Anchorage

- Joe Banta, Project Manager
Gregory Dixon, Financial Manager
Amanda Johnson, Project Manager
Tom Kuckertz, Project Manager
Serena Lopez, Project Manager Assistant
Lisa Matlock, Outreach Coordinator
Barbara Penrose, Administrative Assistant
Steve Rothchild, Administrative Deputy Director
Linda Swiss, Project Manager
Alicia Zorzetto, Digital Collections Librarian

Valdez

- Jean Cobb, Administrative Assistant
Jennifer Fleming, Executive Assistant
Roy Robertson, Project Manager
Jeremy Robida, Project Manager
Donna Schantz, Director of Programs
Alan Sorum, Project Manager
Nelli Vanderburg, Project Manager Assistant

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On the web: www.pwsrcac.org
Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/PWSRCAC
Follow us on Twitter: @PWSRCAC
Email: newsletter@pwsrcac.org

ABOUT THE COUNCIL’S
ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Much of the council’s work is done through permanent volunteer committees made up of board members, technical experts, and citizens with an interest in making oil transportation safer in Alaska.

These standing committees work with staff on projects, study and deliberate current oil transportation issues, and formulate their own advice and recommendations to the council’s full board of directors.

Our committees provide an avenue for public participation in the council’s work.

The council has five technical committees:

Terminal Operations & Environmental Monitoring:

The Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Committee identifies actual and potential sources of episodic and chronic pollution at the Valdez Marine Terminal.

Members:
Chair: Harold Blehm, Valdez
Amanda Bauer, City of Valdez*
Stephen Lewis, Seldovia*
George Skladal, Anchorage

Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems:

The Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems (POVTS) Committee monitors port and tanker operations in Prince William Sound. POVTS identifies and recommends improvements in the vessel traffic navigation systems and monitors the vessel escort system.

Members:
Chair: Bob Jaynes, Valdez
Vice-chair: Bill Conley, Valdez
Amanda Bauer, Valdez*
Cliff Chambers, Seward
Pat Duffy, Valdez*
Jane Eisemann, Kodiak*
Pete Heddell, Whittier
Orson Smith, Seward

Scientific Advisory:

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) sponsors independent scientific research and provides scientific assistance and advice to the other council committees on technical reports, scientific methodology, data interpretation, and position papers.

Members:
Chair: John Kennish, Anchorage
Vice-chair: Paula Martin, Soldotna
Sarah Allan, Anchorage
Roger Green, Hope
Dorothy M. Moore, Valdez*
Debasmita Misra, Fairbanks
Walt Parker, Anchorage*
Mark Udevitz, Anchorage

Oil Spill Prevention and Response:

The Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee works to minimize the risks and impacts associated with oil transportation through strong spill prevention and response measures, adequate contingency planning, and effective regulations.

Members:
Chair: John LeClair, Anchorage
Vice-chair: Jerry Brookman, Kenai
Robert Beedle, Cordova*
David Goldstein, Whittier
Jim Herbert, Seward*
Walt Parker, Anchorage*
Gordon Scott, Girdwood
John Velsko, Homer

Information and Education:

The Information and Education Committee’s mission is to support the council’s mission by fostering public awareness, responsibility, and participation in the council’s activities through information and education.

Members:
Chair: Patience Andersen Faulkner, Cordova*
Vice-chair: Savannah Lewis, Seldovia
Jane Eisemann, Kodiak*
Cathy Hart, Anchorage*
Ruth E. Knight, Valdez
Kate Morse, Cordova
Linda Robinson, Kenai
Diane Selanoff, Port Graham*

*council director

25
years

Citizens working with industry and regulators to prevent complacency
and promote environmentally safe operation of Alyeska's oil terminal
and associated tankers

Progress in Oil Spill Prevention and Response

March 24
1989

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill

11 million gallons of crude oil spilled

1300 miles of coastline impacted

Impacts to wildlife including seabirds,
otters, harbor seals, bald eagles,
killer whales and an untold number
of herring, salmon and other fish

Minimal response equipment and
training

Socio-economic impacts;
communities under stress

Broken promises and public trust

Nation's largest oil spill at the time

Lingering oil and long lasting
environmental impacts

March 24
2014

Improved Preparedness and Response

Citizen oversight

Double hulled tankers

Powerful tug escorts

Numerous oil spill drills and exercises

Pre-contracted fishing vessel
response fleet

Increased training, monitoring and
communications

Ice detection radar

Reduced air emissions

Improved oil spill response plans

Pre-positioned spill response
equipment

Tools to mitigate community impacts

Pre-identified strategies to protect
sensitive resources

www.pwsrcac.org

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND
RCAC
Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

Photos courtesy of: Bill Rome, Tom Copeland, and the Alaska Resources Library & Information Services (ARLIS)