

THE OBSERVER

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Gulf of Mexico representatives explore the lasting effects from the Exxon Valdez oil spill

In early August, a group of Gulf of Mexico citizens affected by the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill visited Alaska on a fact-finding mission.

The delegation, mostly from coastal Louisiana, included clergy, professors from the University of New Orleans, the mayor of the town of Jean Lafitte, a member of the Jefferson Parish council, representatives from environmental groups the Louisiana Bucket Brigade and the Gulf Restoration Network, and an out-of-work oysterman from the town of Point au Chene.

Journalists from the Washington Post, CNN, WWL-TV in New Orleans, and a Japanese public television station based in New York City accompanied the tour to tell the story to the rest of the world.

The group spent six days visiting Whittier, Cordova and Valdez. Their goal was to witness firsthand the lingering effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound.

On Sunday, August 1, Patience Andersen Faulkner, council board representative for the Cordova District Fishermen United, welcomed the group to Cordova and spoke about the connectedness of the two communities.

"I want us all to know that we are in this together, we are not standing alone. We are all united and I want you all to never feel alone," Faulkner said.

Monday morning, the group toured a SERV

oil spill response equipment storage site in Cordova. SERV employees were conducting an inspection during the visit, so the group was able to get an up-close look at a variety of response equipment and watch the workers conduct an annual inspection of oil booms before returning them in their storage trailers.

"The workers are knowledgeable and engaged in the whole process," Faulkner said.

After seeing the amount of equipment stashed and sitting in wait for a spill, several visitors expressed frustration that similar equipment had not been pre-stationed and available in the Gulf before the BP spill.

Members of the Chamber of Commerce gathered with the visitors at Cordova's St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Monday afternoon to talk about hardships the community had experienced. In the years after the Exxon spill, Cordova saw an increase in suicides, spousal abuse, and alcoholism. In some social circles, family members and friends don't speak, even today.

Father Tom Killeen, pastor of St Joseph's Catholic Church, said many Cordovans turned to the church for help after the spill. Killeen said that he was the only pastor still in Cordova who had been around in 1989, because Cordova's religious communities suffer a high



Shirley Laska and Kristina Peterson returned a healing drum that Faulkner had left with them during her visit just after the crisis began. While Faulkner was there, this drum was played at each gathering and became a symbol of the ties between Alaska and the Gulf of Mexico. Photo by Amanda Johnson.

See page 6, **GULF OF MEXICO VISITORS**

Students study oceanography and oil spills in Sound

By **ALICE DOU-WANG**

Education Specialist

Prince William Sound Science Center

Nine high school students from around the country recently completed the Ocean Science and Leadership Expedition, a summer intensive course based in Cordova and Valdez and led by staff from the Prince William Sound Science Center. From August 5-14, the students studied principles of oceanography and marine environ-

mental issues, especially focusing on oil spills, and developed leadership skills in a wilderness learning environment.

Students came from as far away as New York and Florida, with several coming from the Gulf Coast on first-time scholarships awarded through a partnership between the science center and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium. For them, the expedition was an opportunity to share their experiences of the Deepwater Horizon oil

spill and learn insights from the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

"I really wanted to learn as much as I could about oil spills and how to properly respond," said Danielle Wall, a high school senior from Sarasota, Florida.

In Cordova, researchers and educators from the science center taught the students about

See page 7, **STUDENT EXPEDITION**

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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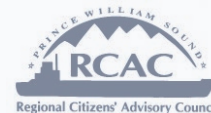


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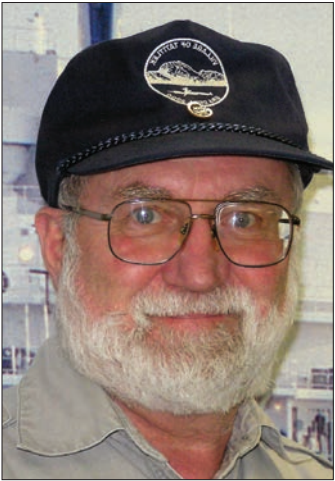


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Council volunteer observes spill response test runs

Jerry Brookman, council volunteer with the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee, recently spent a week in Prince William Sound watching Alyeska’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System’s employees practice special oil spill response plans called Geographic Response Strategies.

These are specialized plans tailored for unique geographic areas in the sound. The areas are identified ahead of time and a strategy is pre-planned in order to save time during the critical first hours of a spill. Part of the plan includes calculating the type and amount of equipment that would be needed along with locations of wildlife habitats, fishing areas and other critical resources.



Jerry Brookman

August 16 was the first time equipment had been deployed to test strategies in these five locations around northwest Prince William

Sound. In 2007, the oil shipping companies in Prince William Sound agreed to test an average of five strategies per year. Brookman got the opportunity to ride along and observe as a representative of the citizens’ council.

“The purpose is to take the plans which are on paper and try them in the real world,” Brookman said, “You can look at it on charts, but it takes actually going out and doing it to see if it really works.”

Brookman accompanied the workers aboard a Crowley Maritime tug, the Endurance, to view the oil spill boom deployment. Environments included intertidal lagoons and oyster beds in Fairmount Bay, harbor seal haulouts near Fairmount Island, an eagle nesting area near Fool Island, as well as shallow water and islands.

Brookman was favorably impressed by the worker knowledge.

“The personnel all appeared to me to be competent, well informed professionals,” Brookman reported after his return.

Brookman said there were a few deviations from the pre-planned strategies once the task was under way. During a deployment near Agnes Island, just south of Naked Island, the strategy called for two lengths of boom held in

place almost end to end by vessels. The workers discovered that the two lengths of boom could be joined together, freeing up a boat that could be used elsewhere.

The efforts of a volunteer such as Brookman make a real difference for a council with less than twenty staff members.

“It’s extremely valuable to have volunteers willing to observe and participate in these types of exercises,” said Mark Swanson, the council’s executive director, “It not only increases their knowledge, but also increases the knowledge base of our technical committees as a whole.”

Learn more about Alaska’s Geographic Response (GRS) Strategies online:

- Council page on GRS: bit.ly/PWSRCAC_GRS
- ADEC page on GRS: bit.ly/ADEC_GRS
- Some individual GRS site strategies:
 - Fool Island: bit.ly/Fool_Island
 - Fairmount Island: bit.ly/Fairmount_Island
 - West Fairmount Bay: bit.ly/WFairmountBay
 - Fairmount Bay Lagoon: bit.ly/FairmountBayLagoon
 - Agnes Island: bit.ly/Agnes_Island

Council project manager to use council experiences in new position at SERVVS

Project manager Dan Gilson resigned from the council in July to take an oil spill response coordination position with Alyeska’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System, known as SERVVS.

A member of the council’s Valdez staff for 10 years, Gilson worked closely with the council’s Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee to observe and report on oil spill drills and exercises in Prince William Sound.

Gilson also worked to monitor the readiness of the SERVVS fishing vessel oil spill response program and to analyze an oil spill “response gap,” which occurs when oil can be transported in weather conditions not feasible for conducting oil spill response.

Gilson has been instrumental in council efforts to monitor Prince William Sound waters for invasive species, such as the European green crab, a particularly adaptable and known destruc-

tive species in the lower 48. The presence of the green crab is checked by setting up traps in various locations in Prince William Sound likely to harbor the non-indigenous species. One goal of the project is to involve school children. Gilson often led Valdez students on “green crabbing” excursions into Prince William Sound, and his efforts in setting the traps were commendably diligent, particularly on sunny days. To date, no green crabs have been found in Prince William Sound.



Dan Gilson



In 2005, Gilson and former staffer Marilyn Leland took a trip to Cordova to help set up a green crab monitoring program. Photo courtesy of Marilyn Leland.

no green crabs have been found in Prince William Sound.

In June, Gilson coordinated a test of the council’s own spill response plan in conjunction with a recent industry spill drill in Prince William Sound (See The Observer, July 2010). The last time staff engaged all staff and volunteers in such an exercise was 2001.

“Dan’s enthusiastic can-do attitude will be sorely missed and his experience with the council is sure to prove valuable for Alyeska and SERVVS,” said Mark Swanson, the council’s executive director.

Long-time Valdez resident a welcome addition to council staff

Valdez resident Alan Sorum has been hired to fill the position of maritime operations project manager for the council.

Sorum and his wife, Ruth Knight, along with their daughter, Elise, have enjoyed living and working on the Alaskan waterfront for nearly 20 years.

Before moving to Valdez in 1999, Sorum and his family lived on Wrangell Island in Southeast Alaska for many years.

Sorum is an alumnus of the University of Alaska Southeast and the University of Alaska Fairbanks with advanced degrees in public administration and rural development. Currently he is an adjunct faculty member with the University of Alaska Southeast and a graduate student in the Public Health Program at University of Alaska Anchorage.

Most recently, Sorum was with the training department at Prince William Sound Community College, and is the immediate past manager of the Municipality of Skagway. He was a city of Valdez employee for eight years as port director and harbormaster.

“I have had many positive interactions with staff and members of PWSRCAC for many years and look forward to the chance to now work with them in the organization,” Sorum said.

Sorum started work with the council on September 7.



Alan Sorum

The citizens’ council board of directors meets three times annually. Here is the tentative schedule for the coming year:

- January 20-21, 2011: Anchorage
- May 5-6, 2011: Valdez
- September 15-16, 2011: Kenai

Board meetings are open to public. Agendas and other meeting-related materials are available on the council web site at www.pwsrcac.org/about/boardintro.html. Or, contact either council office: Anchorage, 907-277-7222, or Valdez, 907-834-5000.

From the Executive Director

Waiting for the next shoe to drop from cost-cutting

When will the next cost savings measure or deferred maintenance item on the now aging and reduced-flow trans-Alaska pipeline and its terminus, the Valdez Marine Terminal, lead to another completely preventable accident with an environmentally adverse outcome?

I don't know, but now is not the time to wait around and find out. Following a tank overflow and spill into secondary containment at Pump Station 9, all summer long the papers have been filled with stories of cost cutting and job location changes and critical internal reports and investigations surrounding the operation of the Alyeska pipeline. BP's tarnished safety record, and Alyeska's management style and attention to safety and workforce concerns under a BP executive and almost 50 percent BP ownership, have been publicly called into question. The pipeline and terminal have other co-owners whose directors and shareholders are presumably more risk-averse today than they were prior to the environmentally disastrous and industry reputation-tarnishing BP spill in the Gulf of Mexico this summer.

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council is not charged with oversight of the pipeline, only the terminal and associated tankers, but the naked truth is that the terminal operates under essentially the same management climate and ownership structure as the pipeline, and we as citizens in the Sound need to pay attention. We at the citizens' council have heard assurances that, at the terminal, safety is the highest priority and that recent failures of the vapor relief valves atop the oil storage tanks and leaks in the drainage piping below the storage tanks are one of a kind and not in any way related to deferred maintenance and reduced maintenance budgets. In public news articles following the

Pump Station 9 spill, the Alyeska management culture has been accused of discouraging maintenance whistleblowers.

Alyeska is full of good folks working to do good things. These folks are our neighbors and we like them as individuals. But still we wonder, what's not getting done? What risks have been reported internally and ignored and hidden from public and regulatory scrutiny to save a buck?

For the oil industry, the economics of safety can be a conundrum. Maintaining and upgrading old equipment costs money. Wait a while and it costs even more money. Adequate staffing and training of folks for accident prevention and response also cost money. And they don't cost any less money when oil prices are down, leaving less money to pay for safety and still make a profit for the owners. Oil for U.S. refineries and customers can seemingly be had more cheaply in other corners of the world or even other regions of our country where there are fewer environmental controls and procedural safeguards.

But saving money by taking safety shortcuts is a short-term economy, because a corporate reputation damaging and environmentally disastrous spill can also be an economically disastrous spill. Just ask BP's shareholders. We are convinced that transparent attention to the safety concerns of stakeholders and the industry's own workforce is in everybody's best interest and is more profitable in the long term than obscured and misconstrued deferral and avoidance of maintenance concerns to meet short term cost-control budget targets. Safety is a sound business practice

On the Valdez terminal, there are several maintenance issues that are reasonably well understood and that Alyeska appears to be addressing. Problems with the fire-fighting water piping valves, the tank roof vapor relief valves,

and secondary containment drainage around the storage tanks are all being addressed under the watchful eye of state and federal regulators and citizens on a schedule that takes account of the very brief snow-free construction season. We want to see the terminal and pipeline continue to operate profitably and accident-free well into the future.

How well are other less "externally" visible maintenance risks being managed? The changing oil properties in the pipeline associated with aging oil fields and slower flow increase the chances of steel-corroding microbes or other unmanaged corrosion risks showing up on the terminal. Vapor handling and power generation systems with historically uncertain fates slated for removal with Alyeska's strategic reconfiguration a half-decade ago, then considered for upgrade, are again being looked at for possible elimination or upgrade because of new EPA sulfur emission regulations. In that environment of uncertainty, have needed investments in maintenance been made?

We appreciate Alyeska's recent offer to open up some of their terminal maintenance records to the council to review. There have been recent public calls for an audit of the Alyeska system maintenance practices and we agree. Now is not the time to wait for the next shoe to drop.

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



Mark Swanson

Alyeska Viewpoint

Terminal and pipeline maintenance held to a high standard

The Trans-Alaska Pipeline System is chartered to safely and reliably move oil from the North Slope through Prince William Sound without impacting the environment. Operations teams ensure that the system is monitored and operating properly. The maintenance program delivers reliability.

All requests for work start with documentation. The scope of work is entered into a computerized maintenance management system. This database allows for all work requests to be tracked from initiation through final closure. The database allows work to be reviewed, batched, prioritized, planned, scheduled, and for these expectations to be measured. The metrics allow us to gauge the health of the system based on historical performance and industry standards.

The work tasks are divided many ways, but the main three groups are: preventative, corrective, and reactive.

Preventative maintenance is routine work that is done prior to when it will likely be needed. An example would be changing oil in an engine. Based on historical knowledge and manufacturer recommendations, we change oil before it is strictly needed. This allows the work to be planned, scheduled, and implemented before there is an impact to the engine. The pipeline system's preventative maintenance program is continuously reviewed and updated to reflect current knowledge and industry improvements

to improve the reliability of the system.

Preventative maintenance work is given high priority and makes up the second largest use of resource hours. The better this work is understood and planned, the less reactive work there is in the system. As the work is repeatable, the materials, tools, controls, and resources can be planned in advance for the least risk to the system, employees and the environment.

Predictive maintenance is the process of monitoring equipment and initiating action when conditions change—like the red engine light in your car. The issue is reviewed and the proper corrective action is taken before repairs are required.

Corrective work is done when a problem is recognized, but is still in a condition that will allow the repair to be planned and scheduled. In this way, personnel can ensure that the right tools, materials, and controls are in place prior to the work starting. Planning allows the workers to reduce safety risks and return the equipment to service in a planned manner.

Reactive work is work that is unexpected, critical, and requires immediate response. This work accounted for 9 percent of the terminal's total staff hours in 2009. This scope of work is reviewed for repeat issues and concerns. When they are identified, the problem is reviewed to see if it can be designed to be more reliable.

Another key element of the maintenance process is continuous improvement. Main-

tenance is done at a high standard, but there are always ways to improve. Alyeska uses Reliability Centered Maintenance to validate how our processes are working and identify potential improvements. In 2007, the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council contracted PetroTech Alaska to review this maintenance process. In his report, Gary Green wrote: "There was strong evidence that the current RCM program and total maintenance program at the VMT [Valdez Marine Terminal] are achieving Alyeska's objectives of providing the highest degree of integrity for the TAPS [Trans Alaska Pipeline System] and VMT equipment and facilities."

We strive to continue to meet and exceed this high standard. We use this specialized maintenance process to review systems and areas of identified concerns to move our design, operating, and maintenance standards to a higher level.

• Kathy Zinn is the director of the Valdez Marine Terminal.



Kathy Zinn

Citizens' council timeline

This final installment of our retrospective of the council’s work on behalf of citizens in the region affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill covers the years 2007 through early 2010. During this period, reforms and improvements included:

- A ramp up in efforts to preserve the dual escort system through legislation.
- The council commemorates the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill.
- Alyeska, after years of council urging, reduces emission of hazardous air pollutants through ballast water treatment processes.
- Interest in citizen oversight grows in the aftermath of the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster.

January 2007

- The citizens’ council and Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. resolve a long-running dispute over the council’s right to investigate the profitability of oil companies operating on Alaska’s North Slope. As a result of the settlement, Alyeska drops its claim that the council can’t use Alyeska contract funds for such investigations, and pays half the council’s legal expenses for the case.

May 2007

- The council begins a project to compile an oral history of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Sharon Bushell, a Homer oral historian, will record interviews with people directly involved in the spill or its aftermath.
- The council adopts a new position on the Prince William Sound tanker escort system, calling for preservation of the two-tug escort requirement for loaded tankers, and for a limit of two loaded tankers in the system at any one time. The council also calls for a requirement to keep a high-performance vessel tug at the Hinchinbrook Entrance for emergency response.

2007

June 2007

- The Alyeska Pipeline turns 30.

July 2007

- The council and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation call for more information from oil tanker companies before Prince William Sound oil-spill contingency plans should be renewed.
- The council comments on possible new tanker ballast water regulations, saying the EPA should regulate ballast water from crude oil tankers serving the Valdez Marine Terminal to help prevent the spread of invasive species.

November 2007

- The state of Alaska approves new tanker contingency plans. Lingerin g concerns about shortcomings in the plans result in a steering committee being formed with members from the council, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Prince William Sound tanker operators, and Alyeska’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System.

January 2008

- Questions arise over a state requirement that fishing vessel captains pay unemployment taxes for crew members during oil-spill response training. The council begins looking into possible fixes, such as a change to state law.
- Ballast water treatment processes are connected to the vapor control system at the Valdez Marine Terminal, greatly reducing emission of vapors.

April 2008

- House Bill 289 passes the state House, stating that during actual fishing operations, crew members are exempt from unemployment insurance requirements because their pay consists of a share of the value of the catch. The bill was supported by the oil industry, the citizens’ council, and the fishing industry.
- A new council study suggests dispersant effectiveness doesn’t matter much, because environmental conditions make the chemicals impossible to apply 75 percent of the time in central Prince William Sound and 60 percent of the time at Hinchinbrook Entrance.

May 2008

- Council joins the international SAFETUG study to better understand the capabilities and limitations of the Sound’s current fleet of escort tugs.

2008

June 2008

- The long-awaited ruling in the case of the Exxon Valdez oil spill is handed down June 25. The Supreme Court sets punitive damages at \$507.5 million, bitterly disappointing thousands of commercial fishermen and other plaintiffs who had seen the award whittled down from \$5 billion by a series of court rulings.
- The newly formed Information and Education Committee holds its inaugural meeting in Anchorage on June 12. The mission: support the council’s work by fostering public awareness, responsibility and participation through information and education.

September 2008

- U.S. Department of the Interior withdraws approval for what is called ‘pre-authorized’ dispersant use in substantial parts of the Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet. Instead, the Interior Department said, spill managers will need to decide about dispersant use on a case-by-case basis.
- The council raises concerns that the state of Alaska is not properly prepared to take on the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permitting program.
- Council staffer Lisa Ka’aihue is appointed to the national Invasive Species Advisory Committee.



In 2008, the council be rides from port to port t a phenomenon known



A council study is released in October 2008 that shows that Alyeska’s Current Buster skimming system, adopted three years earlier, can collect spilled oil up to five times better than the traditional “U” configuration



gins looking at the organisms that catch by attaching themselves to vessel hulls, as hull fouling or biofouling.



At the March 24 commemorative event, a panel of industry, agency and citizen group representatives talk about 20 years of improvements in oil transportation. Left to right: Darryl Verfaillie, US Coast Guard; Greg Jones, V.P. Operations, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company; Tim Plummer, President, Tesoro Maritime; Anil Mathur, CEO, Alaska Tanker Company; Donna Schantz, Acting Executive Director, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council; Betty Schorr, Industry Preparedness Program Manager, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation; and Mead Treadwell, panel moderator.

March 2009

- On March 24, the Council commemorates the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill with a series of teleconferences and presentations on the theme “Partners in Prevention.”
- The Alaska Legislature unanimously passes a council-sponsored resolution calling for the preservation of dual escort tugs for loaded oil tankers in Prince William Sound.
- The council’s oral history of the Exxon Valdez oil spill is published on the 20th anniversary of the 1989 grounding on Bligh Reef. Reviews of the book, titled “The Spill: Personal Stories from the Exxon Valdez Disaster,” are highly favorable inside Alaska and out.
- At council urging, Alyeska implements a new system to capture and destroy hazardous vapors from the ballast water treatment facility.

April 2010

- A long-simmering dispute comes to a head among participants in Alyeska’s oil-spill fishing vessel program. Fishing vessel captains note problems such as inadequate compensation, exclusion from the decision-making process, and lack of respect as reasons for declining participation. Alyeska proposes changes including a raise in wages, and fishers accept the changes.

2009

August 2009

- The council collaborates with the Prince William Sound Science Center, Cape Saint Elias Lightkeepers Association, and the Coast Guard to install a new state-of-the-art weather monitoring station that transmits information about current conditions to the internet in near real time. Purchased by the council, the station helps monitor conditions that could produce a weather phenomenon called “barrier jets.”

December 2009

- The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation surprises Alyeska Pipeline’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System with an unannounced oil spill drill. The council is pleased because they have been advocating for true no-notice drills for a number of years. Usually, drills are scheduled far in advance to allow time to plan the event.

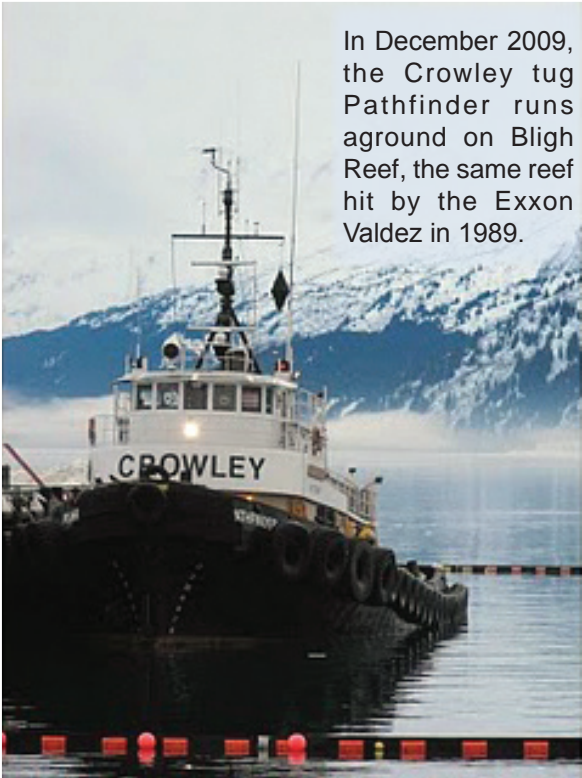


In May 2009, Alaska Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Mark Begich introduce federal legislation to mandate the continuation of double escorts. Representative Don Young supported it in the House.

2010

April 20, 2010

- BP’s Deepwater Horizon oil drilling rig explodes and begins to leak oil into the Gulf of Mexico. Oil continues gushing until August 4. Total gallons spilled is estimated at over 200 million gallons. The council is kept very busy responding to calls for assistance and information.



In December 2009, the Crowley tug Pathfinder runs aground on Bligh Reef, the same reef hit by the Exxon Valdez in 1989.

Gulf of Mexico Visitors: Exploring effects of the Exxon spill

Continued from page 1

turnover rate among their leaders due to stress from helping church members with the huge number of personal problems.

Many of the Gulf visitors' questioned how Cordovans continued to fight for so long against a wealthy corporation without money coming in from fishing.

"There is such an imbalance of resources," asked Rosina Phillipe, resident of the tiny coastal Louisiana town of Grand Bayou, "How to you continue to work, to fight, to go on?"

"It was tough, we just stayed with it and did whatever it took," said Jerry McClune of Cordova, "If I have to talk to some congressman and it takes standing outside his door for five or six days, I'm gonna do it."

The Cordovans encouraged persistence in the face of the disaster, and tried to prepare the visitors for the reality of a long legal battle with little hope of real financial compensation.

Several Cordovans reminded the visitors of the need for community and family.

"The main thing is to be able to listen to people, be there to listen," said Daryl Olsen of Tatitlek.

Tuesday began with a trip to the Prince William Sound Science Center, an independent research and education institution that studies the Prince William Sound and Copper River Delta ecosystems.

Nancy Bird, executive director of the science center and former citizens' council board member; Scott Pegau of the Oil Spill Recovery Institute; Torie Baker from Alaska's Sea Grant; and R.J. Kopchak, development director of the science center spoke on effects of the spill from a scientific perspective.

Kopchak began with a brief history of his involvement in the Exxon spill. When he told the group about his loss of income from the missing herring fishery and his business's bankruptcy due to the spill, New



Left to right, aboard the Alaska Marine Highway's ferry Chenega: Rosina Phillipe and Nancy Machado, sisters from the tiny coastal community of Grand Bayou; Cynthia Sarthou, executive director of the Gulf Restoration Network; Kristina Peterson and Shirley Laska, professors from the University of New Orleans, Tim Kerner, mayor of the town of Jean Lafitte; Chris Roberts, Jefferson Parish council member; Chastity Chiasson, Jefferson Parish council staff; Michael Melsheimer of the town of Jean Lafitte, Erica Claverie, Jefferson Parish council staff; and Russel Dardar, an out-of-work oysterman from the town of Point au Chene. Photo by Amanda Johnson.

Orleans TV reporter Bill Capo raised his hand to ask a question.

"You sit up there so calmly, and talk about all of you being bankrupted by the spill. How many years did it take you to get that calm about it?"

Kopchak said he still gets angry at times, but he's learned to cope over the years.

"It's because this has become a part of our lives," Kopchak said.

On Wednesday afternoon, the group met with the citizens' council staff in Valdez. Swanson welcomed the group and gave an overview of the council's work. Many in the group had questions about the legislation that mandated the council and the independence guaranteed in the council's contract with Alyeska.

"We were struck by the quality of the staff and their breadth and depth of expertise," said Kristina Petersen, from the University of New Orleans's Center for Hazards Assessment, Response and

Technology, known as CHART, "The serious commitment of the board representatives to know and understand issues that are at stake and contained in their responsibilities as citizens with oversight was admirable. It reinforced the need for dedicated and knowledgeable staff and board members who are invested in the care and economics of their region."

When Shirley Laska, a sociology professor at the University of New Orleans and member of CHART, returned home, she found that the entire region had been engaged in the news reports. While she was giving a presentation about the visit, an audience member stood up to tell her how important the story was.

"We weren't just representing

the 14 of us, but the region," Laska said "They wanted us to be there and to learn and connect."

Since returning, members of the delegation have been promoting the idea of a citizens' council for the Gulf of Mexico region. The idea seems to be gaining support from the public, and Amnesty International has also begun a campaign to promote it.

A second group of visitors from the Gulf of Mexico visited Anchorage and Cordova at the beginning of September. Faulkner, who worked closely with both groups, said that the visitors feel guilty at leaving the Gulf, even briefly.

"They are soon relieved by what they find," Faulkner said, "They have been so worried, but then are pleased and overwhelmed by the amount of information that is



The tour stopped at Shoreside Petroleum, a Cordova petroleum distributor. Alaska Chadux, a non-profit oil spill response organization stages response equipment on Shoreside's waterfront property. In the photo to the left, Shoreside employee Fred Newirth IV speaks with Shirley Laska about oil spill response in Prince William Sound. Newirth told the group about growing up in a fishing family and learning spill response techniques

through the SERVS fishing vessel program starting at the age of 13. Newirth also told of a recent tender spill where quick response was estimated to have cleaned up a significant amount of the spilled fuel due to the pre-staged equipment and ready personnel, versus 10 percent, which he said was the average amount of fuel usually recovered without such pre-planning. Photo by Amanda Johnson.



The group also spoke with John Devens, mayor of Valdez during the time of the Exxon spill and former executive director of the citizens' council. In the photo above, Tim Kerner, the mayor of Jean Lafitte, takes the opportunity to get advice from Devens on how a political leader of a small town could be effective in fighting for his constituents. Photo by Amanda Johnson.



At the Ilanka Cultural Center & Museum, young Ikumat Dancers performed to welcome the visitors. The youth are part of a revival of interest in local Native Alaskan traditions since the spill. Photo by Amanda Johnson.

THE OBSERVER is a quarterly newsletter published by the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council. Except where credited to others, articles are written by council staff Stan Jones and Amanda Johnson.

For more photos from this trip, visit the online edition of September's Observer: bit.ly/Sept2010Obs

Student expedition: Learning about oceanography and oil spills

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physical and biological oceanography and the science of oil spills through classes and laboratory activities.

In Valdez, students visited the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council to learn about the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill and the activities of the council.

"I would love to be part of starting an RCAC along the Gulf," said Cierra Martin, a high school senior from Hurley, Mississippi.

The group also toured the Coast Guard Vessel Traffic Center to learn about oil transportation through the Sound.

The course included a kayaking trip near Columbia Glacier and along the coast of Valdez Arm. Although some of the planned kayaking was stymied by weather, the students were thrilled to paddle among icebergs and camp on remote beaches in Prince William Sound.

On one of those beaches, the group conducted a marine debris cleanup, collecting 202 pieces of trash to produce outreach projects to educate the public about marine debris.

The students' final project at the end of the course was a half-day oil spill scenario, in which they used everything learned during the week to decide how to respond to a mock oil spill in Prince William Sound.

Playing roles in the Incident Command System, a standardized system for emergency response, as well as roles as outside stake-



Columbia sampling: While paddling among icebergs from Columbia Glacier, the group made a stop to collect oceanographic data. Photo courtesy of the Prince William Sound Science Center.

holders, the students first used their oceanographic knowledge to forecast the trajectory and impact of the spill, then decided how best to respond. In the midst of making cleanup decisions and assessing shorelines and ecological impacts, the students also had to negotiate contracts with fishermen and issue press releases.

"I thought that this project was interesting and informative. Both working with the incident command system and with the 'public' was important, and let me develop a respect for those people handling the Gulf oil spill," said William, a high school sophomore from New York, New York.

Many of the students were attracted to this expedition by their interest in in marine science careers,

and the course provided opportunities for firsthand interaction with the marine environment that confirmed their ambitions. Students were able to earn college credit for the course from Prince William Sound Community College, and gained experiences and knowledge to bring back to their schools and communities.

"This trip was like nothing I've ever done before and it changed my life," Martin said at the end of the

course. "I'm so glad that I had this experience, and it's going to take me so far in life."

The Ocean Science and Leadership Expedition was presented by the Prince William Sound Science Center with support from Prince William Sound Oil Spill Recovery Institute, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council, BP, and ConocoPhillips.

By Cierra Martin
High school senior from Hurley, Mississippi

"Life is not a journey to the grave with intentions of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out and to exclaim, 'Wow! What a ride!'"

My aunt has this quote on a plaque nailed to her bathroom wall; I noticed it a few years ago, and since then I've made it my aim not to just exist but to really "live" my life.

This recent trip to Alaska to participate in the expedition was one of those opportunities to live like only few people ever have the chance to. I learned so much while I was in Cordova and Valdez, but speaking with director Mark Swanson from the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council in Valdez and Dr. Scott Pegau from the Oil Spill Recovery Institute probably had the biggest impact on me.


As I was sitting there listening to Dr. Pegau, I had such an overwhelming urge to DO something in my community as soon as I returned home. I had always wanted to take action, but he really boosted that desire with his words of encouragement. I am extremely interested in the citizens' council program, and that is what I'd like to help start along the Gulf or a program of that nature.

Dr. Pegau stressed to the group that now is the time to act because a passionate student fighting for a cause she believes in can be as influential as a 40-year-old lobbyist. I plan to take the knowledge that I gained in Alaska and spread it around to the world. This opportunity has opened so many doors for me, and I plan to do my best to help in the construction of advisory programs along the Gulf.

I want to fight. Fight for our oceans, our wildlife, our businesses and our people in any way that I can.



Students in the Unified Command discuss the latest update during a mock oil spill scenario. Photo courtesy of the Prince William Sound Science Center.



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Community Corner

Interest in citizen oversight grows

By LINDA ROBINSON
Outreach Coordinator

This summer the council hosted three groups interested in learning about citizen oversight and the lasting effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Sixteen people from groups affected by the BP Deepwater Horizon spill visited Alaska from coastal Louisiana in August. Four press organizations accompanied the tour: the Washington Post, CNN, WWL-TV in New Orleans and NHK-TV, a Japanese public television station based in New York City. Read more about this visit on page 1 of this Observer.

In July, four visitors from Kazakhstan came to Alaska to learn about the council. Askar Kushkunbayev, Svetlana Anossova, Ulan Sarkulov and Kirill Ossin spent time visiting Anchorage and Valdez. They met with council staff and agencies in Anchorage, and then traveled to Valdez to meet with other agencies, council staff, and industry representatives.

Kazakhstan, with a population of between 15 and 16 million, is the ninth largest nation in the world, with an area of just over a million square miles. It is a major producer of oil and gas, with many other extraction industries such as gold, uranium, zinc, copper, iron ore and coal. New oil fields and planned expansion of production may produce up to 3 million barrels per day within a few years.

When Kazakhstan was formed after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, foreign companies came in and acquired long-term contracts that didn't include substantial environmental constraints.

Recently, \$80 million in funds derived from oil industry operations have been set aside to be invested in social infrastructure. Kushkunbayev and the other Kazakh visitors are working on this as part of a working group established in 2009. This working group, which includes industry representatives, will look at environmental issues, and determine how to spend the money. Our visitors were particularly interested in Dr. Steve Picou's work for the council on socioeconomic impacts of technological disasters.

One of their concerns is future offshore develop-

ment in the Caspian Sea region of Kashagan. There are expected to be approximately 240 rigs on more than 100 manmade islands built in the area. Information from

the government and resource extraction industries on this and other projects has been difficult for the public to access.

In July, board member John French, and staffers Mark Swanson, Amanda Johnson and I met with a number of organizations in Seward.

French organized the agenda, which included meetings with the Alaska SeaLife Center, representatives of the city of Seward, and the Marine Science Center. The group was also given a demonstration of the Alaska Maritime Simulator at the Alaska Vocational Technical Center. The simulator consists of a state of the art computer with a large bank of screens and a mock control panel. The setup mimics real-time ship navigation and allows students to practice maneuvering a ship under a variety of conditions. Swanson gave a presentation about the work of the citizens' council at a work session of Seward city council.

Mark Swanson attended the Alaska Municipal League Conference in mid-August in Kodiak, and met with council members Jane Eisemann, Al Burch and Iver Malutin.

Board member Pat Duffy and I will be attending the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce trade show September 20-22 in Juneau.

Plans are under way to take the council information booth to the Clean Gulf conference, October 19-20 in Tampa, Florida. This conference will focus on the Gulf of Mexico spill so we plan to organize as much information as possible on the council and its projects to share with those in attendance.

On behalf of the council, I want to thank the volunteers, staff, agency and industry people who were so gracious with giving their time and information to help our visitors this summer.



Linda Robinson



Staffer Amanda Johnson tries her hand driving an escort tug using the simulator. Photo by Linda Robinson.

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.

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