



New book illustrates safeguards in Prince William Sound

Council partnership with author and artist Tom Crestodina highlights the vessels, equipment, and systems that prevent oil spills

A new illustrated book, "Protectors of Prince William Sound," showcases the equipment, technology, training, local expertise, and skilled personnel that keeps Prince William Sound safe from an oil spill.

The Council recently partnered with Tom Crestodina, an Alaska fisherman based in Bellingham, Washington, and the creator of the popular "Working Boats: A Look Inside Ten Amazing Watercraft."

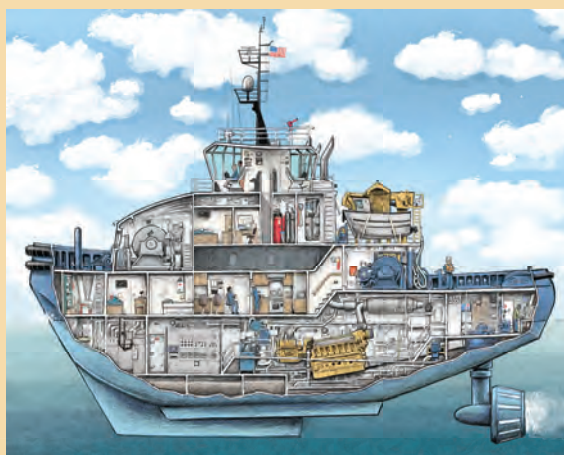
Crestodina is a life-long artist who began making his signature whimsical cutaway drawings of marine vessels in 2011. His first drawings were made for his young son while he was at sea for long periods.

While his books are designed for children, they have become a favorite among Alaska mariners of all ages. In addition to the drawings, easy-to-read text explains the complex systems for readers who don't have a technical background.

"We are excited to share this

wonderful new book showcasing the oil spill prevention and response system in our region," says Donna Schantz, the

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"Protectors of Prince William Sound" is filled with illustrations like this one in Crestodina's signature style. The drawings show how and why local fishing vessels, escort tugs, pilot boats, tankers, and other technology work together to keep the marine ecosystems and coastal communities of Prince William Sound safe.

This edition of The Observer features many of Crestodina's drawings from the new book.

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Scientist cultivates environmental education opportunities

Dr. Amanda Glazier, scientist and educator, is the newest member of the Council's Information and Education Committee. She grew up in Connecticut, but credits a family trip to St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands for the beginnings of her fascination with marine biology.

"I was in maybe 3rd grade, and the place we stayed had a little reef, right off the beach," Glazier recalls. "It was kind of like our little personal reef."

Topics that capture a child's attention often change over time, but Glazier never lost this early interest. In college, she studied marine biology at the University of Maryland College Park, earning an Honors citation, eventually going on to earn a Ph.D. from University of Massachusetts Boston.

Glazier worked as a researcher for several years, including participating in deep-sea research cruises in the Gulf of Mexico and Costa Rica. Her research included investigating the transcriptomic response of deep-sea corals to the oil and dispersant from the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster.

Transcriptomics involves measuring how particular genes are expressed in an organism. This expression can be affected by conditions in the environment.

Building new opportunities for students in the Prince William Sound

In 2021, Glazier moved from Philadelphia to Alaska, joining the Prince William Sound College in Valdez as an Assistant Professor of Environmental Science and Biology.

"There was no program before I got here," she says. "It was a little bit scary, but also fun and exciting, because there was a lot of flexibility to build it in the way I wanted to."

She runs two intensive natural resources programs. One focuses on land-based topics, such as forestry, and the other focuses on marine-based topics, such as mariculture. Students completing the program build skills that qualify them for technician-level positions.

"Both of the programs are experiential learning in the field, as much as we can," Glazier says.

"The students can leave those programs and get a summer research tech job, work as a seasonal employee with the Park Service, or continue on to an associate's or bachelor's."

Developing a research program

Prior to joining the committee as a volunteer, Glazier partnered with the Council to develop a program that gives undergraduate students at the college an opportunity to design and complete their own independent research project. The students, with Glazier's oversight, start with an idea, create a study protocol, complete the project, and present their findings.

The program's first year was partially funded by the Council's Youth Involvement program, an initiative of the Information and Education Committee. Through this program, educators can apply to receive up to \$5,000 for teaching projects related to the Council's mission.

"\$5,000 is a good, manageable size," Glazier says. "You can run a short-term class, or an activity within a class. It's not so big that it doesn't make sense to apply for it, and it's not so small that you can only get, like, 3 pencils."

She no longer receives funding from the Council, because her program took off and now receives funds from a variety of grants.

The students gain experience that would not otherwise be possible. Glazier says that in many research programs at other colleges the topic is



Amanda Glazier

The Information and Education Committee supports the Council's mission by fostering public awareness, responsibility, and participation through information and education.

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Are you an educator in the Exxon Valdez oil spill region? If you have an project idea related to our mission, you can apply for funds of up to \$5,000 through the Youth Involvement Program:

www.tinyurl.com/Educate-PWS-Youth

Annual spill reports help track history of preparedness

When the Exxon Valdez ran aground in 1989, oil spill cleanup equipment was not ready to go. Some of it was buried in snow, other equipment was not operating. The first three days after the spill, the weather was calm, but responders could do little without equipment.

Today, Alyeska's Ship Escort Response Vessel System and the tanker companies are required to practice throughout the year by implementing various aspects of spill response plans. One of the Council's major tasks is to monitor these drills and exercises to verify that responders are prepared to mount a quick response if prevention measures fail.

Each year, the Council releases an annual summary of these events from the previous year. The latest report is now available on our website.

Highlights from this report

In 2025, the Council reported on 11 drills and exercises. These were generally well-done with no major problems observed.

More in-person, fewer virtual events

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, many drills, exercises, and trainings took advantage of virtual meeting technology in the interest of personnel health. Recently, many of these have been returning to fully, or mostly, in-person events. When working with equipment such as skimmers and boom, hands-on training is more effective. Some situations where online training was found to be as effective as in person have remained virtual, such as the HAZWOPER classroom portion of SERVS' annual training for fishing vessel response.

Real-time weather during tanker spill

During the annual tanker spill exercise, conducted last year by ConocoPhillips and

Continued on page 10

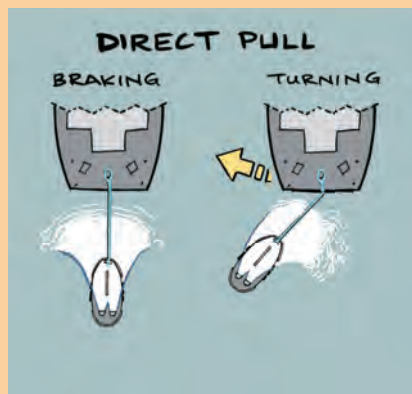
Towing exercises beneficial for tanker crews

The powerful escort tugs that are part of SERVS' system are required to participate in a minimum of four tanker towing exercises per year. These exercises provide valuable training for the crews of the SERVS tugs and those of the tankers of the companies that volunteer to participate regularly. Observers noted that rotating through tankers, particularly vessels that may be new to the system, would provide valuable training opportunities that increase readiness.

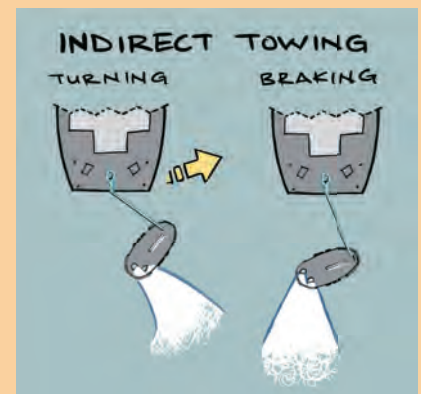
Tankers and tugs conduct emergency towing exercises to practice maneuvers such as this indirect towing method:



Tugs can help slow the ship or turn it by pulling in the desired direction.



Some modern tugs can produce more braking power by turning to the side and being dragged behind the ship. Called *indirect towing*, it is only safe for certain types of tugs.



New incinerators more reliable and fuel efficient

The skyline continues to change at the Valdez Marine Terminal!

Last summer, crews demolished A-incinerator, a construction-era apparatus at the Power Vapor facility that thermally destroys excess tank farm vapors. This summer, terminal project teams have a dual task: removal and replacement.

On May 28, two large cranes worked in tandem to lift the new Vapor Combustion Unit, or VCU,

into place. Fabricated in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the state-of-the-art units are more reliable and fuel-efficient than the construction-era incinerators.

The team set up ladders, platforms, and electrical components while the unit was still horizontal. Then the 100-foot stack was placed on the same pad that was home to A-incinerator for almost 50 years, with the help of an adapter ring that crews put in place last summer. Work has already begun tying in

the new VCU to the existing vapor management system, including connection to waste gas, nitrogen, propane, power and the communications network. The work is progressing on schedule, and the first VCU should be online in the near future.

A few days later, B-incinerator was taken down in preparation for its own replacement VCU, scheduled for installation later this summer.



Above: The view from above shows three units briefly in place. B-incinerator - in the middle - was demolished days later. Below: The 100-foot stack was hoisted vertical by two cranes. Photos courtesy of Alyeska Corporate Communications.



Citizen oversight anchors the Council's purpose

Following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, two citizen councils were authorized and empowered to help reduce the frequency and impacts of oil spills in Alaska waters through more effective oversight: the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council and our counterpart for Cook Inlet.

This oversight was mandated in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, or OPA 90. That Act was achieved through the efforts of Senators Ted Stevens and Frank Murkowski, and Congressman Don Young. It was passed by historic bipartisan votes of 99 to 0 in the Senate and 360 to 0 in the House, before being signed into law by President George H. W. Bush.

The rationale for our two citizen groups was to help combat the complacency seen as one of the contributing factors to the spill and to provide a needed layer of scrutiny to increase public confidence in the safety of Alaska's oil transportation system.

The councils' role, defined by OPA 90 as purely advisory, was to help correct the problems leading to the oil spill. This is achieved through two main avenues. First, by involving local citizens in the process of preparing, adopting, and revising oil spill prevention and response plans and the systems that support those plans. Second, by fostering long-term partnership among the oil industry, government, and local communities in overseeing compliance with environmental concerns in the operation of crude oil facilities and means by which oil is transported through the region.

The structural attributes created with our founding are necessary for effective and constructive citizen oversight: authority to monitor and oversee industry operations; assured independence to conduct oversight and have credibility with the citizens it represents; assured funding to undertake technical research, monitoring, and evaluation of proposals; and access to company facilities, personnel, and records on the same basis as regulators.

As time continues to move us away from the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster, it's important to revisit how and why PWSRCAC was founded. This

history grounds our mission and purpose to this day. Time has not diminished its importance. In fact, this context is more important than ever to keep us moving forward, as was envisioned and intended through our federal mandates.

We value the relationships we strive to maintain with industry and regulators, while also recognizing that our founding advisory functions necessitate that we not shy away from tough conversations, nor hold back hard questions. These sometimes challenging interactions could be seen by some as being anti-industry, which is certainly not the case. The Council is neither for nor against development – our purpose is solely to make sure the system is as safe as it can possibly be made while oil is being transported through our region.

The goals of all – industry, regulators, and citizens – are achieved when all parties come to the table ready to listen, discuss, and take on the greatest problems presented. If the conversations are uncomfortable, we must all ask why that is the case and get to the real core of the issue. We must put our personal perspectives aside to share information, be open to new ideas, and move towards solutions.

Congress found that the system of regulation and oversight before the 1989 spill had degenerated into a process of continual mistrust and confrontation. They noted that only when local citizens are involved in the process will the trust develop that is necessary to change that system from confrontation to consensus. The Council was created to push for answers, observe operations, verify information we are provided, and inform the stakeholders who have the most to lose in the event of another major oil spill. There is too much at stake for us to do anything less.



Donna Schantz
Executive Director

Local knowledge incorporated into proposed spill response plans for Copper River Delta

A group of Alaskans recently collaborated to develop new plans to protect the Copper River Delta and Flats region from an oil spill.

These plans, called geographic response strategies, or GRS, are map-based plans tailored to specific areas that are particularly sensitive to oil pollution. By pre-identifying these areas and planning protection strategies before a spill happens, GRS help save time during the first critical hours of a response.

The rich and diverse habitat at the mouth of the Copper River presents significant challenges to oil spill responders. Rudimentary GRS plans were developed for the area in the late 1990s, however these are dated and no longer readily available. Oil spill response technology has also come a long way. Improvements in vessel capabilities

and navigation tools have made a response more feasible.

Collaboration to develop new GRS

The Council worked with experts at Nuka Research to lead a workgroup and help collect the information needed to develop a new set of GRS for the area.

Representatives from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, the U.S. Coast Guard, resource trustees, Cordova nonprofit organizations, and local Cordova fishermen were either involved in the group or consulted during community workshops.

The collaboration resulted in nine new GRS and a tactics guide specific to this unique area. The new

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Copper River Delta and Flats: A unique and rich habitat

The mouth of the Copper River is a unique geographic area. This 700,000-acre estuary is made up of an intricate web of tidal flats, marshes, freshwater ponds, braided river channels, and barrier islands.

By volume, it is the 10th largest river in the U.S. When this volume of fresh water flows into salty seawater, the tides are complex and can be unsafe for vessels to navigate.

Due to the rich sediments brought by the river, wildlife is abundant. Among the habitat's many residents is the world-famous Copper River salmon, a delicacy that supports a major fishing industry in the nearby town of Cordova, and millions of migrating shorebirds that pass through every year, many remaining to breed in the rich wetlands.

The map below shows the location and major features of two of the new GRS:



New executive committee elected at May Board meeting

The Council held its annual Board meeting in Valdez, Alaska, on May 7-8, 2026. Among other business, the Board convened to elect officers who will serve from May 2026 to May 2027. The elected executive committee is comprised of:

- President: Robert Archibald, representing the City of Homer
- Vice President: Amanda Bauer, representing the City of Valdez
- Treasurer: Mako Haggerty, representing the Kenai Peninsula Borough
- Secretary: Jim Herbert, representing the Oil Spill Region Recreational Coalition
- Three Members-at-Large:
 - Robert Beedle, representing Cordova District Fishermen United
 - David Janka, representing the City of Cordova
 - Aimee Williams, representing the Kodiak Island Borough

New members join Board of Directors

The Board seated two new members in 2026. In January, Lois Epstein was seated to replace Bob Shavelson as the representative of the Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition. Epstein is a licensed professional engineer and President of LNE Engineering and Policy, a consulting firm in Anchorage.

In May, the Council seated Ailie Baker. Baker is an Executive Operations Specialist with the Chugach Alaska Corporation. She recently earned a Master's in Business Administration from the University of Alaska Anchorage.



Robert Archibald



Amanda Bauer



Mako Haggerty



Jim Herbert



Robert Beedle



David Janka



Aimee Williams



Lois Epstein



Ailie Baker

More about the officers and new members on our website: www.tinyurl.com/2026-Execs

Kodiak community engages with on-water oil spill response training

One of the Council's most popular community events finally made it to Kodiak. Since 2016, the Council has sponsored tours of the annual oil spill training for regional fishing crews, rotating through communities in the Exxon Valdez oil spill region.

Alyeska's Ship Escort Response Vessel System, or SERV, contracts with local vessels and crews to respond in the event of an oil spill from Prince William Sound's oil transportation industry. SERV coordinates annual spill response exercises and trainings in multiple Southcentral Alaska communities, including Kodiak, to ensure the mariners are ready to respond.

In April, the Kodiak community was invited to join the Council on a tour of the training to see how local vessel operators would use the oil spill response equipment if a spill threatened Kodiak. Over 40 members of the public came out to the event, including students from the Kodiak High School and Kodiak College.

Attendees learned about oil spill response technology, tactics, safety, and the role of local

vessels in protecting regional resources. Narrators from both the Council and Alyeska were on hand to describe the activities so that participants could better understand the training.

"I was definitely interested in increasing my knowledge of what could happen on the Island and anything I can do to help prevent something happening to our environment," noted attendee Alicia Flores. "Having local people involved is important. This is where we live – where we enjoy fishing and recreational activities. We want to keep this for future generations; to keep it as it was before we got here."

Alyeska's contracted fishing fleet is the backbone of their world-class oil spill response system. A major lesson of the Exxon Valdez oil spill was that incorporating local mariners into

the spill response system helps ensure a quick, efficient, and effective response. Kodiak mariners have the most intimate knowledge of, and connection to, the waters in and around Kodiak.

The Council conducts programs like this to help communities understand the importance of oil spill prevention and why the Council advocates for the most robust response strategies ahead of a spill.



**Maia
Draper-Reich**
Outreach
Coordinator



Mike Day of Alyeska explains the Buster oil spill boom system to Kodiak residents. This Council event helps keep communities informed on what oil spill prevention and response measures are in place in Prince William Sound and downstream communities, especially those involving their local fishers.

**Thank you to our partners,
Alyeska/SERV and Kodiak
National Wildlife Refuge
Visitors Center, for helping
to support this event!**

New book illustrates safeguards in Prince William Sound

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Council's Executive Director. "It can be challenging to get people interested in oil spill prevention, because the public doesn't see all the activities and hard work that goes into keeping oil out of the water."

Why does Prince William Sound have such a world-class system?

In Prince William Sound a quiet day is a good day. The Sound is home to one of the best maritime oil spill prevention and response systems in the world.

Personnel are on alert to prevent another disaster like the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill and ready to respond if prevention measures fail.

But this system didn't just appear out of nowhere. Alaskans learned hard lessons in 1989. The region was not prepared when the Exxon Valdez tanker struck Bligh Reef, spilling at least 11 million gallons of crude oil into Prince William Sound.

Changes to the system

After the disaster, Alaskans changed the laws governing oil spill response in Alaska. Local citizens, industry, and regulators worked together to reshape and update the system.

Today, in addition to a robust spill prevention system, the industry must have enough equipment and trained personnel ready to respond quickly to an Exxon Valdez-sized spill.

The story about how this system came together is documented in a Council report:

www.tinyurl.com/Spill-Prevention-PWS

Where to find the book

The Council is providing free copies of the book for residents of the Exxon Valdez oil spill region (one per household while supplies last) during community visits throughout the year.

Download a free e-book and check for upcoming community visits on the Council's website:

www.pwsrcc.org/protectors

Crestodina's other books can be found in bookstores or purchased through his website:

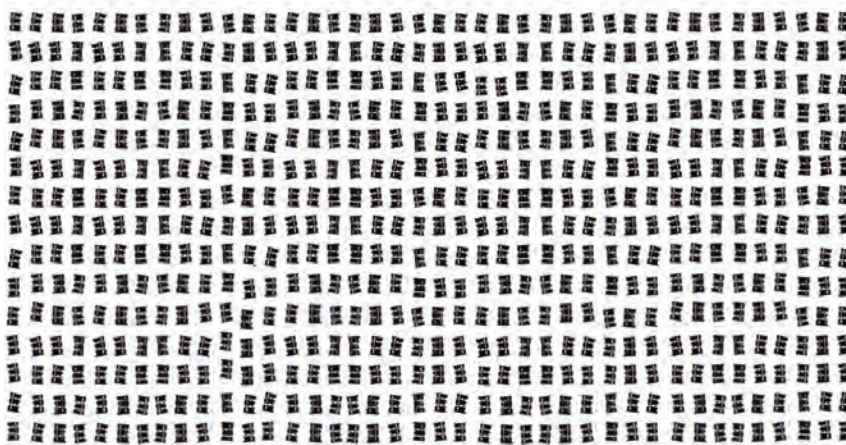
thescow.bigcartel.com



1989: **Storage for cleanup:** When Exxon Valdez spilled its oil, there was not enough capacity to store recovered oil and the contaminated water.

In 1989, storage capacity was about 500,000 gallons. Today there is room for over 25 million gallons.

Today:



Scientist cultivates environmental education opportunities

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assigned according to the faculty member's area of research.

"The way that my funding works, it's whatever the students want to do. So, we have projects all over the place," she says. "Usually they gear towards marine biology, but we've also had one on science communication, a social science project, a project about law, invasive deer, a GIS project. It's interesting."

Glazier's students present their projects at an annual research symposium at the college. This

May was the symposium's fourth year.

"We had a lot more student posters than we had in the beginning," Glazier says.

"This past year, three of the research students focused on an invasive slug." The slug is a recent invader into the Valdez area. The students focused on different aspects, including genetics, ecology, and a scientific illustration poster that incorporated Alaska Native cultural arts.

"That flexibility in their projects makes it that much more interesting."

Council recertified by U.S. Coast Guard

The Council is recertified for another year as the citizens' advisory group for Prince William Sound. Official notification came from the U.S. Coast Guard in late June. While the Council usually receives this notice in March, the government shutdown earlier this year delayed the process. The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 requires the Council to be recertified annually to ensure that its responsibilities have been met. Every three years, the recertification is opened for public comment.

Annual spill reports help track history of preparedness

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Polar Tankers, responders had to react to real weather reports, including tides and currents. Incorporating real weather and forecasts provided a chance to respond to a different set of challenges because the weather in the Gulf of Alaska would have hindered the response vessels coming from Prince William Sound.

More exercises during low visibility needed

The Council's annual reports also track issues that remain unaddressed. One of these concerns is conducting exercises in low-visibility situations. Alaska's latitude and climate mean visibility is reduced a lot of the year. In winter, daylight is short and weather conditions can bring thick fog, increasing the likelihood of responders encountering a low visibility situation during a real event. The last time an exercise was held during darkness was over five years ago.

Testing changes to contingency plans

Drills and exercises aren't just an opportunity to practice techniques. They are also important to verify that plans will work as intended. Several new contingency plans were submitted recently and details in these plans should be tested.

This report is available on our website:
www.tinyurl.com/Drill-Report-2025

The Council received many letters of support from organizations, agencies, businesses, Native corporations, and members of the public during the recertification process. The new recertification expires February 28, 2027. At that time, the Council is scheduled to undergo the streamlined version of recertification. The next public comment period will be held in 2029. Copies of the Council's application for recertification or letters of support received can be obtained by contacting Brooke Taylor.

Local knowledge incorporated into proposed spill response plans for Copper River Delta

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plans built off previous efforts where applicable, incorporating new information and ideas.

One innovation is the use of existing fishing tender anchorages as response hubs. Tenders are vessels that anchor near fishing areas to accept fish on behalf of a fish processor, allowing commercial fishing vessels to quickly return to work.

"Response in the area would be challenging, but not impossible. It was really rewarding to build from old plans, have conversations with a wide group of stakeholders, and advance planning and preparedness in the area," says Jeremy Robida, project manager for the Council.

Due to the Council's focus on spills from oil transportation through Prince William Sound, the workgroup focused on a hypothetical spill from a tanker in the Gulf of Alaska, with oil migrating into the area.

The finished products, developed through the workgroup, have been provided to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and will go before the Prince William Sound Area Committee to be considered for formal approval in the near future.

This report is available on our website:
www.tinyurl.com/CRDF-GRS-2026

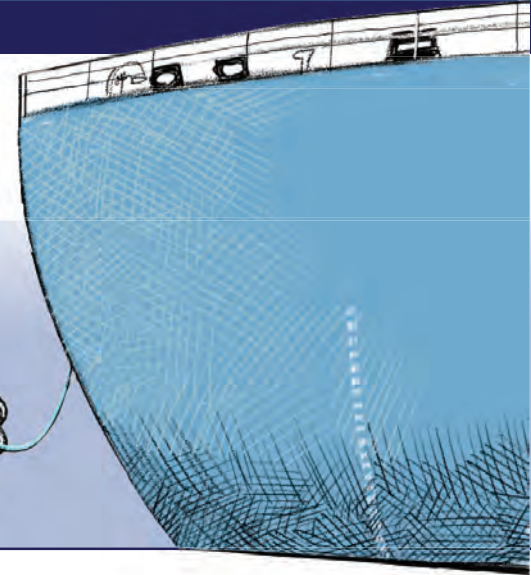
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We love feedback! Please send us your comments or questions to: newsletter@pwsrccac.org

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND REGIONAL CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

Citizens promoting the environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers



Who we are

The Council is a federally mandated, independent nonprofit corporation formed after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill to minimize the environmental impacts of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System's terminal and tanker fleet.

A voice for citizens: The Council is a voice for the people, communities, and interest groups in the region oiled by the Exxon Valdez spill.

Those with the most to lose from oil pollution must have a voice in the decisions that can put their livelihoods and communities at risk.

What we do

Combatting complacency: Investigations into the Exxon Valdez oil spill found that complacency on the part of industry and the government contributed to the accident. The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 mandated independent, nonprofit, citizen oversight councils for Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet.

We combat the complacency that led to the 1989 spill by fostering partnerships among the oil industry, government, and local communities in addressing environmental concerns.

More about the Council and its history at:
www.pwsrccac.org/about

Upcoming Council meetings

The next meeting of the Council's Board of Directors will be held September 17 & 18, 2026, in Whittier.

Board meetings are open to the public and an opportunity for public comments is provided at the beginning of each meeting.

Meetings are streamed online. Details on our website:
www.pwsrccac.org

Image credits:

The hand-drawn illustrations in this edition of The Observer were created by Tom Crestodina, in partnership with the Council, for the new book "Protectors of Prince William Sound." You can find more of Tom's work on his website:

thescow.bigcartel.com

Page 2: Amanda Glazier. Photo courtesy of Amanda Glazier.

Page 6: Satellite image of Copper River Delta and Flats courtesy of NASA (images.nasa.gov).

Page 8: Oil spill training by Donna Schantz.

Board of Directors

The Council's member entities are communities and interest groups affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill:

Alaska State Chamber of Commerce
Community of Chenega • Chugach Alaska Corporation
City of Cordova • City of Homer • City of Kodiak
City of Seldovia • City of Seward • City of Valdez
City of Whittier • Community of Tatitlek
Cordova District Fishermen United
Kenai Peninsula Borough • Kodiak Island Borough
Kodiak Village Mayors Association
Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition
Oil Spill Region Recreational Coalition
Port Graham Corp. • Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp.

Advisory Committees

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

Our committees provide an avenue for public participation in the Council's work.

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

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

Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC): 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.

Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR): OSPR works to minimize the risk and impacts associated with oil transportation through research, advice, and recommendations for strong and effective spill prevention and response measures, contingency planning, and regulations.

Information and Education Committee (IEC): IEC supports the Council's mission by fostering public awareness, responsibility, and participation in the Council's activities through information and education.

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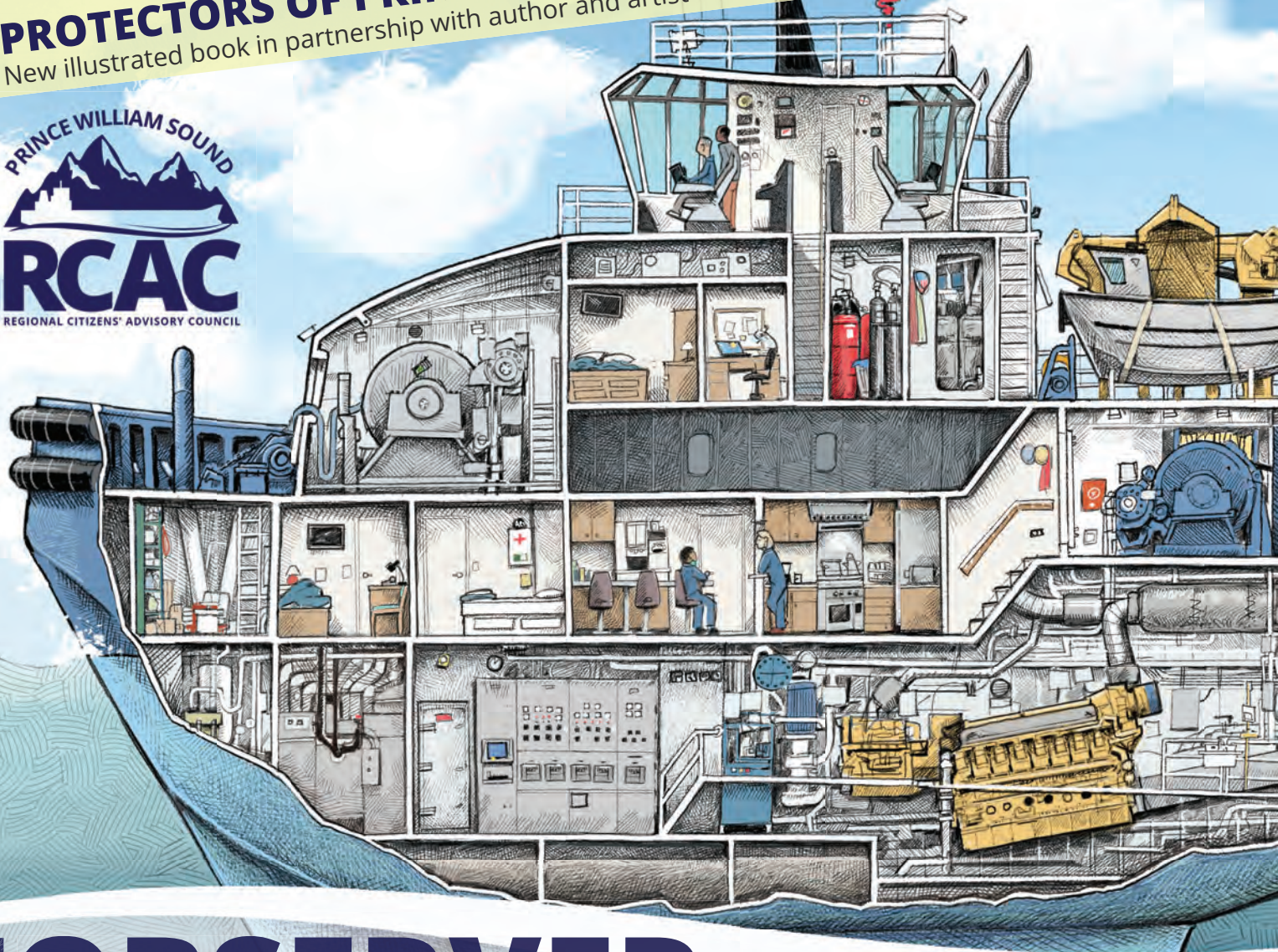
A publication of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

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PROTECTORS OF PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

New illustrated book in partnership with author and artist Tom Crestodina - see page 1



THE OBSERVER

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- And more...

Tug illustration by Tom Crestodina from the new book "Protectors of Prince William Sound."

Alaska State Chamber of Commerce - Chenega - Chugach Alaska Corp - Cordova
Cordova District Fishermen United - Homer - Kenai Peninsula Borough - Kodiak - Kodiak Island Borough - Kodiak Village Mayors
Association - Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition - Oil Spill Region Recreational Coalition - Port Graham Corp
Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp - Seldovia - Seward - Tatitlek - Valdez - Whittier