THE OBSERVER

Summer 2025

GAO report looks at Joint Pipeline Office

A new report from the Government Accountability Office, or GAO, examines the current status of the Joint Pipeline Office, or JPO.

The JPO is a group of six federal and six state agencies that oversee various parts of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System. The office was formed after the Exxon Valdez oil spill by the Bureau of Land Management and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources to coordinate oversight between the 12 agencies. The last time the GAO reviewed the JPO was in 1995.

In 2023, Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan asked the GAO to conduct the assessment. They specifically asked the GAO to examine the current structure of the organization; how the organization has changed over time; whether the group effectively collaborates to ensure the safety of the pipeline and terminal; and whether the organization has sufficient personnel, resources, and authority to complete its mission.

The Senators' request came about after a Council-sponsored report found that, among other issues, there had been a reduction in oversight of the terminal in recent years.

"We've just begun reviewing the GAO's report and its recommendations," says Donna Schantz, executive director for the Council. "We are extremely appreciative of the efforts of Senators Murkowski and Sullivan for requesting this report."

The JPO: Then and now

"Since its formation in 1990 in response to the Exxon Valdez oil spill, JPO has played a critical role in overseeing the 800-mile pipeline and marine terminal that comprise the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System," the GAO's report says.

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Two years later: Has safety at Alyeska improved?

Alyeska's response yields many improvements although concerns remain

A 2023 Council report identified some serious safety risks at Alyeska's Valdez Marine Terminal. Since that time, the Council has been monitoring the actions taken by Alyeska to improve the work culture and more effectively promote an atmosphere of safety. Many areas have improved over the last two years. Some improvements are still in process and some areas of concern remain.

The 2023 report raised concerns about whether the terminal was operating safely and in compliance with regulations. The report was authored by Billie Pirner Garde, a national expert on safety culture for work environments in energy industries. In the report,

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PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND RCAC
REGIONAL CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

Volunteer Spotlight:

Where physics meets the sea

W. Scott Pegau wasn't born in Alaska, but it's the place that feels like home.

When Pegau was a kid, his family moved to Alaska so his dad could attend the University of Alaska Fairbanks, or UAF. His dad was later hired by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, so the family stayed.

After graduating from high school in Nome, Pegau joined the Navy for 6 years, then headed to his dad's alma mater, UAF, and later Oregon State University for graduate school. Pegau chose to major in physics.

"I avoided the natural sciences," Pegau says. "So we both got a good laugh, because when I did come back up to Alaska, I was hired as a fisheries biologist."

His journey from physics to fisheries is what makes his background particularly helpful in his role as a member of the Council's Scientific Advisory Committee.

Atmospheric physics to ocean physics

For a while after undergrad, Pegau worked with atmospheric models at UAF's Geophysical Institute. He liked the work but found that he missed being close to the ocean. He also found himself interested in the physics of light.

He combined these interests in a Ph.D. in oceanography from Oregon State University, where he focused on how light interacts with ocean water. He also studied how to use remote sensing technologies to gather ocean data.

He uses the colors of the sky and the ocean to explain how light can provide information. Blue light waves scatter across the atmosphere when they encounter particles.

"So when you look up, you see blue."

He says sunrises and sunsets appear red because red light waves make it far enough into the atmosphere to reach the clouds. Pegau says the ocean appears blue for a different reason.

"Blue light has the greatest chance of reflecting back out of the water because it's least absorbed."

He says the light interacts differently according to what's in the water. Particles or features in the water such as sediments or plankton can be identified by examining how light waves are reflected or absorbed.

"Each particle has a different kind of scattering characteristic," he says. "If you're trying to figure out how light transmits through the ocean, you're trying to put those two things together: How is it being absorbed and how is it being scattered?"

Over the years, he traveled all over the northern hemisphere studying the optical properties of the oceans and looking at remote sensing methods to gain more understanding of the ocean, its currents, and inhabitants.

North to Alaska

In the early 2000s, he came back to a job at Homer's Kachemak Bay Research Reserve. Finally settling in Cordova, he has coordinated and managed research projects for the Oil Spill Recovery Institute for the last 18 years.

Born out of the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the institute funds research projects that improve oil spill response and seeks to better understand spills' impacts to people and wildlife.

He's also authored or co-authored papers on topics including remote sensing of spilled oil, the circulation of ocean currents, and the effects of crude oil on herring. The herring fishery in Prince William Sound disappeared a few years after the Exxon Valdez oil spill and has never fully recovered.

As he now prepares to retire, he's excited to finish up a study on how the atmosphere and ocean conditions affect herring populations.

"I've really wanted to work on this particular project," Pegau says. "I'm trying to determine what makes for a good herring year. Different factors come into play. Are the winds holding the larvae near the shore? Is the food the right size or the

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Pegau is a member of the Council's Scientific Advisory Committee, a group of scientists and citizens promoting the environmentally safe operation of the terminal and tankers through independent scientific research, environmental monitoring, and review of scientific work.

Study estimates emissions from 2022 incident

A new Council report contains an estimate of crude oil vapors emitted during an incident at the Valdez Marine Terminal in 2022.

Damage from snow and ice during winter 2021-2022

Over the winter of 2021 to 2022, excessive snow and ice built up on top of the vast tanks that store crude oil at the terminal, damaging the pressure vacuum vents on many of the tanks. In some cases, the vents were completely sheared off. These vents control the internal tank pressures, preventing dangerous overpressure or vacuum conditions.

During normal tank operations, the internal tank pressure can vary. Oil levels inside the tanks increase or decrease, and other factors such as sunlight heating the tanks can affect the internal pressure.

When the tank vapor pressures get too high, the vents can open and release those vapors to the atmosphere. They also prevent too much oxygen from entering the tanks, which could lead to a fire or explosion.

Damage to the vents led to concerns about the release of crude oil vapors into the surrounding atmosphere and other dangers.

Evaluating the impact

In incidents like these, precise emission volumes are difficult to measure. However, estimates can be calculated using key data points. Last year, the Council hired Dr. Ron Sahu, a nationally respected expert in air quality and engineering, to do just that. By gaining a better understanding of the volume of emissions that was released, the Council hoped to better understand the potential effects on the environment of Port Valdez or nearby residents from this incident.

The Council provided Dr. Sahu with documents from Alyeska and data from the State of Alaska, acquired via public records requests. From these documents, he was able to determine key points such as:

- The number of tank vents that were damaged.
- The extent of damage to individual vents.
- The time period between when the damages were discovered until vent repairs were made and when pressure management of the tanks stopped.
- The amount of oil in each tank.

Dr Sahu also considered ambient conditions such as temperature, among other factors to complete his analysis.

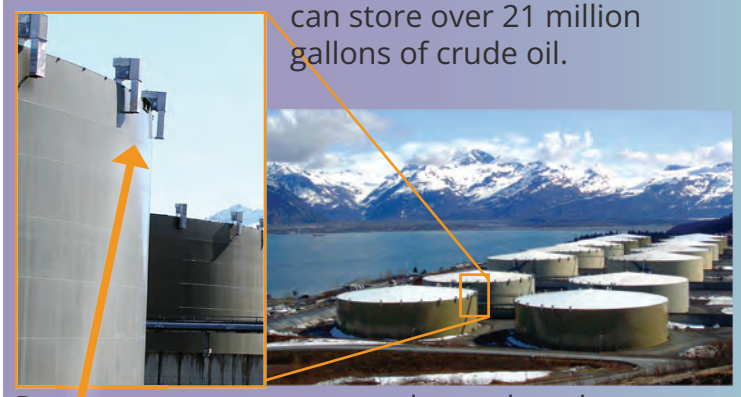
Using special software developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that calculates air pollutant emissions from organic liquid storage tanks, Dr. Sahu conservatively estimated that between 79 to 193 tons of volatile organic compounds and hazardous air pollutants were released into the surrounding atmosphere from February through March 2022. Dr. Sahu emphasizes that his estimate is conservative, and that the total is likely higher. Among other factors, he only accounted for losses when the oil levels were not changing in the tanks.

He also provided input on Alyeska's response to the incident, including areas to improve safety.

Alyeska disagrees with the estimate

Dr. Sahu used the best information that was available to the Council at the time of the report's release. In preliminary feedback provided by Alyeska, they disagreed with the report's calculations, noting that they believe the total emissions to be lower. The Council has requested additional information on what Alyeska believes to be inaccurate; however, Alyeska has so far declined to provide any more feedback, limiting the Council's ability to address their concerns.

Oil is stored in tanks until it can be loaded onto ships for transport. Each of the storage tanks can store over 21 million gallons of crude oil.



Pressure vacuum vents are located on the outside edge of the roof on each tank.

The full report details Dr. Sahu's calculations and how he arrived at his conclusions:
www.tinyurl.com/Emissions-Vent-Damage

From the Executive Director:

Preventing oil spills requires strong safeguards, oversight, and information

I was reminded recently that when the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, or OPA 90, was voted on by Congress after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, it passed unanimously by both the House and the Senate. That kind of bipartisan support and unity is hard to image today, yet it is only when we set our differences aside and work together to find common ground that true and lasting change is made – for the good of all.

The Council's mandates under OPA 90 include fostering long-term partnerships with government and industry. The Act specifically states, "...only when local citizens are involved in the process will the trust develop that is necessary to change the present system from confrontation to consensus."

While the Council strives to build and maintain positive relationships with industry and regulators, the nature of our mission is to observe, ask questions, verify information, provide advice, and push for the highest level of transparency and safeguards. This has led to some uncomfortable conversations and recommendations over the years, and continues to this day. But, respectful disagreement is a cornerstone to addressing issues.

With that said, when information is withheld from citizens, trust is broken. If we look into issues and are told we don't have all the facts, or that we have gotten something wrong, we are open to further examining and reevaluating our findings and conclusions based on the new information. However, we can't correct any perceived inaccuracies unless we are provided what is needed. Improving the Council's access to data and information necessary to fulfill our federally mandated role is the only way we can move forward together and work collaboratively with our industry and regulatory partners.

Another uncomfortable reality is the continued, and now escalating, federal budget cuts. The Council has raised concerns for years about reduced budgets, staffing, and resources at the agencies that oversee the Trans Alaska Pipeline System, including the Valdez Marine Terminal. Recent cuts to science and research budgets based on what is being characterized as an excessive and burdensome regulatory environment has concerned and alarmed many academics, researchers, and conservationists - as well as local citizens in our region. All of these concerns increase the risk of a major oil spill.

Donna Schantz
Executive Director

When we have comprehensive and consistent regulatory oversight, at both the federal and state level, along with citizen involvement, we create an environment that promotes development and ensures it is done safely. At a time when the U.S. is trying to unleash the full potential of American energy, we should be working to support a balanced approach for these agencies in their work, not cutting and decimating them.

All of this makes the work of the Council, and the need for all parties to work together on solutions, more important than ever. We need to be willing to have the uncomfortable conversations, respectfully and inclusively, and ensure there is adequate information to understand all impacts in the interest of safe transportation of oil through our region. We owe this to all those that suffered after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, and to those who would suffer if another similar disaster were to happen. We must be strong in the face of adversity. Only together – government, industry, and citizens – can we protect our resources, economies, communities, and environment, as was envisioned when OPA 90 was unanimously endorsed.

From Alyeska:

An interview with Atigun Lifetime Achievement winner, Gregory Tang

Each year, Alyeska leaders select Atigun Award recipients, which recognize employees, contractors, and teams who stand out for their exceptional contributions and dedication on the Trans Alaska Pipeline System, or TAPS. In 2025, Valdez Lab technician Greg Tang won the Lifetime Achievement award. In his 48 years on TAPS, Greg's integrity, attention to detail, and continued desire to learn has made him an asset at Alyeska. After graduating from Hong Kong's Aberdeen Technical School, Greg moved to Alaska, where he started a summer job as a TAPS contractor in 1975 as a lab technician. A year later, he took a senior role in the lab and continued building his skillset and accountabilities. Throughout his career, Greg, now a Field Science Technician, has embodied a selfless dedication to Alyeska, and is quick to share knowledge with fellow lab technicians and work groups.

Greg recently shared some of his experiences on TAPS, and what's kept him around longer than oil has been flowing through the pipeline.

How did you feel when you heard you won this award?

Very surprised, totally unexpected, and humbled. When [Alyeska President and CEO] John Kurz called me to tell me about this, I first thought that he might want to ask me questions about a project that I nominated for an Atigun award. I am honored and grateful to be working with an amazing group of professionals and the "lab rats" in the lab.

2025: Tang collecting samples.

What is your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of the job is doing the Port Valdez Environmental Monitoring sampling on the response boat Valdez Star, and the mussel sampling in 2017.

Do you have a favorite day on TAPS? Tell us about it!

Yes, the most memorable day was July 28, 1977, when the first barrel of Alaska North Slope crude oil arrived at the terminal at 11:02 p.m. The City of Valdez threw a big street party to celebrate the following day. The Valdez 'Oil In' celebration was captured by international news media and broadcast around the world. My parents watched the news event on TV in Hong Kong. They called me and told me that they had watched the news, saw what Valdez looked like, and knew I was there celebrating and was part of the success story. It was a proud family moment and validated that my decision to move to Alaska was a right one. It was like the early version of #TAPSPride.

1992: Tang works in the lab at Alyeska.

Is there anyone you'd like to recognize who has helped you along the way or supports your work?

There are many people who had helped me over the years (most of them had already retired) – from the Fluor engineers during the Valdez Marine Terminal construction, my mentors at the analyzer and instrument and electrical group, Ballast Water Treatment operators and staff during my time there, and most of all to my current Analytical Laboratory Services, or ALS, supervisor, Bob Carson, and my ALS colleagues. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to work with great teams and a world class organization.

Responders perform well overall in drills in 2024

Many of the drills and exercises conducted by the industry last year went well, according to the latest drill summary released by the Council. During the 14 drills and exercises observed in 2024, responders were generally well-practiced and activities went smoothly. The summary report also contains suggestions for future exercises.

Tanker spill exercise

In October, Marathon Petroleum conducted a large exercise, simulating a spill of almost 3 million gallons of crude oil from a tanker into central Prince William Sound.

One goal of the exercise was to test how well responders transitioned command of the response from Alyeska's Ship Escort Response Vessel System, or SERVS, to Marathon. Part of SERVS' role in an oil spill is to initiate and manage the response activities until the company that owns the tanker arrives on the scene.

"The transition from Alyeska to Marathon was very well done," says Roy Robertson, drill monitor for the Council. "The Marathon team members took the time to shadow SERVS' team before the transition to learn the system and processes that are unique to our region."

"Marathon also kept most of SERVS' team around to provide support which has not always been done in the past," Robertson added.

A wildlife expert teaches Council staff members Donna Schantz and Joe Lally how to clean crude oil from an otter. A stuffed toy otter is used in these training sessions.

Terminal spill exercises

In 2024, Alyeska conducted several exercises that simulated a spill from the terminal. During one of these, Alyeska set up its new units for treating oiled wildlife such as otters and birds. These units contain state of the art equipment and can be set up quickly in the event of a spill.

Polar Tankers conducted emergency towing exercises

Polar Tankers led the pack in tanker towing exercises. The industry is required to perform one each quarter, although a total of five were conducted in 2024. The Council observed two of the five. Polar Tankers volunteered to conduct three.

"These exercises do add time to the tanker's trip," says Robertson. "But they provide valuable training for the crews."

The report recommends rotating the exercises between the various shipping companies.

Protecting sensitive areas

Several exercises focused on tactics to keep oil away from shorelines or other areas that are particularly susceptible to damage from oil contamination.

This type of exercise is often held during the annual spill response training for fishing vessel

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Above: Fishing vessels pull boom in a U-shape formation (two vessels are parallel to each other). U-shapes are more often used in combination with a skimmer to collect oil.

Below: Fishing vessels pull boom in a J-shape formation (one vessel ahead of the other). J-shapes guide oil in a certain direction and are often used to deflect oil away from a shoreline or sensitive habitat. J-shapes are now usually performed by tugs.

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crews. The small vessels that participate in these trainings would mostly be used in this capacity in a real incident.

Some areas to improve

The report included suggestions for improving future exercises, including:

- More deployments of the new oil spill response barge, the Allison Creek, which replaced an older barge of the same name last year. The new barge is an improvement, but does have more equipment on its deck.
- Practice response operations during reduced visibility. More than 5 years have elapsed since the last exercise was conducted in low visibility. The escort tugs have special equipment on board that improves responders' ability to spot oil in these conditions.

Additional recommendations available in the full report on our website:
www.tinyurl.com/Drill-Report-2024

GAO report looks at Joint Pipeline Office

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Until 2004, the JPO's oversight activities "focused on producing Comprehensive Monitoring Program Reports, reviewing pipeline projects, preventing and responding to oil spills, preparing for the renewal of the TAPS right-of-way agreement, and responding to Alyeska employee concerns," according to the GAO's report. The group previously shared an office and published reports on its activities, which it no longer does.

The report says that, according to stakeholders, JPO "scaled back" its work due to a decrease in TAPS projects that required oversight. The report also notes that JPO's oversight of TAPS was also impacted by shifts in agency roles.

JPO's current role is unclear

The GAO report notes that the JPO currently functions "as a forum through which participating agencies share information and coordinate activities."

The GAO recommends the JPO would benefit from outlining the intended outcomes of its current activities "including those aiming to inform the public of its oversight efforts." This would "enable JPO agencies to work toward shared goals and ensure accountability."

"Clarifying roles and responsibilities would enhance coordination among JPO agencies and help JPO identify any potential gaps in oversight," according to the GAO.

Unclear duties can leave gaps

The need to identify gaps in regulatory oversight was a significant finding in the Council's 2023 report (see page 1 "Two years later: Has safety at the terminal improved?").

"We are encouraged to see the GAO recommend that the JPO needs to clarify its roles and responsibilities," Schantz said. "The Council had also hoped that the GAO would identify potential gaps in regulatory oversight. Instead, while mentioning that potential gaps are a concern, they have recommended the JPO do this review for gaps themselves."

In its 1995 review, the GAO noted that the JPO's success depends on having adequate staffing and funds over the long term. Government agencies have been experiencing reductions in staffing, budgets, and resources for years, with losses increasing at some federal agencies in recent months. The Council is concerned about the JPO's current capacity to monitor the complex systems at the terminal, along with their ability to follow through on the GAO's recommendations.

"Everyone involved wants to make sure that oil is transported safely in Alaska," Schantz said. "Comprehensive regulatory oversight is of critical importance to help ensure that adequate safety systems are in place to prevent devastating events from occurring. This also supports industry and their desire to increase energy development by providing consistency and timely guidance.

The GAO's report is available on their website:
www.tinyurl.com/GAO-Report-PWS

Community Corner:

Renewed Kodiak Connections

In April, Project Manager Danielle Verna and I were able to fly out to visit Ouzinkie, Alaska, thanks to clear weather and Council Board member Elijah Jackson. Jackson, who is the Kodiak Island community's Mayor and Village Public Safety Officer, hosted us for a day connecting with community members of all ages.

First, we stopped by the Ouzinkie School, which has two small mixed-age classroom groups: Kindergarten-5th grade and 6th-12th grade. We spent time with each class teaching our Critter Clean Up lesson, a hands-on activity that allows students to learn about wildlife clean up during an oil spill. We discussed the Exxon Valdez oil spill, why the Council exists, and the work that we do. Then, the students experimented with different cleaning solutions using a faux bird feather to learn about the challenges of caring for oiled wildlife. The students had excellent questions and drew connections to their coastal community and the wildlife that live there.

Midday, the Council co-hosted a community reception at the Tribal Cultural Center with the City of Ouzinkie through Mayor Jackson and his staff. We shared some of the Council's written materials and publications. Over lunch, which was provided by the Council for those who stopped by, Danielle and I chatted with community members sharing specific Council projects, hearing experiences from the Exxon Valdez spill, and learning their concerns about community preparedness for future spills. Community members were particularly curious about the spill equipment staged in Ouzinkie and logistics for using it during a spill.

We also had time to walk along the waterfront boardwalk, and visit with Mayor Jackson and his staff at the city's office building. One of the city employees is a cat - in charge of pest control for the office.

Maia Draper-Reich
Outreach Coordinator

In addition to our day in Ouzinkie, while in Kodiak, the Council hosted a booth at ComFish Alaska 2025, a commercial fishing trade show held every year. The event also features a series of forums and presentations including discussions with Alaska's federal and state legislators. At the booth, Board members Aimee Williams, who represents the Kodiak Island Borough, and Wayne Donaldson, who represents the City of Kodiak, connected with Kodiak community members sharing the Council's work. We heard stories from community members involved in aftermath of the Exxon Valdez oil spill and the formation of the regional citizens advisory councils in Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet.

I am grateful to be able to connect with our downstream community members, to share information and to hear their perspectives, including with the next generation of stewards of these lands and waters.

The village of Ouzinkie has about 125 year-round residents, mostly of Alutiiq/Sugpiaq ancestry.

Pilot test evaluates testing methods for buried liners

How do you detect damage underground? The Council, Alyeska, and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, or ADEC, have been trying to answer that question. The results from a recent pilot test are providing direction to help ensure that oil will not leak through the secondary containment liners under the storage tanks at the Valdez Marine Terminal.

Finding flaws in an underground liner

Last summer, Alyeska conducted a pilot test for locating damage in the special asphalt liners that surround the crude oil storage tanks at the terminal.

The liners are part of a system surrounding the tanks that is designed to prevent oil from leaking into the environment. The liners are difficult to examine because they are buried under several feet of earthen fill. Digging them up for inspection is expensive, time-consuming, and historically has caused damage.

Since the liners were installed nearly 50 years ago, only a small percentage has ever been uncovered and evaluated for damage. When sections have been uncovered, holes or cracks have been found about 19% of the time.

Both Alyeska and the Council have been looking for a method that can determine whether there are cracks or faults in the liner, and if so, where they are located, without having to dig, per requirements set by ADEC.

Results from pilot test

Of the methods that were tested last July, electrical leak location was determined to be the most feasible. This type of survey is done by applying electric currents to the ground outside the liner and measuring electric currents on the surface of the fill inside the liner. A solid liner would block the currents. Holes or cracks would allow the current to flow through. The currents that flow through the liner can be detected from the surface, allowing technicians to create a map of damaged areas.

Further analysis to come

Alyeska conducted this pilot test in preparation for a larger-scale test. When approving the last update to Alyeska's oil spill contingency plan, ADEC placed a condition on the plan's approval, requiring that Alyeska conduct further analysis of the liner. The timeline for these additional tests is yet to be determined.

How much of the liner needs to be tested?

The Council hired Dr. Craig Benson, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Dr. Joe Scalia, Associate Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Colorado State University, to weigh in on the pilot test results. They determined that when the large-scale testing is done, at least 20% of the liner needs to be examined to be able to confidently estimate the frequency and size range of defects in the liner.

The report on the pilot test is available on our website:
www.tinyurl.com/Liner-Testing-VMT

Upcoming Council meetings

The next meeting of the Council's Board of Directors will be held on September 18 & 19 in Cordova.

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 and available to the public. Details on our website: www.pwsrcac.org

Left: Cordova's Fisherman's Memorial stands watch over the harbor.

Two years later: Has safety at Alyeska improved?

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Garde made a series of recommendations aimed at improving the situation.

Alyeska's efforts to improve

When the report was first released, the Council was encouraged by its reception. Alyeska President John Kurz spoke to the Council and said that he and Alyeska's executive team were taking the report seriously.

Alyeska formed an internal team to follow up and develop a plan to address the issues.

"Alyeska has engaged in a substantial amount of work to address the recommendations directed towards them," says Donna Schantz, executive director for the Council.

Auditors reviewed worker safety and processes at the Valdez Marine Terminal

Alyeska conducted internal reviews and contracted with a third party to audit various factors that affect safety at the terminal.

Auditors compared the current safety system with federal requirements for "process safety management." OSHA developed this set of standards to help industries safely manage the hazards of working with highly hazardous chemicals. This guidance helps recognize, evaluate, and control risks that could occur while working with hazardous materials.

The auditors identified some areas of improvement in Alyeska's systems. Alyeska reported that corrective actions have been taken, and there are currently no outstanding audit findings. They also worked on better aligning their documentation regarding process safety management, including the creation of a compliance manual, and conducted additional training.

Alyeska also reviewed their deferred maintenance backlog. Among other issues, Alyeska improved how they evaluate risks associated with work orders. This ensures that higher-risk orders are identified appropriately. Alyeska has prioritized existing work orders and is monitoring any past due and upcoming commitments.

A few issues still remain. A review of human factors was conducted, and a program to help address and mitigate human-related accidents is still being developed. Alyeska also continues to review and assess recommended practices for establishing safety systems.

Alyeska working to encourage culture of safety

Garde's report recommended mandatory training for supervisors to encourage a stronger safety culture. Alyeska has completed that training.

Alyeska also reported that they continue to develop and improve their employee concerns program. The success of that effort is yet to be determined.

Updated recommendations

Garde recently developed some additional recommendations. Among those, she recommended the Council develop a set of performance indicators that would serve as an objective measure for comparison when talking to Alyeska about concerns.

Remaining concerns

Though many of the safety issues have been addressed, the Council still has concerns: Alyeska has lost key staff with extensive institutional knowledge in recent months; gaps in regulatory oversight and monitoring remain unaddressed; and the Council and contractor Billie Garde continue to receive reports from employees concerned about safety issues.

Volunteer Spotlight: Where physics meets the sea

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right type for the larvae?"

Volunteering for the Council

Pegau has been an ex officio member of the Council for many years as part of his work for the institute. He joined the Scientific Advisory Committee this past year, answering the committee's call for an oceanographer.

He says he's always appreciated the committee's commitment to good science. He says their work is important for keeping Prince William Sound safe from spilled oil.

"If you want to protect resources, you better have good information."

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.pwsrcac.org/about

Photo credits:

Cover: The sun setting on the Cordova harbor by Linda Robinson.
Page 1, top: Alyeska responders practicing maneuvers in front of the Valdez Marine Terminal by Nelli Vanderburg.
Page 2: W. Scott Pegau, courtesy of W. Scott Pegau.
Page 3: Storage tanks by Amanda Johnson. Closeup of vents by Nelli Vanderburg.
Page 5: Greg Tang courtesy of Alyeska Corporate Communications.
Page 6: Drill and exercise photos by Roy Robertson.
Page 8: Ouzinkie by Maia Draper-Reich.
Page 9: Fisherman's Memorial by Amanda Johnson.
Page 11: Responders practicing deploying oil spill boom and a skimmer during an exercise by Jeremy Robida.

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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.

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

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