

Briefing for PWSRCAC Board of Directors – January 2021

INFORMATION ITEM

Sponsor: Joe Lally
Project number and name or topic: Barry Arm Landslide and Tsunami Risks Presentation

1. **Description of agenda item:** Dave Snider, the Tsunami Warning Coordinator with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Tsunami Warning Center, will be making a presentation to the Board on the current status of Barry Arm landslide risks and early warning preparations being made to protect the City of Whittier in the event of a land or submarine slide in the area.

During the summer of 2020, there were three massive alpine landslides detected in the Sound – something that is historically unusual. These types of failures are not overly dangerous, if they run out onto a glacier. Concurrently, there is concern about the potential of a landslide generated tsunami occurring in Barry Arm near Whittier, Alaska. An unstable mountain slope above the toe of Barry Glacier has the potential to fail and cause a tsunami. This tsunami could pose significant risks to people and property. As an example, a 2015 landslide in Icy Bay, Alaska, generated tsunami with near elevations of 633 feet and 35-foot heights some 15 miles away.

2. **Why is this item important to PWSRCAC:** There is interest in monitoring the geological hazards present in Prince William Sound (PWS) that could pose a risk of landslide induced tsunami. Historically, prior to the construction of the Alyeska Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT), a submarine landslide caused by the Good Friday earthquake of 1964 produced a tsunami that overran the current site of the VMT and rebounded to cause significant loss of life and property damage in old town Valdez.

A project to investigate geological hazards in Prince William Sound that might pose a risk to oil spill prevention and response infrastructure is included in the Council’s proposed FY2022 project list.

3. **Previous actions taken by the Board on this item:** None

6. **Relationship to LRP and Budget:** None at this time.

7. **Action Requested of the Board of Directors:** This is an informational item only.

8. **Attachments:** None.