



The Observer

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AK Chamber of Commerce - AK Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Assoc. - Chugach Alaska Corp. - Cordova District Fishermen United - OSREC - PWS Aquaculture Corp.

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Join one of the council's technical committees – see back page!

Council looking for answers on oil dispersants

The citizens' council has proposed an ambitious multi-stakeholder research process that may answer, once and for all, the question of whether chemical dispersants will work on spilled North Slope crude in Prince William Sound conditions and are safe to use.

While dispersant research has been conducted for decades, much of it has been inconclusive, or has reached opposing conclusions. The confusion is compounded by the fact that much of the research was conducted by firms that make and market the chemicals, rather than by independent scientists, and very little of it was subjected to peer review.

During peer review, scientists who are expert in the relevant field, but not connected with the project, investigate its design, execution and findings to assess its credibility. Thus, research that has not been peer reviewed is of unknown validity.

See page 2, **DISPERSANTS**

New members appointed to serve on the council board and legislative committee

AKodiak fisherman and an Anchorage attorney were seated on the citizens' council board at its September quarterly meeting in Whittier.

Al Burch, long prominent in Alaska commercial fishing issues, will represent the Kodiak Island Borough. He replaces Wayne Coleman, who received a resolution of appreciation from the board for over a decade's service on the council.

Burch has fished Alaska's waters for over 40 years and is executive director of the Alaska Druggers Association, a non-profit group representing some 40 Kodiak-based bottomfishing vessels. He said he joined the board because of his belief that it's important to have a fisherman at the table to represent fishing interests.

Dave Marquez will represent the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce. He replaces Carol Fraser, who had served as chamber of commerce

representative since late last year.

Marquez, an Alaskan since 1973, spent his career in the oil industry, working for Arco, Phillips, and Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. until his retirement last year. He said his particular area of interest is cost effectiveness, and he hopes to help the council board understand its role in contributing to the cost of transporting Alaska's oil.

The board also chose its Legislative Affairs Committee for the upcoming session. The members are Dennis Lodge, Jim Nestic, Patience Andersen Faulkner, Jody McDowell, and Dave Marquez.

The committee monitors activity in the state legislature, and recommends action, as needed, to the council board. The committee meets twice a month during session, receiving reports from Juneau

attorney Doug Mertz, the council's legislative monitor.



Al Burch



Dave Marquez

Drill tests response to giant "spill" at terminal

In mid October, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. tested its ability to handle a nightmare scenario: a catastrophic leak from one of the huge crude oil storage tanks at the Valdez Marine Terminal.

The total spill: 535,000 barrels, twice as big as the *Exxon Valdez*. The scenario for the Oct. 16-17 drill had about 155,000 barrels of the spilled oil reaching the waters of Port Valdez. The cause of the imaginary spill was a crane hitting an oil pipe near the storage tanks, according to the Alyeska scenario.

The drill saw activities all over Port Valdez, with the council participating as usual. Council staffers observed activities at Alyeska's waterfront Valdez Emergency Operations Center, where the drill was managed. The council was also present at various sites where on-water and on-land activities took place.

On Oct. 17, Observer editor Stan Jones was assigned to the 500-2 Barge, a floating depot loaded with response equipment, and fitted out with a mini-headquarters where part of the on-water response was managed. The 500-2 was anchored just east of the Alyeska terminal.

Alyeska's Pete LaPella worked the drill on the 500-2. His main job was to dispatch and direct two nearshore task forces that were to work near Allison Point, just west of the terminal. Each task force consisted of two commercial fishing vessels towing a NOFI CurrentBuster booming system.

Shortly before 9 a.m., the fishing vessel *Lady Sandra* backed up to the



The fishing vessel *Lady Sandra* tows a CurrentBuster boom unit to Allison Point to practice oil-skimming operations. Photo by Stan Jones.

500-2 to take off the first CurrentBuster unit, which was stored on the deck of the barge on a giant spool. By 9:25 a.m., another fishing vessel—the *Miss Grande*—pulled away with the second CurrentBuster in tow and soon the two vessels had teamed up with two more vessels and were at work off Allison Point.

One hitch came when one of the task forces reported its CurrentBuster wasn't towing properly. LaPella sent an Alyeska staffer down on a small workboat to check on the problem. It turned out to be a small buoy that had become entangled with the CurrentBuster. It was soon untangled, and normal operation resumed.

Another hitch came in the afternoon when the task forces were ready to offload the imaginary oil collected in the CurrentBusters. The plan was for additional fishing vessels to haul oil

See page 2, **Drill**

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Volunteer Profile

POVTS member from Whittier has spent much of his life on Alaska waters

Pete Heddell has seen and lived a goodly chunk of Alaska history since arriving in the then-territory 60 years ago.

After spending part of his childhood on a homestead near Homer, he worked the fishing industry in pre-statehood, days when fish traps were still legal, and did oil-industry geophysical work on the Kenai Peninsula.

He spent 24 years as an Alaska State Trooper. In 1972, he helped in the unsuccessful search for the downed plane of U.S. Reps. Nick Begich and Hale Boggs. And he was one of the first responders to the scene of the 1978 Anchorage plane crash that killed the wife of Sen. Ted Stevens and injured the senator himself.

During the cleanup of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, shortly after founding Honey Charters, he ferried government officials around Prince William Sound on a 32-foot Nordic tug.

He and his wife, council board member Marilyn Heddell, still run Honey Charters. They started the Whittier-based tour boat business in 1988, shortly after he retired from the Troopers.

And Pete is a volunteer on the council's Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems Committee, usually known as POVTS. What with his wife's service on the council as representative of the city of Whittier, he said, "I was attending a lot of meetings anyway. And with our involvement in the marine transportation industry, I had an interest in POVTS."

Pete Heddell arrived in Alaska at age three in 1942 and the family lived on the Homer-area homestead for the next six years. Then his father took work as a cannery machinist and watchman at



Committee volunteer Pete Heddell runs the charter boat *Qayaq Spirit* out of Whittier. Photo by Stan Jones

Larsen Bay, on Kodiak Island. In the early Fifties, the family moved back to California, where Pete finished high school and took two years of college.

He started coming back to Alaska for summer work in 1956. One of his first jobs was helping set up the fish traps that were a mainstay of Alaska's commercial salmon industry until the devices were banned with the coming of statehood in 1959.

After that, he said, "I transitioned into being a jack of all trades and master of none, like everybody else up here at that time. Anything that came along to earn a buck, that was what you did."

He applied to the Alaska State Troopers – then known as the Alaska State Police – in 1961. But what with

bouncing around Alaska's fisheries to make a living, it took Pete over a year to make it to an interview, and he didn't get on until late 1963.

Like most Troopers, he worked at posts all over the state before his retirement in 1987.

"In those days, we were generalists," he said. "We would respond to everything from homicides to burglaries to somebody's chickens being in somebody else's yard."

His Trooper work put him in position to meet Marilyn, who was a non-uniformed employee of the same department. They married in 1986. As retirement approached, the Heddells had to decide what to do next. They were discussing it one evening when Marilyn

said, "Well, you've been around boats all your life."

That led to the founding of Honey Charters. They considered setting up the business in Homer, Seward, Valdez or Cordova, but decided Whittier made the most sense, for two reasons. One was the opportunity to fill a special niche: hauling kayakers and sightseers. The other was that Whittier was in the backyard of Anchorage, the state's largest population center.

The *Exxon Valdez* spill turned things upside down in the Sound in March of 1989, soon after the launch of their business. Pete hired out their Nordic tug to work the cleanup, and used the proceeds to build an office in Whittier and buy a fast, beachable aluminum boat to improve service to the kayakers and sightseers that make up the core of their clientele. Today Honey Charters has two boats, with another due to enter service next spring.

The Heddells wondered how the September 2001 terror attacks would affect the tourism business, but believe it had little, if any, impact on Honey Charters in the 2002 season.

"Last year was flat, but we were back on track this year," Pete said. "We are actually up, though I understand the tourism business is down elsewhere in the state."

On POVTS, Pete has taken an interest in the things you'd expect of a mariner on the Sound. One example was the development of Alyeska's fleet of escort tugs.

Another is the council project to develop a radar system that can warn of icebergs in the shipping lanes. "That's at the top of the list for right now," he said.

DISPERSANTS: Council calls for test design

The council's proposal: form a multi-stakeholder working group to establish a set of scientific protocols for conducting peer-reviewed research on dispersants.

One part would address how to test dispersant effectiveness in a cold saltwater wave tank, under conditions mimicking as closely as possible those found in Alaska waters. The other part of the protocols would measure the toxicity of dispersed oil to determine its effects on Alaska sealife.

The council presented its plan at a mid-November meeting of the Alaska Regional Response Team, a multi-agency group that advises local, state and federal government on responding to oil spills and other pollution incidents.

"It's definitely time for some research

that addresses all the questions the various stakeholders have and will stand up to scientific review," said John Devens, executive director of the citizens' council. "Our goal, as always, is to be sure dispersants are both safe and effective before they are used in our waters."

The proposal was well-received by the agencies making up the regional response team, and discussions have already taken place between the citizens' council, the Coast Guard and other agencies about the makeup of the working group.

Dispersants work – if they do work – by chemically breaking up floating oil and dispersing it throughout the water column rather than leaving it on top in a slick. However, dispersants may be as toxic as the oil they disperse, raising

the question of whether the environment would be harmed less if the oil were left undispersed.

Effectiveness tests, if eventually performed, could be conducted in a relatively small wave tank in Alaska. Such tanks are available in the Cook Inlet and North Slope oilfields.

Another possibility is the federal Ohmsett oil-spill response test facility in New Jersey. It features a 2.6-million gallon saltwater tank with a wave generator and chilling equipment. It was used earlier this year in dispersant tests co-sponsored by the federal Minerals Management Service and Exxon. However, the research was not peer-reviewed and the council, which sent an observer to the tests, has questioned the validity of the work.

Continued from Page 1

DRILL: Terminal spill response gets a test

skimmers and small storage barges to the Allison Point site to take the recovered oil out of the Current-Busters. But all other fishing boats in the drill were still tied up in other activities, and none could be freed to move the skimmers and barges to Allison Point.

LaPella responded by calling in the *Krystal Sea*, a large landing-craft

type vessel configured for nearshore skimming operations. It moved to Allison Point and began skimming "oil" out of the CurrentBusters.

The drill ended at about 4 p.m., with a wrap-up session in the emergency operations center in Valdez.

Tony Parkin, the council's project manager for drills, gave the exercise good marks in such areas as control-

ling the source of the spill, assembling the team to manage the response and bringing together the federal, and state agencies involved.

"As in all drills and exercises, we had some concerns, such as the estimated volumes of recovered oil being reported," Parkin said. "But overall this was a successful and useful event."

Continued from Page 1



Alyeska's Pete LaPella worked the drill aboard the 500-2 barge, directing nearshore response activities near Allison Point. Photo by Stan Jones, citizens' council.

Kenai tanker incident is reminder of need to address response gap in Sound

By John S. Devens, Ph.D.
Executive Director

In early October, the Prince William Sound escort system proved itself again. When the tanker *Kenai* experienced engine problems at Hinchinbrook Entrance and called for assistance, Alyeska tugs promptly hooked up and conducted the ship to a safe anchorage for repairs.

The captain of the *Kenai* made the right call, and Alyeska took the right measures.

But this successful outcome was somewhat a matter of luck: the weather was mild, with 14-mph winds and 2-foot waves. In weather that developed a few hours later, the outcome might have been different.

The fact is, our escort and response system suffers from a dangerous gap in capability. Tankers legally sail from Valdez in weather so severe that it would be impossible to contain or clean up spilled oil. And there is some doubt that the kind of aid the *Kenai* received would be possible in bad weather.

What kind of weather?

For spill response, the answer is clear. Loaded tankers can sail if the wind at Hinchinbrook is less than 45

knots (about 52 m.p.h.) and the wave height is less than 15 feet.

The industry's oil spill contingency plans, however, specify that cleanup is possible only in winds under 30 knots (about 35 m.p.h.) and waves of less than 10 feet.

When the weather is between those two limits, a loaded tanker can sail but no cleanup response is possible if it spills oil.

Weather at Hinchinbrook is estimated to be in this response gap about 7 percent of the time, equivalent to 26 days out of 365. In other words, for nearly four weeks a year, no immediate cleanup effort would be possible in the event of a spill.

As for tanker rescues, the situation is cloudier but still alarming. As discussed above, loaded tankers can sail if the wind at Hinchinbrook is under 45 knots and waves are under 15 feet.

But could Alyeska rescue a disabled tanker in such conditions? Computer simulations indicate the answer is yes, but Alyeska and the tanker companies

have declined, because of safety concerns, to practice tanker rescues in weather anywhere nearly as severe. And they have never said exactly what conditions they do consider safe for such drills.

No one wants tug or tanker crews to drill in unsafe conditions. But common sense suggests you can't be certain of doing what you don't practice.

In the case of the *Kenai*, mild weather didn't last long. Within about 15 hours, conditions passed the 30/10 threshold and

were in the response gap. Six hours later, weather passed the 45/15 limit at which Hinchinbrook Entrance is closed to tanker travel. If the *Kenai's* departure had been delayed by 18 hours, it is questionable whether the save attempt would have been successful, and it is fairly clear that no immediate cleanup response would have been possible had the tanker spilled oil.

This is unacceptable. Oil shouldn't cross the Sound on those 26 days a year when weather would preclude oil-spill

cleanup and possibly even the tanker save that could forestall another *Valdez*-scale disaster.

Perhaps the tanker closure limits need to be reduced.

Or perhaps, with better technology and training, both tanker saves and cleanup response could be made safe and feasible in worse weather than is now the case.

Or perhaps the traffic rules could be tightened, as follows: "If you are under way when the weather enters the response gap you may continue. But if you are still at the dock, delay your departure until the weather subsides."

But action is clearly needed. We can't call our system the safest possible when it suffers from a gap this large.

Accordingly, we have begun exploring what to do about the situation. Cooperative efforts by citizens, government and industry have resolved numerous safety issues in the Sound – from escort system improvements to ice-detection radar to tanker vapor controls – and we are confident the same kind of cooperation will be able to close this dangerous response gap.



John Devens

How the Prince William Sound escort system resolves the "response gap"

By Greg Jones
Senior Vice President
Operations and Maintenance
Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.

In the past several years Alyeska and its industry partners have dramatically improved the system of preparedness, prevention and response in Prince William Sound. The fleet of escort tugs designed and built to perform ship assist and rescue missions, and to confront the challenging conditions of Prince William Sound, is unsurpassed anywhere in the world. The level of training and communication among tanker crews, marine pilots and escort tug crews sets the standard for oil terminals and ports. Our inventory of oil spill response equipment is the largest anywhere assembled, and the readiness of our response teams is tested on a regular basis under high scrutiny. The interaction among agency and public stakeholders in Prince William Sound is unequalled anywhere. The informed analysis of experts in marine risk management and the hands-on experience of those who operate the equipment have produced periodic improvements to what is already a best-in-class system.

In Prince William Sound people and technology must be capable of operating

this system in a demanding and often hazardous environment. In this environment laden tankers sail in conditions when open water spill response operations are unlikely to succeed. Some argue that this situation presents an unacceptable "response gap."

Industry acknowledges there are limits on effectiveness of on-water mechanical response. This is why the expectations of safe movement of oil through Prince William Sound without spills are achieved not just by response, but by well thought out design, preparedness and prevention measures. The citizens' council has also recognized this, and has been a partner in efforts such as the Prince William Sound Risk Assessment study, and the two conferences on prevention held in Valdez. To suggest that tankers should only be allowed to sail when certain skimming systems can operate is to discount the many ways in which oil spill risk is managed in the Sound – a comprehensive approach that parallels that of other transportation systems.

Some acknowledge our prevention

efforts, but say that a "response gap" exists because drills have not tested the ship casualty and spill prevention measures in place in Prince William Sound under all foreseeable operating conditions. This ignores the importance and the validity of the engineering and modeling that are just as intrinsic to the system's reliability as are drills and training. Passenger jet aircraft are not plunged into crash dives to see if the airframes can withstand the stresses. Bridges once built are not subject to destructive testing to see if they will stand. Rigorous analysis and modeling establish the reliability of many technologies where actual tests under certain scenarios would be unreasonably risky or prohibitively expensive. This has been the case with the Prince William Sound escort tugs, and the ship rescue missions they are designed and equipped to execute.

However, our system's reliability is based not only on engineering design, but also on training, as anyone familiar with its development is aware. Tug crews, tanker

crews and pilots have worked together on simulators, and routinely practice maneuvers on the water. Not every maneuver is tested under every conceivable condition, just as urban fire departments do not burn down large structures to establish that they can fight fires of all sizes. Reasonable training objectives strive to balance between foreseeable scenarios and personnel safety, and recognize that competence established through practice of what appears routine can prepare a responder to meet a greater challenge. The crews of the tankers and tugs are well aware of the potential hazards and challenges of Prince William Sound – they work in those conditions throughout the year.

In Prince William Sound, what some call a "response gap" has been addressed by science and engineering, by the application of worldwide as well as Alaskan operating experience, by training on simulators and on the water, and by daily vigilance and consideration of lessons learned. We can't say whether that's sufficient proof to satisfy everyone of the capabilities of our system and the people who operate it. But it's proof that enables our escort system to set the standard for spill preparedness and prevention. And that's the standard we test ourselves against every day.

Alyeska Viewpoint



Greg Jones

THE OBSERVER is a quarterly newsletter published by the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council. Except as noted, articles are written by Stan Jones, Public Information Manager for the council and editor of the Observer. To obtain a free subscription, contact him at 907-273-6230 or jones@pwsrca.org. Or contact the council offices in Valdez or Anchorage (see back page).

NEW LEASE ON LIFE – Gov. Tony Knowles was flanked by regulatory officials and executives of the oil industry and other businesses on Nov. 26 as he signed the state's 30-year renewal of the right of way for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. The Knowles administration rejected calls for citizen oversight of the pipeline part of the system, and most other improvements recommended by the citizens' council and other members of the public as the renewal was under review this past summer. Knowles, seated, is on the right. Natural Resources Commissioner Pat Pourchot is on his right. Federal officials are expected to complete the process early next year by approving renewal of the federal right of way for the system. Photo by Stan Jones, citizens' council.



Community Corner**Council supports Coast Guard fund-raising**

By **Linda Robinson**
Community Liaison

A dinner was held October 3 at the Hotel Captain Cook to raise funds for the Coast Guard Foundation. Council board member Margy Johnson chaired the committee that planned the event, and other board members and staff participated. Also in attendance were Admiral Thomas Collins, Commandant of the Coast Guard; Rear Admiral James Underwood from the 17th Coast Guard District in Juneau; and former Governors Walter Hickel and Bill Sheffield.

The Coast Guard Foundation is a non-profit organization set up in 1969 to raise funds for projects and programs for Coast Guard members that cannot be funded by the federal government. These include recreational facilities and scholarships. This particular dinner raised funds to help pay for the new Marine Safety Office Community Center in Valdez, which was dedicated on October 4. The Valdez base is one of the fastest growing units in the Coast Guard. It is home to over 80 active duty members and their families, and crews from three ships call Valdez home.

On the road

The council held community receptions in Cordova on October 9, and Anchorage on October 24. The Cordova reception was at the Orca Adventure Lodge, which used to be a cannery town near Cordova. All current Cordova board and committee members attended as well as most former council volunteers.

The Anchorage reception was held in the Anchorage office following an orientation for new volunteers. Both receptions were well attended and gave staff the opportunity to discuss many current projects, and to distribute reports. Many of these reports are available on our web site, www.pwsrccac.org.

A Peer Listener Training session held in Kenai on October 17 had an excellent turnout. Most participants were from the Women's Resource and Crisis Center and the feedback

was very positive. Please contact the council if you would like training in your community.

The council participated in the Alaska Natural Resource and Outdoor Education conference held November 7-9 at Alaska Pacific University. This is a statewide group of school teachers, naturalists, state and federal agency staff, and others who help young and old alike learn about and appreciate Alaska's natural resources. It archives Alaska specific curricula, kits and web sites as a resource for educators. For more information on this non-profit organization, visit their web site at <http://www.anroe.org>.



Linda Robinson

Board members Jim Nestic from Old Harbor and Lou Beaudry from Cordova assisted staff members John Devens, Marilyn Leland and Linda Robinson in the council booth at Fish Expo, held annually in Seattle. Margy Johnson and Marilyn and Pete Heddell also spent time discussing the council's work with visitors. Expo-goers include fishermen, workboat owners, commercial vessel operators, and seafood processors as well as a number of agencies. As in the past, large numbers of visitors stopped at the booth and collected information about the council.

Volunteers needed

It's time again to search for new volunteers to join our committees. Volunteers are essential to our mission. Much of the council's work is done through four committees made up of citizen volunteers and council board members. Most committees meet monthly and often by teleconference. The four committees are Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring, Oil Spill Prevention and Response, Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems, and Scientific Advisory. If you are interested in being a volunteer or know of someone you would like to nominate, please check our web site for an application or nomination form, or contact me at 1-800-478-7221. Our important mission wouldn't be accomplished without our volunteers.



Clem Tillion, long-time player in Alaska politics and fisheries issues, stopped by the council booth at Fish Expo to chat with board member Lou Beaudry, Executive Director John Devens, and Deputy Director Marilyn Leland. 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 18 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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