Council seeks better oil-spill planning for the ‘downstream’ areas

The citizens’ council has launched a drive to help improve the plans that will guide the response if another big crude-oil spill in the Sound should threaten the “downstream” communities on the Kenai Peninsula and Kodiak Island.

While existing oil-spill response plans go into great detail about what would be done inside Prince William Sound, they provide little specific information about how to respond outside it. This is despite the fact that oil from the Exxon Valdez spill, which serves as the model around which response strategies are constructed, traveled almost 500 miles from Bligh Reef, reaching points as distant as the western beaches of Kodiak Island and the eastern shoreline of the Alaska Peninsula.

To start the process, the council has produced a 23-page report on the problem, coupled with a 61-page draft plan for oil-spill response in the downstream communities.

“One of the lessons of the Exxon Valdez is that your response can’t be any better than your plan,” said John Devens, executive director of the council. “We need to be sure we have the plans in place that will guarantee a better response for our downstream communities than we had in 1989.”

The recent Selendang Ayu spill at Unalaska highlights the need to plan for protecting areas outside Prince William Sound. While the council’s draft plan is focused primarily on crude oil spills in the Sound, it could also help guide the response to spills of fuel oils, as was the case with the Selendang Ayu.

The council’s report and plan cover such issues as the timeline when oil might reach the downstream communities, as well as the personnel and equipment that would be needed for the response. The report reviews what equipment is already available for downstream response, and finds the picture far from bleak. For the most part, the necessary equipment is available, with one significant exception: secondary storage. This refers to the large barges used to store oil recovered during skimming operations.

See page 5, DOWNSTREAM

Has the time come for citizen oversight in Puget Sound?

Marilyn Leland, deputy director of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council, testified in favor of citizen oil-spill oversight at two Feb. 8 committee hearings in the Washington state legislature.

Lawmakers there are considering legislation to establish an “oil spill monitoring and oversight council” for Washington state. It would be similar in many ways to the existing citizens’ councils for Puget Sound and the Alaskan region.

“The time has come for citizen oversight in Puget Sound,” she said.

Mark Janes, a board member of Seldovia’s SOS oil spill response team, talks about his group’s work during a January forum sponsored by the citizens’ councils for Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound. The forum dealt with how local organizations can respond to small local spills, as well as help out in the response to large spills, such as the Exxon Valdez.


See page 4, TERMINAL

More work needed on review of oil terminal overhaul – Council

State and federal regulators at the Joint Pipeline Office are reviewing their assessment of Alyeska Pipeline’s proposed overhaul of the tanker terminal in Valdez in response to detailed comments by the citizens’ council.

The agency issued its assessment in November and found the project would have no significant environmental impact. The council hired a contractor to go over the document, and concluded the no-impact finding was premature.

“We strongly recommend the Environmental Assessment be revised to examine all the impacts, alternatives, and consider additional mitigation to reduce the environmental impacts of this proposed project,” Executive Director John Devens wrote the pipeline office in a Dec. 30 letter accompanying the council’s comments.

The comments, including Devens’ letter, can be downloaded from the council web site, www.pwsrcac.org.

The council comments came one day after the federal Environmental Protection Agency weighed in to the pipeline office with similar concerns. “It does not appear that the EA (Environmental Assessment) has adequately identified and addressed the potentially significant air quality impacts on public health for the proposed reconfiguration,” wrote Christine Reichgott, an official in EPA’s...
Volunteer Profile

TOEM member’s life mixes music and science

Jon Bower may well be the only volunteer in citizens’ council history who has been a punk-rock recording artist.

Nowadays, he is a diligent member of the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee, is researching hydrocarbon contamination of snow in the Valdez area, and is working on an environmental science degree at the University of Alaska in Juneau.

But, before he moved to Valdez in 2001, Bower was a guitarist and singer with a variety of punk-rock bands in the San Francisco Bay area, often in collaboration with his wife, Ali, and his brother, Josh.

One enthusiastic online reviewer described the work of one of Bower’s bands, Mercury, as follows: “A sound track on course into the darkest corner of synth-rock stratosphere. Yet, a sound track guaranteed to provide the listener with a floating device, upon a dense, lush, and spacey atmosphere...”

The sound is enhanced dynamically by electric guitar player and vocalist, Jon Bower, who carries enough gloom and conviction in his voice, that when combined with his cold, disenchanted lyrics it may convince everyone in the room that ground control may never find its Major Tom!”

That may suggest that Mercury’s output was a bit on the bleak side, but Bower says it’s not so. His music, he says, is best described as “sort of melodic punk rock, with a message of environmental concern.”

Bower, who is tall and serious but doesn’t seem the least bit cold and disenchanted, or gloomy, was born 32 years ago in the little town of Shawnee, Kansas. He grew up in Minnesota and Michigan, then moved to California with his family when he was in the seventh grade. His parents moved to Valdez when he was 21, but Jon stayed in the Bay area and got seriously into music.

It was after his last band broke up, in 2001, that he moved to Valdez himself, primarily to attend Prince William Sound Community College. He took an environmental science course from Bob Benda, chairman of the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (or TOEM) Committee, and he was hooked.

“I loved it and so that’s what I’m still pursuing,” Bower said. That course is also where he became interested in volunteering for the citizens’ council. At first, he thought that might involve going out on research vessels to work on the studies that are a mainstay of the council’s work. That didn’t turn out to be the case, but he has found the actual role of TOEM equally enlightening and interesting.

“I’ve learned so much about the policy side of things,” he said. “That is where society and science meet, which is very important.”

Bower’s parents are still in Valdez. His father is a minister at the Bayside Community Church, while his mother runs the Rose Cache restaurant.

Bower, however, moved to Juneau after a year in Valdez, so he could get a bachelor’s degree in environmental science at the University of Alaska Southeast. He will finish that this spring, and plans to go next to the University of Washington for a master’s degree. Eventually, he hopes to get his doctorate and return to Alaska for teaching and research.

It was Bower’s work on TOEM, plus a class on snow and glaciers at the university, that led him to undertake a study of hydrocarbon contamination in the snowfields around Valdez. The study did find hydrocarbons as far up the Richardson Highway as Thompson Pass.

They were similar to hydrocarbons put out by the Alyeska pipeline, though Bower’s study didn’t show what the actual source was, or whether the levels found in the snow could pose health risks.

In November, he presented his findings at a convention of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry in Portland, Ore. He has received a grant to continue the project, and will be taking more samples around Valdez and in Thompson Pass this month.

He still participates in TOEM meetings via phone from Juneau, but otherwise focuses mostly on being a student. He’s in the math club and chemistry clubs, tutors chemistry students, and works with a couple of his professors on research projects around Juneau. One of them involves water quality in the Mendenhall Valley, where the university campus is located.

However, he hasn’t given up his music altogether. He and Ali still record in their home studio and exchange music with friends from their California days. In fact, they still perform on occasion, such as a recent reunion show of their old band, Mercury, in Oakland, over the Christmas break.

“I think there’s a common thread,” he said with a laugh, “but I’m still trying to figure out exactly what it is.”

New faces join council offices in Anchorage and Valdez

Two new employees have been added to the council’s staff roster.

Roy Robertson, of Olympia, Wash., was hired to serve as project manager for drill monitoring and oil-spill preparedness. He replaces a contractor who had performed the monitoring services for several years.

Robertson most recently worked for the state of Washington’s Department of Ecology in the area of oil spill response. Among the spills he was involved with were last year’s mystery spill in Dalco Passage, when he served as chief of the Operations Section.

Robertson also has considerable experience in Alaska, having served as consultant to both the Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound citizens’ councils, as well as the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. He supervised the community of Seldovia’s response to the Exxon Valdez spill, and later helped found the Seldovia Oil Spill Team, a community-based response organization. In addition he worked for Alyeska Pipeline to develop fish hatchery protection programs and fishing vessel training programs.

Robertson will work out of the council’s Valdez office.

In the Anchorage office, Mary Schonberger was hired to replace Bernie Cooper as administrative assistant. She most recently worked for First National Bank of Anchorage. She lives with her husband in Chugiak, where they raise, race, and show Siberian Huskies.
Alaskans have the best tanker escort system on earth in Prince William Sound. But there are about as safe from a repeat of the Exxon Valdez spill as is reasonably possible. But that may not last. Regulators and the oil industry are considering how to scale back the escort system and potentially reduce the margin of safety developed to protect the Sound since 1989. Each tanker leaving Valdez with North Slope crude is accompanied by two powerful, state-of-the-art tugs. For parts of the trip out of the Sound, one tug is tethered to the tanker’s stern to provide immediate assistance and prevent a disaster if the huge oil carrier should lose a rudder or engine. Why is this outstanding fleet of escort vessels in jeopardy? The system’s existence in part to the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, which requires two escorts for any single-hull crude carrier in Prince William Sound. The same Act bans single-hull tankers from U.S. waters after 2015, because double-hull tankers are less likely to spill oil in groundings and collisions. In the Sound, the transition to double hulls may be complete as early 2007. The escort system is threatened because the Oil Pollution Act does not require escorts for double-hull tankers. Up to now, double-hulls have gotten escorts anyway, as required by state-approved contingency plans and by a directive of the Coast Guard in Valdez. But, with the end of the single-hull era in sight, the regulators are considering downsizing the escort system. That would be a mistake. The council has always supported double escorts and will continue to do so until it can be demonstrated that another alternative would offer equal protection. Though the new double-hull tankers — with redundant rudders, controls, and engines — are far superior to the Exxon Valdez and the rest of the single-hull fleet, they are not infallible. Last year, ConocoPhillips’ new Polar Endeavour suffered a malfunction on one rudder that threw the vessel 12-15 degrees off course before the problem was corrected. And the new Alaskan Frontier, a double-hull tanker under charter to BP, was detained or delayed by the Coast Guard on two of its three voyages into Valdez because of problems with its propulsion system. As the council board noted in a resolution adopted in December, “it is imprudent to reduce proven prevention programs based solely on improvements in vessel engineering and design.” Moreover, not all double-hull tankers operating from Valdez are new. Some are approaching 30 years of age and, under federal law, can continue to sail indefinitely. In theory, they could still be plying the Sound on the 60th anniversary of the startup of the trans-Alaska pipeline. In addition, we must bear in mind that prevention is not the only task of the escort tugs. They are also equipped to begin the response to a major oil spill should occur. The need for response vessels close at hand is one reason double-hull tankers have always been escorted through the Sound, even though the Oil Pollution Act doesn’t require it. That need will not end when the last single-hull tanker leaves service. From Exxon’s memory that two events could dramatically alter operations in Prince William Sound. One would be a big oil strike in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which would lead to a huge increase in tanker traffic. The other would be the construction of a natural gas pipeline to Valdez, which would add a fleet of liquefied gas tankers to the system. Clearly, this is no time to let our defenses down. What’s to be done? State and federal regulators should freeze the present escort requirements until a determination can be made as to whether and how the system can be modified without reducing safety. The bottom line, is any changes should leave the Sound in at least as much protection as we have now. To do otherwise would be to squander the great gains we’ve made, and the valuable lessons we’ve learned, since the Exxon Valdez hit Bligh Reef sixteen years ago this month.

John Devens is executive director of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council.
For SERVS, training is key to being prepared

Throughout the past year, Alyeska’s Ship Escort Response Vessel System (SERVS) explored new approaches to training, drills and exercises to improve our readiness to respond to spills. In partnership with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), SERVS redesigned the safety and hazardous materials training for fishing vessel crew members in the SERVS Fishing Vessel Program. The updated program satisfies OSHA’s training requirements and provides the equipment-specific experience required for compliance with response plans through a three-day curriculum combining classroom courses, hands-on instruction, and on-water training.

The benefits of this training were put to the test in late September when the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) called an unannounced drill on the fishing vessel response fleet that had assembled in Cordova, preparing to conduct field training in warpshore response tactics. The fishing vessels and crews in Cordova were diverted from their scheduled training to respond to the unannounced drill. The weather was typical for the season and windy with winds pushing the upper limit of operational capability.

The task force selected by ADEC for this drill consisted of 36 fishing vessels, Barge 500-2, and the utility vessel Endurance. A pocket tanker was a tanker grounded near Smith Island in central Prince William Sound with 20,000 barrels of oil released and moving east into Orca Inlet. Weather conditions worsened throughout the day with heavy rain, fog, and winds to 40 knots. Over four thousand feet of boom, four mini-barges, two skimmers, and a Current Buster were deployed before crane operations on the deck of the Barge 500-2 were suspended due to high winds. All the drill objectives were met despite the weather conditions, there were no injuries, and praise from the evaluation team was unprecedented. One of the more notable comments from the state’s lead controller was “I’ve never seen the nearshore operation run smoother than today.”

The following month, over 100 Alyeska employees and contractors participated in an oil spill response exercise at the Valdez Marine Terminal, joined again by fishing vessel operators in the Valdez core fleet. The exercise scenario involved a major crude oil spill at the Terminal loading berths. A unique element to the management of the drill was the real-time (“symptom-driven”) injects for site characterization. Vapor levels were gathered by responders in the field with gas detectors by calling drill control for the vapor levels in their area. This pushed the responders as close to reality as possible and enabled field leadership to make difficult decisions balancing response and safety. During this drill, the deployment of the protection boom around the Solomon Gulch Hatchery and Valdez Duck Flats set an all-time record – assisted by favorable tides and weather but reflecting the commitment to training and practice over the past several years. The combined field and incident management team performance resulted in an extremely positive evaluation.

The challenge of getting people and equipment to Valdez and from Valdez to the scene of a large spill can present a logistical constraint that SERVS must be prepared to address. To probe its capabilities and to provide training to internal and external stakeholders, SERVS developed a new tabletop exercise format involving the use of wooden models of tugs, barges, and other vessels to simulate actual vessel movements. In March of last year, nearly 100 employees, contractors, fishermen, and stakeholders spent three straight days at the Valdez Civic Center to pull this event off with an array of models scattered inside a ballroom for site characterization. The exercise simulated the handling of a spill that occurred on seawater pumped from Port Valdez. The exercise tested ALARP principles to develop a plan for upgrading the Valdez Marine Terminal Treatment Facility as part of Strategic Recon configuration, but then didn’t address the tank configuration. It also said the council’s concerns were being addressed by new double-hulls – which carry very low levels of hazardous materials training for fishing vessel crew members in the SERVS Fishing Vessel Program. The updated program satisfies OSHA’s training requirements and provides the equipment-specific experience required for compliance with response plans through a three-day curriculum combining classroom courses, hands-on instruction, and on-water training.

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Alyeska refers to its massive undersea pipeline as the Alyeska proposal omits one project – the huge tanks used to store crude oil including the fire-fighting system, the existing system relies on seawater pumped from Port Valdez.

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Alyeska’s Ship Escort Response Vessel System (SERVS) explor...
The council’s Legislative Affairs Committee has been set up to monitor developments in the Alaska Legislature.

The committee, formed in November, consists of six members of the council board: Blake Johnson, chair; Connie Stephens, vice chair; and Walter Parker, Judy McDowell, John Velsko and Al Burch. The committee’s work is supported by Juneau attorney Douglas Mertz, who serves under contract as the council’s legislative monitor.

In the early part of the legislative session – which began in January – the committee has been tracking two legislative packages of council concern. One, involving a state takeover from EPA of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (or NPDES), would change how operating permits are issued for the facility that cleans oily ballast water from tankers arriving at the Valdez terminal operated by Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. The other legislation of interest deals with modifications to the Alaska Coastal Management Program, which gives coastal communities and interest groups some control over nearby development projects.

As the Observer went to press, the council had not taken a position on either matter, though the board was scheduled to consider taking a stand on the NPDES issue at its March meeting.

The Legislature adjourns in mid-June.

**DOWNSTREAM: Promoting better response**

Blake Johnson

Continued from Page 1

During the Exxon Valdez response, the shortage of secondary storage limited how much of the spilled oil could be cleaned up. The council hopes regulatory agencies such as the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Coast Guard will incorporate the draft plan into their contingency plans for Kodiak, the Kenai Peninsula, and Cook Inlet after further development with public input.

“This is a good plan from the council,” said Kodiak fisherman Al Burch. Burch is executive director of the Alaska Draggers Association and a member of the citizens’ council board of directors.

“It should significantly increase protection for downstream communities like ours.”

**RECOGNITION**

“a good plan for . . . downstream communities like ours” – Al Burch, Kodiak. Photo by Stan Jones

The downstream response report and draft plan, along with contact information, are available on the council web site, www.pwsccac.org.

**LEGISLATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE TRACKS THE ACTION IN JUNEAU**

The committee’s December board meeting in Anchorage, Executive Director John Devens, left, presented Tom Copeland with a framed map of the council region in honor of his long service to the council. Copeland was a committee member, board member, or both, from 1990 to 2004. Photo by Stan Jones.

Council documents available to public

Single copies of most documents produced or received by the citizens’ council are available free to the public. To make a request, contact either council office. Addresses appear on the back page of the Observer.

**REPORTS**


The citizens’ council’s position on the use of site burning during an oil spill in the citizens’ council’s region that includes Prince William Sound and the

See next page

The Observer Volume 15, No. 1 March 2005 Page 5
For the past two years, the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council has solicited simple line drawings of subjects related to the safe transportation of oil, signed by the artist, for use in children’s coloring books distributed at various public events.

Thanks to the generosity of artists, two editions have been printed. They have been so popular the council is doing a third and once again soliciting donations from artists.

Subjects may include vessels such as tankers, fishing, tugs, Coast Guard cutters, and kayaks; marine mammals; fish; the Alyeska tanker terminal in Valdez; and just about anything related to Prince William Sound or the council. Submissions should be about 8.5x11 inches in size. Each artist whose work is selected will receive two copies of the coloring book.

Submissions should be mailed to:
Linda Robinson, PWSRCAC
3709 Spenard Rd. #100
Anchorage AK 99503

Or they may be e-mailed in the jpeg digital image format to: robinson@pwsrcac.org.

Submissions must be received by April 15 in order to be considered for inclusion.

For more information, contact
Linda Robinson at 1-800-478-7221, 907-273-6235 or the email address above.

This drawing was donated for the coloring book by artist Cindy Shake.

of Cosflman Engineers to the PW SRCAC Board of Directors at its December 2004 quarterly meeting regarding the non-tank corrosion & containment prevention at the Valdez marine Terminal, 12/4/2004. 559.1 07.041204.CosflmanPrest.ppt

Presentation made by contractor Bill Driskell and Lisa Ka’alau of staff to the PW SRCAC Board of Directors at its December 2004 quarterly meeting regarding the long-term Environmental Monitoring Program (TEMP) results, 12/4/2004. 951.0 07.041204.04.04TEMPPresent.ppt

Presentation made by contractor Susan Harvey and Tom Kuckertz to staff to the PW SRCAC Board of Directors at its December 2004 quarterly meeting regarding the appeal status of the NESHAPoL rule with EPA, 12/4/2004. 557.0 07.041204.AppealStatus.ppt

Presentation made by Steve Peppar, Volunteer firefighter for the City of Valdez, to the PW SRCAC Board of Directors at its December 2004 quarterly meeting regarding a request for funds to send two firefighters to Texas A&M for industrial fire training, 12/4/2004. 554.0 07.041204.VolFundRequest.ppt

Presentation made by Dan Gibson to the PW SRCAC Board of Directors at its December 2004 quarterly meeting regarding 2004 incidents, inventory and loading stats, 12/4/2004. 707.1 07.041204.IncidentRpt.ppt

Presentation made by Tom Copeland to the PW SRCAC Board of Directors at its December 2004 quarterly meeting regarding the National Academies Committee on Understanding Oil Spill Dispersants
Letters of Advice and Comment

John Devens, 2/16/2004. 270.105. 040216.AK LNGHeinzé.doc


Letter in support of the further development of an All-Purpose Oil Spill Response Vessel; MMS Solicitation #1435-01-04-RP-33212 Laksh, AS ORSPV. To US DOI - Minerals Management Service (MMS), from John Devens, 3/31/2004. 950.103.040351.DOIM MsOrsv.doc

Letter in response to the February 20, 2004 public notice requesting comments on the Alaska Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) proposed changes to the Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP) regulations in response to requirements in the legislation passed last year (HB 191). To Randy Bates, DNR Office of Project management and Permitting, from John Devens, 4/1/2004. 600.105.0 40401.ADRacmp.doc


Letter thanking the students of Herman Hutchens Elementary School (Valdez) for submitting drawing for possible inclusion in the Citizens’ council coloring book. To Roz Strong, HHES, from John Devens, 4/7/2004. 350.105.040407.HHES colorbk.doc

Nomination for the Coastal America Partnership Award - letter nominating the citizens’ council SAC committee for this award - note: this is the second letter drafted & sent incorporating Coastal America’s suggested additions. To Kevin Goldstein, Coastal America, from John Devens, 4/7/2004. 250.105.040407.CAPAnnominate2.doc

Letter in support of the development of an All-Purpose Oil Spill Response Vessel for the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. To Dianne Munson & Ed Thompson, ADEC & BP Exploration, from John Devens, 4/12/2004. 700.105.040412.BP hrtErOSRv.doc

Letter to the Gem Program expressing the citizens’ council’s strong support of the PWS Shore-Zone Mapping grant application by Carl Schoch and John Harpenter from PWS ScienceCenter. To Phil Mundy, Ph.D., Excon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council, from John Devens, 4/14/2004. 900.105.04041 4.EVOSTizmGrnt.pdf

Letter regarding the citizens’ council’s concerns on JPO staffing at the VMT and portions of the TAPS. To Jerry Brosia, Joint Pipeline Office, from John Devens, 4/14/2004. 400.105.040414.JPOStaffing.doc


Letter nominating the PWS TAPS Shippers for the 2004 Legacy Award. To Jean Cameron, States/ BC Oil Spill Task Force, from John Devens, 4/15/2004. 800.105.04041 5.LegacyNomnate.doc

Letter regarding the citizens’ council’s concern on the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) Oversight of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) VMT staffing. To Frank Murkowski, Governor, State of Alaska, from Tom Jensen, President, 5/21/2004. 400.1 05.040525.GovADECStaff.doc

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Community Corner

Scientific gatherings offer a wide range of subjects

Two large environmental conferences were held recently. The Marine Science in Alaska Symposium took place January 24-26 in Anchorage. Sponsored by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council, NOAA-Alaska Fisheries Science Center, the Prince William Sound Science Center and a number of related organizations, the symposium covered topics such as Ocean Observing Systems and Climate Change; Physical and Biological Oceanography; Fisheries Oceanography; Benthic Habitat and Nearshore Ecology; Contaminants; Harmful Algal Blooms and Invasive Species; Oil Impacts; Seabirds; Marine Mammals; and Fisheries Science and Management.

The second conference was the annual Alaska Forum on the Environment, held February 6-9. The council reserved two booths and project managers created posters describing various projects the council has undertaken.

Member community profile: Seldovia

Seldovia, located across from Homer on the south shore of Kachemak Bay, is a member organization of the citizens’ council. It was settled by the Russians around 1844. However, Pacific Eskimos, Aleuts and the Den’a’ina Indians were living there before the beginning of the Russian trade. An 1880 census lists a population of 74, consisting of 36 Eskimos and 38 Creoles (people of mixed Russian and Native descent). In 1884, an influenza epidemic killed nearly all children under three years of age in Seldovia, English Bay, Kenai and Ninilchik. Accessible only by air or sea, Seldovia (formerly “Seldevoy,” a Russian word meaning “herring bay”) currently boasts a population of 263. It encompasses about 250 acres of land and 130 acres of water. Seldovia is a commercial fishing center, and shellfish farming also occurs. There are several oyster farms in Kachemak Bay, including one in the Jakalof Bay Area, east of Seldovia. You can find oyster farms in Seldovia in the summer as well as off the Jakalof dock. Most farms in Kachemak Bay belong to a co-op that sells oysters and mussels in Homer as well as around the state and country. Immediately after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, in anticipation of oil fouling local waters, the community set up its own command post. When it learned that no boom was available they made their own from materials at hand. This event was the force behind the community’s creation of the Seldovia Oil Spill Team, or SOS. Its vision is “that an effective and efficient network of community-based response teams exist along the Alaska coast to protect the sensitive resources of the coastline and to aid each other, the State, the U.S. Coast Guard and other local, regional and industry oil spill cooperatives in times of need.”

The Seldovia Native Association is hoping to build a local service ferry with $8 million in federal funds. Lockheed Martin, the nation’s largest defense contractor, hopes to get the design contract for the ferry. The Native Association is planning to supervise a feasibility study.

As this photo of the Seldovia small boat harbor suggests, the community’s economy depends heavily on commercial fishing. Photo by Linda Robinson.