



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.

Council system will monitor tankers in Sound

The citizens' council is now equipped with the latest technology for tracking ship movements.

In late December, a Furuno-brand Automated Identification System was installed in the council's Valdez office. The system will enable the council to track the course, speed and heading of oil tankers, escort tugs, and other vessels as they move through Port Valdez and some areas of Prince William Sound.

"Most importantly, we'll be able to archive the data from the system," said Rhonda Williams, the council project manager who oversaw its acquisition and installation. "That way, we'll be able to go back and review vessel track information even if an incident doesn't come to light immediately."

Most ocean-going vessels now carry Automated Information System equipment. It radios the ship's name, position, and other information to AIS-equipped vessels within VHF radio range, and to AIS ground stations like the one operated by the council.

On ships, the AIS information is usually overlaid on the vessel's radar screen for display. The council's Furuno system is connected to a conventional Windows computer, which produces



The council's Automated Identification System captured three tugs assisting the Polar Alaska as it left a loading berth at the Valdez terminal on Jan. 4.

the display and makes it possible to archive the data.

VHF radio is a line-of-sight technology, which limits the areas of the Sound that can be monitored by the council system. At present, Williams said, it provides good coverage in Port Valdez – the part of Prince William Sound nearest the city of Valdez. It

provides more limited coverage near Bligh Reef, site of the Exxon Valdez spill, and at Naked Island in the central Sound.

Eventually, Williams said, it should be possible to make the system's output available over the Internet so that it can be viewed from locations other than the council's Valdez office.

Wilderness group backs citizen oversight

An international environmental forum last fall gave a ringing endorsement to the concept of citizen involvement in preventing and responding to oil spills and other man-made disasters.

The 8th World Wilderness Conference, meeting in Anchorage, passed a resolution calling on extractive industries to support citizen advisory groups for every project started.

"Local citizens have the most to lose," the resolution states. "It is in the best interest of industries to work with the citizens of the areas affected by their projects."

The resolution was proposed by John Devens, executive director of the citizens' council, and adopted by the Congress during its meeting Sept. 30-Oct. 6.

"We're getting more and more requests for information and presentations from interested citizens and industries around the world," Devens said. "This resolution will hopefully be one more tool people elsewhere can use to establish citizen oversight."

Rick Steiner, a University of Alaska professor and international advocate for conservation and citizen oversight, said the resolution should help in his efforts to persuade governments, industry, and non-governmental organizations to support the concept.

"We want to drive home the point that all large extractive industry projects throughout the world should establish citizen oversight bodies similar to the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, but adapted to local conditions," Steiner said. "I'm optimistic we can get there."

The World Wilderness Congress is the world's longest-running public international environmental forum, according to the organizers. The group said the Anchorage event drew some 1,200 delegates from 55 countries.

December was a milestone month for Alyeska

The last few weeks of 2005 saw two big milestones for Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.

On Dec. 14, Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System escorted its 10,000th loaded tanker through Prince William Sound since the system was formed after the Exxon Valdez spill of 1989.

The 10,000th load was carried by ConocoPhillips' double-hull tanker, the Polar Resolution. It left the Alyeska terminal in Valdez at 7:01 a.m. under the command of Captain Ray Geisler, bound for Ferndale, Wash., with 900,000 barrels of North Slope crude aboard. It was escorted by the

tugs Alert and Nanuq, commanded by Captains Dave Sweeny and Grady Harker, respectively.

Before the Exxon spill, only one escort tug accompanied each tanker, and it turned back after the tanker passed through Valdez Narrows, several miles north of the spill site. Today, escorts are required until the tanker leaves the Sound through Hinchinbrook Entrance and enters the Gulf of Alaska.

Alyeska's other December milestone was the Dec. 21 arrival of the 15 billionth barrel of oil at Pump Station One, where North Slope crude begins its journey south. Oil flow through the pipeline today is around 900,000

barrels a day, well below the peak of 2.1 million barrels a day.

Because some oil is taken out by refineries along the 800-mile pipeline to Prince William Sound, the 15 billionth barrel will not be loaded onto a tanker until about December 2007, according to Alyeska.

More oil has moved through the pipeline since the Exxon spill than did so before the accident. According to Alyeska figures, just under 7 billion barrels passed Pump Station One from pipeline startup in 1977 through March of 1989, meaning just over 8 billion barrels have passed it since.

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Volunteer Profile

Long-distance TOEM member keeps eye on Sound

By **SUSAN SOMMER**
Project Manager

Janice Wieggers lives in Fairbanks, but Valdez holds a special interest for her.

Since 1999, she has been a member of the council's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee, learning about and weighing in on oil terminal issues via teleconference during meetings that originate nearly 400 miles from her home.

TOEM, as the committee is usually called, identifies actual and potential sources of pollution at the Valdez Marine Terminal. Most of its work focuses on ballast water treatment and its impact on water quality in Port Valdez, and on air quality issues stemming from hydrocarbons emitted during tanker loading and other facility operations.

One of Janice's projects when she was a graduate student at Western Washington University involved a comprehensive look at environmental aspects of Port Valdez after many years of oil being transported through the area. After earning her master's degree in applied ecology and moving back to her hometown of Fairbanks, she wanted to stay in touch with environmental issues



Janice Wieggers of Fairbanks is a long-time member of the council's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee. One of her hobbies is skijoring. In the photo at right, above, she's out for a run with Marco and Zoey. Left photo by Stan Jones. Right photo courtesy of Janice Wieggers.



concerning Prince William Sound and the port, so she called the council and asked if any volunteers were needed. TOEM took her on immediately.

Being a TOEM volunteer, says Janice, broadens her understanding of Alaska's environmental issues. It takes her beyond the things she works with as an environmental program specialist with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation,

where she focuses on soil and water contamination.

"You become so entrenched in the things you deal with regularly," she explains, "and it's only a small part of what's going on."

Janice says she's particularly interested in learning more about fire suppression and the terminal's various operating permits, topics less familiar to her than more traditional TOEM issues

such as air and water quality.

Janice received the TOEM Volunteer of the Year Award in 2001.

In December, Janice participated in the council's volunteer workshop, a gathering of committee volunteers, board members, and staff to share ideas and brainstorm better ways of working toward common goals. She was impressed by the number of people who brought both knowledge of marine oil transportation issues and concern for the Sound to the meeting.

An outdoorswoman and life-long learner, Janice lives with her husband and two dogs. She's trained the younger animal to skijor, or pull her on skis. She also spends lots of time exploring trails with a local hiking club. Lately, she's been practicing tai chi, a Chinese martial art.

With work, family, and plenty of other pursuits to keep her busy in Fairbanks, Janice doesn't get to visit Valdez as often as she'd like. Volunteering on TOEM, though, keeps her in touch with this community at the pipeline's terminus. "I'm impressed with RCAC – the number of projects and the level of commitment the organization maintains. And trying to work with industry is a great thing," she says.

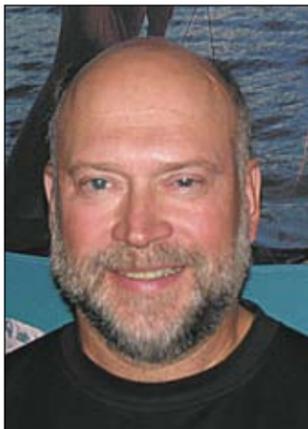
Long-time Valdez resident takes board seat

George Levasseur, a commercial fisherman and retired official of the state Department of Transportation, has joined the citizens' council board as one of two representatives of the city of Valdez.

Levasseur was nominated by the Valdez city council in July and seated at the board's September meeting in Seward. He replaces Dr. JoAnn McDowell, who left the board last summer to move out of state. She had served on the board for over eight years.

In applying for the seat, Levasseur wrote the city council that he was an avid sportsman who loves to fish and hunt, and knows "that protection of these resources and environmental issues is vital to us and to future generations."

He has lived in Valdez for over 30 years. He



George Levasseur

participated in the response to the Exxon Valdez spill of 1989, as well as a spill in Thompson Pass the previous year and in the more recent Windy Bay spill in Prince William Sound.

Levasseur worked for the state transportation department for 20 years ending in 2004. He was a manager and maintenance engineer.

He is a commercial fisherman and, with his wife, owns halibut and black cod quotas, and runs charters for halibut and salmon. In addition, he has long served on the board of the Valdez Fisheries Development Association and is a past board member of the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Association.

The other Valdez representative on the council board is Connie Stephens.

Council's online presence given a makeover

By **SUSAN SOMMER**
Project Manager

If you haven't checked out the council's website in a while, now is the time to revisit www.pwsrca.org. A major overhaul has vastly improved the site, making it easier to find important information.

The general look remains the same, but we've improved many features. You'll find updates, new photos, smoother navigation, and new sections and pages. Favorite features, such as the alphabetical list of projects, are now accessible from even more pages.

And there are many other changes. An enhanced menu across the top of each page lists main topics, and also appears in the left column. The Search feature has been improved and is prominent on each page. Updated project information can be found under the main heading "Projects." Our Outreach section also has new pages. The About section is now more streamlined for first-time visitors. Observer

newsletters dating back to 1991 are now online as PDF files. PDF files are labeled as such and include file size. New photos fill both the main photo gallery and the Outreach photo gallery. Each is enlargeable for easier viewing. A comprehensive Site Map is now accessible from the bottom of each page. And our Help page has been updated to facilitate assistance with downloads, requests for hard copies of reports, or other questions.

Two brand new sections add depth to our Web site: FAQs, or Frequently Asked Questions, and Resources, a compendium of tools for visitors that includes maps, photos, links to other sites of interest, a glossary, a list of acronyms used on the site, fact sheets, and more.

Some page names have changed; so if you've bookmarked our most popular pages, you'll be redirected to the new page. You can also visit the Home page or Site Map to find your favorite pages.

Spill response facility being proposed for Cordova area

Federal officials are seeking comments on plans for a deep-water port and equipment depot for responding to oil spills on the east side of Prince William Sound.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, which released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the project, recommends building the facility at Shepherd Point, about six miles north of Cordova. The project arises from a legal settlement in the early 1990s between the State of Alaska, the U.S. Government, and Alyeska Pipeline Service Co., according to the draft statement. Besides serving as a storage depot, it would be a staging area for equipment arriving by air for a spill response.

BIA developed the plan in cooperation with the Native Village of Eyak, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Federal Highway Administration, according to cordovaresponsefacility.com, the project website.

Comments must be filed by Feb. 6. For more information contact Kristin K'ait, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Regional Office, Division of Environmental and Resource Management, PO Box 25520, Juneau AK 99802-5520, or visit the website.

Two staffers leaving council

This winter saw the resignations of two of the council's project managers.

Tony Parkin resigned in early December. He had worked out of the Valdez office since 2002, dealing primarily with drills and other aspects of oil-spill preparedness.

Rhonda Williams, also based in Valdez, resigned this month to take a job with the Bureau of Land Management at the Joint Pipeline Office in Valdez. She will be an operations and management specialist.

Williams had been with the council since 2000.

The council is recruiting to fill the vacant positions.

From the Executive Director**As citizen oversight spreads, much work lies ahead**

The main mission of our council is monitoring crude-oil transportation in Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska.

But the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990, which gave us much of our authority, also gave us and our sister organization in Cook Inlet another responsibility: to serve as demonstration projects, with the hope that other citizen oversight groups would be formed as time went by.

Over the past year or so, it has come to seem that hope is being fulfilled. The seeds of citizen oversight are sprouting everywhere:

- Last year, legislators in Washington state set up an Oil Spill Advisory Council, primarily in reaction to a spill in Puget Sound.

- Here in Alaska, a citizen oversight body was set up for the Pogo gold mine near Fairbanks.

- This fall, I was invited by the Aleutians East Borough to speak in Cold Bay about the possibility of setting up a citizen group to deal with the risk of spills from oil and natural gas drilling in the area.

- Also last fall, I was invited to Murmansk, Russia, for a conference on oil development in the Barents region.

- And, in October, the 8th World Wilderness Conference in Anchorage (*see story, page 1*) endorsed the idea of citizen oversight on a worldwide basis, whenever an extractive natural resource project is launched.

These are all encouraging developments, but we need to be aware that getting to the point we've reached in Alaska may be a slow and difficult process in other places. Our council has adequate funding and is accepted as legitimate and credible by industry and regulators. At the state level, Alaskans have a government reasonably willing to enforce laws and regulations, a substantial budget for environmental protection, close monitoring of oil tankers, and a press free to criticize government and industry when regulations are not followed.

That's not true everywhere, however, and the Murmansk conference provided some examples.

One woman told the group that Russia was planning to relocate her entire village to make room for an oil terminal. Many Norwegians at the conference expressed shock that people could be relocated at the whim of the government, but the Russians appeared to accept it as a fact of life.

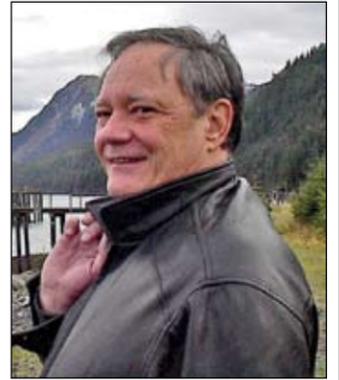
There was widespread concern among conference speakers that older single-hulled tankers in the possession of former Soviet states have not been maintained and are not safe to transport oil. Papers presented in Murmansk suggested a great lack of response equipment in the region, as well as budgets inadequate to support prevention and response activities. Some Russian oil-spill response organizations have had to wait months to get their pay. One of them had only three tugs to cover thousands of miles of coast,

and one of those had to be put on lease elsewhere for financial reasons. Many speakers indicated there was inadequate enforcement of environmental laws and inadequate funding for prevention and response efforts. We were told of oil spills never cleaned up and spillers never fined.

Will the citizens of Russia, the Aleutian Islands, and other areas be able to establish effective citizen oversight without the prod of an environmental catastrophe like the Exxon Valdez spill that gave rise to the Alaska citizens' councils?

I hope so, but the road is apt to be long and trying. As our fellow citizens elsewhere start down it, we stand ready to do the one thing we can do to help: continue sharing the lessons we've learned since 1989 about the value of citizen oversight, and how to make it work.

- John Devens is the executive director of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council.



John Devens

Alyeska Viewpoint**Focus will be on safety and system reconfiguration**

I'm very excited about my return to Alaska and the opportunity to serve as Alyeska's President and CEO. I've spent the last 10-15 years in executive management roles within BP working in a wide variety of locations from Wych Farm in England to the North Sea to Columbia and the Gulf of Mexico. From this experience I've learned the importance of people to the ultimate success of a company. I've also incorporated a respect for safe operations and environmental performance. I've learned the tremendous importance of the relationship between a company and the stakeholders who have an interest in the company. I raise these issues with you to give you some sense of how I'm going to approach running this great company. It's my goal to bring a level of transparency to the decisions we'll make as a business.

Since my arrival on TAPS, I've traveled to all of the pump stations, Fairbanks and Valdez several times. My goal was to get to know the people who run TAPS and to find out what issues and challenges they're facing in their daily work. This will

continue.

I'm taking time to learn the issues of interest to our various stakeholders, including the citizens' council. We'll meet regularly to discuss the issues we're facing and provide insight into the decisions Alyeska is making about how we're approaching the business in Valdez. And, in my limited time here, I know there is a lot of interest in the issues and challenges that we face.

As Alyeska moves into 2006, we're going to focus on a few key priorities. First and foremost is our commitment to safe operations. I've challenged our company to get to best in class performance on safety—especially when compared with our industry peers in Alaska. This is a core value to me and I know it's a core value throughout TAPS.

We're also going to spend a lot of time and energy ensuring we have a successful transition to the reconfigured pipeline. This has been a major project for the organization and is the right investment for the next 30 years of operation. We will also continue our analysis of how we're conducting busi-

ness in Valdez. I'll use this column and my discussions with the leadership of the citizens' council to share information through the year.

I'm very enthusiastic about Alyeska. We run a very safe and reliable pipeline, terminal, and tanker escort system. We understand the importance of our business to Alaskans and the wide spectrum of issues we face.

- Kevin Hostler took over as president and chief executive officer of Alyeska Pipeline Service Company on Oct. 1.



Kevin Hostler

Council backs budget change at spill agency

The citizens' council is supporting a move to change how Alaska's Division of Spill Prevention and Response is funded.

Until now, the division has been financed primarily by a tax of three cents per barrel on crude oil produced in the state. But that revenue is declining as oil production drops and can no longer support all of the spill division's work.

As a result, Gov. Frank Murkowski has proposed an appropriation of \$725,000 from the state general fund next year to pay for some division programs unrelated to crude oil operations. Crude oil programs would continue to be financed as in the past.

"We believe this is the best way to

maintain Alaska's high-quality oversight programs for both crude and non-crude-oil operations," council Executive Director John Devens wrote in a Jan. 11 letter to lawmakers. With the state enjoying record-high oil prices and a large revenue windfall, Devens noted, the appropriation "is a very wise investment of a very tiny portion of the budget surplus."

The letter was recommended by the council's Legislative Affairs Committee, which is chaired by Tom Jensen. The other committee members are Pete Kompkoff, vice chair, and Sherri Buretta, John Allen, George Levasseur, and Steve Lewis. All committee members are members of the council board.



DAWN DUTY – This workboat from Alyeska's SERV fleet towed boom for an early-morning dispersants exercise near Valdez in mid-September. Photo by Roy Robertson, citizens' council.

Community Corner

With new year comes a new job title

Happy New Year everyone! This greeting is now coming from the Outreach Coordinator rather than the Community Liaison. I feel the new title better explains what I do (and it's easier to say.) And I wanted to tell you a little about it.

The Outreach Coordinator position provides a tool (currently me) for sharing information between the council and the communities affected by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill. I represent the council at conferences, trade shows and activities sponsored by member organizations. Other responsibilities include assisting with outreach for council projects (such as geographic response strategies and aquatic invasive species), recruiting and orienting volunteers, and coordinating the participation of council volunteers and staff at public events.

A birthday in France

Last fall was an especially busy time. Board member Patience Andersen Faulkner, who represents Cordova District Fishermen United, and I were invited to make presentations at the planetarium in Pleumeur-Bodou, France on the 25th anniversary of Vigipol. Vigipol (formerly Syndicat Mixte) was established following the 1978 Amoco Cadiz spill, when approximately 1,589,000 barrels damaged 224 miles of coast in Northern Brittany. After fighting for 14 years to receive compensation, the citizens won a court case against Amoco and were paid more than \$42 million. This penalty was used to fund Syndicat Mixte, the Center for Documentation, Research and Experiments on Accidental Water Pollution (CEDRE) in Brest and the Regional Operation Center for Surveillance and Rescue, based in Paris. In 2000, Syndicat Mixte was renamed Vigipol.

Other presenters at the anniversary event came from the Shetland Islands, Finland, Corsica and many dignitaries represented Brittany. It was a true honor to visit with many people so dedicated to the protection of coastlines. One speaker noted that lands may be privately owned, but the ocean belongs to everyone.

Following the anniversary event for Vigipol, we traveled to Brest to visit CEDRE, a large non-profit facility that warehouses response equipment. CEDRE tests equipment in three ponds on-site, conducts scientific testing,

and conducts practical training with its artificial beaches and equipment. They also collect documents on spills and research. During the Exxon Valdez oil spill cleanup, CEDRE sent power washers to be used on the oiled beaches.

On the road again

In November, the council sponsored a reception for the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly. Staff members John Devens, Susan Sommer and Mary Schonberger attended as well as board member Blake Johnson, committee volunteer Jerry Brookman and representatives from the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council.



Linda Robinson

The council's information booth was set up at the Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry's annual conference in Baltimore, Maryland in mid-November. Former staff member Tony Parkin presented a poster, and volunteers John French and Dick Tremaine participated in sessions. November 17-19 found the booth at the Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle. Board member Nancy Bird assisted staff members John Devens, Marilyn Leland and me in tending the booth.

And on December 2, the council held its annual Volunteer Appreciation Party. Guest speaker was Sylvia Earle, renowned marine biologist and currently "Explorer in Residence" for the National Geographic Society, and music was provided by Flutissimo and Melissa Bledsoe Fischer.

In mid-December, staff member Lisa Ka'aihue and I visited Steller school in Anchorage to give a presentation on invasive species with Denny Lassuy of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Anyone interested in a school presentation on invasive species or any of our other projects should contact me.

The council will be participating in several conferences in the new year: January 23-26, the Marine Science Symposium in Anchorage; February 6-10, the Alaska Forum on the Environment in Anchorage; March 1-3, the Alaska Wilderness, Recreation and Tourism Association Conference in Seward; March 9-11, the Alaska Natural Resource and Outdoor Education Conference in Anchorage; and March 24-26, the Kachemak Bay Science Conference in Homer.

Again, I wish you all a happy and safe new year.

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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Council Meeting Schedule

The citizens' council board of directors meets three times annually. Here is the schedule for the coming year:

May 2-3, 2006 (rescheduled): Valdez
September 21-22, 2006: Homer
January 25-26, 2007: Anchorage

For more information, visit the council website, www.pwsrccac.org

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