Project will document spill history

The citizen’s council has launched a project to compile an oral history of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Sharon Bushell, a Homer oral historian, will record more than 100 interviews with people directly involved in the spill or its aftermath.

The results will be published in two volumes, the first containing the interviews themselves, and the second analyzing the interviews for lessons about the causes and effects of the spill, as well as the cleanup effort that followed.

The spill, in March 1989, is one of the most important events in Alaska history, yet no comprehensive oral history has ever been attempted, according to a council review of available resources that preceded the decision to start its own project.

“It came as a surprise to us that so little work of this type was ever done, considering how much has been written about the spill,” said John Devens, executive director of the council. “With the 20th anniversary in sight, we decided we needed to capture the memories and insights of people with first-hand involvement in the spill before it was too late.”

The interview subjects will include people in communities affected by the spill, commercial fishermen, cleanup workers, officials of regulatory agencies such as the Coast Guard and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, and employees from companies at the center of the event, such as Exxon, Alyeska Pipeline, and VECO.

While the project is just getting rolling and the time frame is still somewhat uncertain, the council hopes to be able to publish the first volume, containing the interviews, during 2009, twenty years after the Exxon spill. The second volume is expected.

See page 2, HISTORY

Council contingent visits capital

In early March, several representatives from the citizens council traveled to Washington for visits with the Alaska Congressional delegation — Rep. Don Young, and Sens. Ted Stevens and Lisa Murkowski — as well as staffs in several other offices and agencies.

Council participants included Blake Johnson from the board of directors; John Devens, executive director; and Stan Jones, director of external affairs. Council board member Dorothy Moore, who was in Washington for the City of Valdez, also attended some meetings on behalf of the council.

During this trip, the council became aware that one of its issues appears to be coming to life in the newly Democratic Congress. That issue is combating non-indigenous species, long a council concern because of the risk that Prince William Sound could be colonized by alien marine species arriving in tanker ballast water.

In other areas, alien invaders like the zebra mussel and the European green crab have harmed native species and caused billions of dollars in damage.

Several bills on non-indigenous species have been introduced in the new Congress, though it’s not yet clear which is most likely to become the chief vehicle for legislation in this area. Accordingly, the council will continue tracking the issue and related legislation very closely.

Two reports on last fall’s oil-spill drill by Exxon Mobil’s SeaRiver Maritime tanker subsidiary are available from the citizens council. Here, council president Stan Stephens meets with agency and industry officials during the drill to oppose plans to approve the use of dispersants on the hypothetical spill, or scenario. The dispersants approval process was among several problems the council found that made the drill unrealistic. “This scenario forced too many artificialities to be put into play to force the response to go in a non-rational direction,” the council said in one of its reports. This was a tabletop drill, meaning it was conducted entirely indoors, with no on-water activities. The reports are available from either council office.

The Observer
Volunteer Profile

Retired meteorologist volunteers weather wisdom

By SUSAN SOMMER
Project Manager

What do a charter boat captain, an award-winning meteorologist, a taxi driver, and a pizza deliveryman have in common? Everything, if you’re Dave Goldstein. He’s done all that and more.

Dave, a member of the council’s Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee, says he didn’t just retire from the National Weather Service after more than 35 years, he retired to his current position as a retired volunteer of Whittier-based Prince William Sound Eco-Charters. Dave had already been chartering clients in his free time for salmon and halibut in Prince William Sound. Turning that into a full-time endeavor seemed a natural extension.

Dave is friends with Pete and Marilyn Heddell, who serve, respectively, on the prevention and response committee and on the council board. They suggested Dave’s background in weather might be beneficial to the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee, or OSPR, and suggested he contact the council about joining.

Volunteering with OSPR gives Dave the opportunity to help prevent spills in a region he calls home and from which he now makes his living. He was working a midnight shift in the Anchorage Forecast Office the night the Exxon Valdez grounded. During the response, Dave provided weather information to the people involved. Not long after the citizens’ council was formed, his office began receiving The Observer. He followed the council’s efforts for several years before joining OSPR last year.

The committee focuses on reducing the size and frequency of oil spills, as well as reducing the harm they cause. Dave’s experience in Alaska weather forecasting provides valuable input for committee actions and recommendations, as his career frequently involved forecasting wind and sea conditions, obstructions to visibility such as fog and snow, icing conditions due to freezing spray and even sea ice conditions.

“[Dave] says making accurate forecasts, mentoring younger employees, and traveling to see highlights of Alaska all was great for my professional weathering. He was a lead forecaster in Anchorage.” — Sharon Bushell, who serves on the council’s Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee.

ECO-TOURISM: Retired meteorologist Dave Goldstein now runs an eco-tourism business in Prince William Sound. He also continues to serve on the council’s Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee. Photos courtesy of Dave Goldstein.

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ECO-TOURISM: Retired meteorologist Dave Goldstein now runs an eco-tourism business in Prince William Sound. He also continues to serve on the council’s Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee. Photos courtesy of Dave Goldstein.

HISTORY: Will tap memories of the oil spill of 1989

Continued from Page 1

to follow approximately a year later.

The council plans to distribute many free copies of the oral history to libraries, regulators, elected officials, and oil industry personnel. Additional copies will be sold at printing cost.

In addition, the council plans to make the history downloadable as an electronic book from its website, www.pwsrca.org. The transcribed interviews will also be posted there, and, as technology allows, so will the recordings of the interviews.

Bushell is a veteran Alaska writer who produced a series of oral history interviews that ran for years in the Anchorage Daily News. They were later compiled into a two-volume book called “We Alaskans — Stories of people who helped build the Great Land.”

“I’m extremely excited that the spill project is under way,” Bushell said. “I look forward to traveling around Alaska with my recorder and capturing what people remember about those days.”

Sharon Bushell of Homer is the oral historian for the council’s project. Photo courtesy of Sharon Bushell.

Council Meeting Schedule

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

- September 20-21, 2007: Kodiak
- January 24-25, 2008: Anchorage
- May 1-2, 2008: Valdez

Agendas and other meeting-related materials are available on the council web site at www.pwsrca.org/about/boardintro.html.

Or, contact either council office: Anchorage, 907-277-7222, or Valdez, 907-834-5000.
Differing c-plan processes show value of citizen role

Approximately four years ago, Alyeska Pipeline started work on the complex process of preparing a new oil-spill contingency plan for its tanker terminal in Valdez. From our perspective, the company couldn’t have handled it better.

Alyeska and the state Department of Environmental Conservation set up a working group to develop the new plan and invited us to participate. Our concerns have been resolved along the way, and both we and Alyeska are confident the plan will do a good job of preventing oil spills at the Valdez terminal, and of ensuring an effective response if one should occur. When it’s submitted to the conservation department for approval in a few weeks, we have no doubt it will make it through its review by the agency and then by the public with few, if any, changes.

We consider this such a good example of how citizen involvement should work that we have nominated Alyeska for a Feasibility Award, for an operational task based on its proximity and access to the pipeline backbone telecommunications system.

In the last 30 years, numerous changes have occurred in both the infrastructure of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System and the technical assumptions underlying the original scope of the control center. Consider the location of the Valdez terminal as its site. The high bandwidth, wide range of access, and declining cost of telecommunication circuits made it possible for the company to consider locations such as Fairbanks and Anchorage. A modern distribution Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system now being implemented makes it easier to operate the pipeline system from another site such as Anchorage or Fairbanks, and to implement an alternate control site.

In line with these developments as well as other recommendations, in 1999, Alyeska conducted a risk-based assessment to further investigate the optimal location for the control center. A major conclusion of this analysis was that the best location is Anchorage, with Fairbanks as the second-routed site. In 2003, Alyeska took the information from the earlier study and conducted an economic and risk analysis for the optimal site for the control center. The findings of that study indicated that Anchorage is the best regional site for the control center.

Anchorage, because of its location, ranks most highly as it best integrates with pipeline system infrastructure, allowing for enhanced functional and organization efficiency. A centralized location more efficiently supports the majority of personnel who interact daily with the control center. This includes measurements personnel, pipeline schedulers, operations engineering, Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system maintenance, telecommunications providers and control system vendors. With the control center at the hub of the telecommunication infrastructure for the pipeline system, there is redundant capability to control the pipeline and terminal operations. Most pipeline operations centers are either co-located with the company headquarters or are located in close proximity.

In addition to being nearer to Anchorage-based personnel, the location also takes advantage of the availability of public infrastructure including access to airports, control system equipment providers, telecommunication providers, highway and surface transportation, and high availability and flexibility of flights to sites on the pipeline system. All flights traveling to pipeline locations either originate in Anchorage or must pass through it, and this central point of origin for travel makes it easier for employees to return to their families.

Alyeska did consider Fairbanks and Valdez. However, Anchorage allows for the best integration with future pipeline infrastructure under the current Strategic Reconfiguration Plan. Fairbanks ranked second overall in this analysis, with Valdez third. It is important to emphasize that the relocation of the control center does not affect control and monitoring of the pipeline and terminal, while safety and system integrity are improved.

• Mike Joyner is Alyeska’s Vice President, Oil Movements.

BOARD: New members seated at January meeting

Continued from Page 1

From the Executive Director

Alleyska Viewpoint

Pipeline control center is relocating to Anchorage

Alyeska Pipeline Service Company will move its Operations Control Center from Valdez to Anchorage late this year. The control center is currently located at the Valdez Marine Terminal and has been in continuous operation since 1977. At that time, Valdez was the most feasible site for an operational task based on its proximity and access to the pipeline backbone telecommunications system.

In the last 30 years, numerous changes have occurred in both the infrastructure of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System and the technical assumptions underlying the original scope of the control center. Consider the location of the Valdez terminal as its site. The high bandwidth, wide range of access, and declining cost of telecommunication circuits made it possible for the company to consider locations such as Fairbanks and Anchorage. A modern distribution Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system now being implemented makes it easier to operate the pipeline system from another site such as Anchorage or Fairbanks, and to implement an alternate control site.

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• Mike Joyner is Alyeska’s Vice President, Oil Movements.
### Community Corner

**Poets participate in council contest**

The council sponsored a Shorebird Poetry contest in Cordova, similar to the Whalefest Poetry contest last year in Kodiak. Poems are being printed in a book, and the winners will receive a ticket to the boat cruise during the Shorebird Festival, where they will read their poems. The festival is May 3-6 this year, and celebrates the arrival of millions of shorebirds passing through during their annual spring migration. Festivities include bird viewing, presentations, family activities and an evening cruise. For more information, visit www.cordovachamber.com.

**Seward ship simulator**

Peter Armato of the council’s Scientific Advisory Committee, Capt. Mark Devries of the Coast Guard’s Anchorage office, and I had the opportunity to tour the full mission bridge simulator at the Alaska Vocational Technical Center in Seward in early April with Curt O’Halloran, head of the simulator program. This simulator, designed with some of the programming used in computer games, provides ship simulation for training in a number of maritime fields and U.S. Coast Guard approved courses.

Training capabilities include ship maneuvering and tactics, collision avoidance, docking, undocking, transiting shallow waters, and ship handling in various sea and weather conditions.

This $2 million piece of equipment has a solid concrete foundation that holds bridge equipment for ship control, navigation, communications, and emergencies. It has windows as seen on a ship bridge, with the bow of the vessel in front. Screens behind the windows are used to project high-resolution video of actual locations, such as Resurrection Bay and Prince William Sound. The simulator can be set up to replicate any number of vessels from tankers to cruise ships to tug boats. Any number of weather conditions and sea heights up to 20 feet can be input.

About 500 students per year participate in classes at the simulator. It’s a very interesting experience. The simulator doesn’t move, but it seems like a moving boat. The illusion can cause dizziness, and, as in my case, the need to grab a wall!

For more information, see avtec.labor.state.ak.us

### Conference

In February, the council participated in the Alaska Forum on the Environment in Anchorage as a Leadership Partner. For the first time, the forum included a film festival organized by Lisa Ka’aihue, the council’s Director of Administration. It was very successful. Over 50 films were shown, highlighting environmental topics such as non-indigenous species, Alaska Native diet, and recycling. Lisa plans to issue a call for films for the 2008 Forum this summer. Contact her at kaaihue@pwsrcac.org for more information.

Speaking of film, the council will begin work in July on a film on the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, including historical footage and interviews. We hope to show this film at the International Oil Spill Conference in 2008 and the Forum on the Environment in 2009, the 20th anniversary of the spill.

The council took the booth to the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association Conference in Anchorage in early March. The theme this year was Sustainability: Banking on Nature. Presentations were given on global warming, eco tourism, the cruise ship industry and the pebble mine. Stan Stephens represents the tourism group on the council.

The next conference the council will attend is the 30th Arctic Marine Oil Spill Program, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The conference in early June provides a chance for oil spill researchers, regulators and responders to present up-to-date information on topics such as oil spill treating agents, contingency planning and containment and recovery. For more information, or to obtain proceedings, visit www.etc-etc.ec.gc.ca/news/conferences_e.html

### 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 Ayleska 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 Alyska terminal and associated tankers.

### Board of Directors

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Vice President: Steve Lewis - City of Seldovia
Secretary: Marilyn Heddell - City of Whittier
Treasurer: Jane Eisemann - City of Kodiak
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Nancy Bird - City of Cordova
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Patience Andersen Faulkner - Cordova District Fishermen United
John French - City of Seward
Blake Johnson - Kenai Peninsula Borough
Pete Kompoff - Community of Chenahega Bay
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Barb Penrose, Data Entry Assistant
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REAL OR VIRTUAL? The ship simulator at the Alaska Vocational Technical Center in Seward creates a convincing illusion of actually being at sea. Photo by Linda Robinson.