



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.

Federal agency wants more scrutiny before allowing dispersant use in Sound, Inlet

The U.S. Department of the Interior has moved to require incident-specific consideration before chemical dispersants can be used on oil spills in large areas of Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet.

The policy shift, laid out in a Sept. 26 letter, withdraws Interior Department approval for what is called 'preauthorized' dispersant use in substantial parts of the two waterbodies. Instead, the Interior Department said, spill managers will need to decide about dispersant use on a case-by-case basis.

"The use of dispersants in a particular incident may not adequately protect (Interior Department) resources," wrote Pamela Bergmann, the department's regional environmental officer in Alaska. "Therefore, preauthorization of dispersants without incident-specific information is no longer appropriate."

Preauthorization means dispersants can be used by oil-spill response managers without consulting Interior or the other agencies with responsibilities in the affected area. The areas at issue are in what is called Zone 1 under dispersant use guidelines adopted in 1986 for Cook Inlet and in March 1989 for Prince William Sound (shortly before the Exxon Valdez spill).

"Information forming the basis of policies included in those guidelines is 20 or more years old," Interior wrote, noting that environmental conditions change over time.

Interior also said that each incident is unique,

and that consultations on dispersant use can be made quickly today, thanks to modern technology. Interior, the letter said, "has a track record of considering, both objectively and in a timely manner, requests for the use of dispersants."

Dispersants in theory disperse spilled oil on the surface of the ocean into the water column. Thus, dispersant use is an environmental tradeoff. As the guidelines put it, "effects on water column organisms may be increased at one site so that effects can be decreased or eliminated at other sites."

In Zone 1, the tradeoff analysis is presumed to have been made in advance and to have favored using dispersants so decisively that cleanup managers may do so without further analysis and without consulting affected agencies.

(In Zone 2, dispersants can be used only after incident-specific consideration. In Zone 3, areas close to sensitive shorelines, the chemicals are all but banned.)

Most of central Prince William Sound and Port Valdez were in Zone 1, the formerly preauthorized area, during the winter. In the summer, when more fish move through, parts of those areas switched to Zone 2. Zone 1 also took in waters off the Copper River Delta, off the Gulf of Alaska coast outside Prince William Sound, and along the southern Kenai Peninsula.

See page 2, **DISPERSANTS**

New legislative committee likely to deal with bill to set up state invasive species council

The citizens' council board at its September meeting in Cordova formed a new Legislative Affairs Committee for the 2009 lawmaking session.

The members are John Velsko of Homer, Blake Johnson of Kenai, John French of Seward, Iver Malutin of Kodiak, and Pat Duffy of Valdez. Velsko is the new committee's chair, with Johnson as vice chair. All are also members of the council board.

One bill the committee may track would create the Alaska Council on Invasive Species to serve as a statewide clearinghouse and coordinating body on the issue.

Invasive species, long a major issue for the citizens'

council, refers to the problem of non-indigenous plants or animals reaching Alaska and establishing themselves here. Such invaders can harm native species, including such commercially valuable ones as salmon. For the citizens' council, the primary concern is organisms arriving via oil tankers—either attached to hulls or riding in ballast water that the tankers discharge before loading North Slope crude at the Alyeska terminal in Valdez.

The bill was filed early this month by Rep. Craig Johnson of Anchorage. "Governmental, public, and

See page 3, **INVASIVE SPECIES BILL**



Sociologist Steven Picou makes a point during his October presentation in Cordova. Photo by Linda Robinson, citizens' council.

Studies trace psychological aftereffects of oil spill

By JOY LANDALUCE
Cordova Times
Courtesy of Alaska Newspapers Inc.

Sociologist Steven Picou from the University of South Alabama has listened to Cordovans since 1989. From what he hears, the Exxon Valdez oil spill is still playing a daily role in many lives.

"What not to say to victims is a long, important list. 'I know how you feel,' 'It was God's will,' 'You have got to get on with your life,' 'You should be over that by now,' 'You are lucky to be alive,' 'You have got to be strong,' 'Good will come out of it,' and 'Time heals all wounds,'" Picou said. "Good communication as a peer listener means you stop talking, get rid of distractions, be interested and show it—tune into the other person and concentrate on the message."

Picou studies the impacts on victims after a disaster, going on site to conduct surveys on the psychological and social behavior. Picou and his team came to study Cordova victims of the Exxon Valdez oil spill by August 1989. Survey after survey was filled

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Volunteer Profile

New volunteer is absolutely impressed by council

By KYLE VON BOSE
Council Content Writer

Valdez resident Steve Bushong is the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee’s newest member. Bushong serves as chief operating officer at Copper Valley Electric and has 15 years of experience in Alaska’s energy industry.

Before moving to Valdez, Bushong and his family lived in the small town of Dillingham, in Bristol Bay. The Bushongs moved to the remote port town in 1993 from Virginia with their three sons, whose ages were two, three, and eight years.

“We really liked Dillingham a lot. It was pretty exciting,” Bushong said. “We were really into running up rivers on our snow machines, king salmon fishing, moose hunting, we had a blast.”

In Dillingham, a large portion of the population rides snow machines and ATVs down the streets, on the sidewalks, and all around town. Bushong’s kids grew up riding snow machines to school. So their move to Valdez in 2002 was something of a culture shock for his three boys.

“When we first moved, my middle son couldn’t understand why everyone was so uptight,” Bushong said. “That same middle son really didn’t like the idea that we were moving to a place that had a road going into it. He thought there would be too many people.”

Bushong, however, has gotten used to the idea of having the Richardson Highway available for his cruising pleasure. He recently bought a BMW motorcycle and enjoys making trips back and forth between Valdez and Anchorage during the summer.

At Copper Valley Electric, Bushong faces many of the same challenges that Alaskans face throughout



Steve Bushong

the state: trying to control the growing cost of energy. For Valdez that involves the exploration of additional hydropower.

Bushong said he became active with the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee after his neighbor Tom Kuckertz, a member of the Copper Valley Electric board of directors and a project manager for the council, talked him into joining. Bushong said he was impressed by Tom and the council, and has always had a natural curiosity about what was going on across the Sound.

“I think Tom does a very good job of being able

to communicate some very technical issues in a way that some of us as volunteers can get our arms around it and say, ‘Oh, so that’s what’s going on.’ I think that’s just pretty cool.”

Bushong lends the committee his knowledge in engineering and emergency incident planning and response. In Dillingham he was trained as an incident commander for their small tank farm.

Bushong is glad the citizens’ council serves as a mechanism to verify that oil transportation in the Sound has the appropriate checks and balances.

“I find it to be absolutely entertaining,” Bushong said. “What I’ve found is a particularly sincere group of people that are interested in protecting the environment, but have the understanding that an industrial process like this needs to get done as efficiently and cost effectively as possible. I also like that the group I’m involved with is absolutely sincere and 100 percent professional.”

Bushong said that some of the things he has learned as a member of the committee have really opened his eyes to the realities of Alaska’s oil industry.

“The one big thing that has just blown me away, is despite all we hear about the throughput of oil going down, the dollar value of what is going through is incredible,” Bushong said. In 2002, the North Slope crude moving through Valdez was worth about \$700,000,000 a month; in 2008, throughput value exceeded \$2 billion per month.

“Anybody who thinks there aren’t a lot of issues left to deal with, needs to see what those dollar amounts are. There’s plenty of things left to do here and there’s plenty of money for the oil companies to make sure it’s done right.”

DISPERSANTS: No more preauthorization

Continued from Page 1

Zone 1 also included the central portion of northern Cook Inlet, as well as strips paralleling the east and west shores of the Inlet in the vicinity of Kamishak Bay and Kachemak Bay.

The Prince William Sound guidelines have not been revised since their adoption in 1989, despite the fact they were in effect at the time of the Exxon Valdez spill response, when dispersant use was attempted repeatedly and unsuccessfully.

The main dispersant stored in Alaska for use on Prince William Sound spills is Corexit 9527, the same product that failed during the Exxon Valdez response. The oil industry has stockpiled about 74,000 gallons of it in Anchorage and Valdez, plus about 1,000 gallons of a different dispersant.

A top federal official in the 1989 spill response estimated afterward that it would have taken 500,000 gallons of the chemical to treat the 11 million gallons of oil released by the Exxon Valdez.

The citizens’ council position on dispersants is that decades of research have not shown they will work in Prince William Sound conditions, nor established how harmful they are to the marine environment (they are, like crude oil, extremely toxic). Consequently, the council opposes dispersant use in the Sound until those questions are answered.

“We believe dispersants could well do more harm than good,” said John Devens, executive director of the council. “So we are glad to see an important agency like the Interior Department call for consultation before they are used anywhere in the Sound.”

Interior’s move has drawn objections from other agencies involved in the Alaska Regional

Response Team, which is in charge of planning the response to crude oil spills in Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet.

Doug Helton and John Whitney, who represent the U.S. Department of Commerce on the response team, wrote on Oct. 3 that they were surprised and did not concur with the Interior Department’s action. They said the consultation process sought by Interior might be too time-consuming in the “often times chaotic and rapid pace of response decisionmaking.” Response managers, according to Whitney and Helton, “need to have greater latitude of authority regarding this time-critical response issue.”

Three other agencies that participate in the response team raised similar concerns in an Oct. 14 letter. They faulted Interior for not coordinating the move with the rest of the response team. And they said they were concerned that, without preauthorization, the oil industry might stop stockpiling dispersants in Alaska for quick response in the event of a spill. “An unintended consequence of this action could be a diminished dispersant capacity statewide and inability to protect and mitigate impacts to important resources.”

The letter was signed by Coast Guard Rear Admiral A.E. Brooks; Larry Hartig, commissioner of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation; and Elin Miller, regional administrator for the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

In a Dec. 22 response, the Interior Department said it would stick with its decision. “Incident-specific consultation rather than preapproval is the best way for (the Interior Department) to meet its responsibilities,” wrote Willie R. Taylor, director of the agency’s Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance in Washington, D.C.

Picou: Spill effects linger for years

Continued from Page 1

out. Picou presented his most recent findings from the Cordova studies at the community’s Masonic Temple in October 2008.

In 1996, working with the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council, Picou helped develop a peer-listener training program for Cordova residents, including a DVD version. In peer listening, community residents learn to be peer counselors, advisors, friends, and referral agents for those who may not seek professional services or may not know that help is available.

Mental and social impacts

Picou’s latest findings represent data collected from a telephone survey done with 372 Cordova residences in 2006.

The results are focused on the long-term study of the social and psychological impacts of the Exxon Valdez spill and also the impacts of the litigation process.

At that time, seventeen years after the spill, psychological stress from the event was still present, Picou says. Depression was widespread among the victims. The survey showed financial and economic problems, strained marital relationships and low self-worth.

On a positive note, the study also showed a strong trust in friends, relatives and local community organizations. There seemed to be a community recovery under way.

“Acute traumas were inflicted on the community at the time of the spill. There was a subsistence loss to the Native culture and an economic loss to the fishermen,” Picou said during his October visit. “Initially, panic and similar emotions arrive, but the long-term emotions switch to frustration and depression. Victims feel that they lose their dreams. Common outcomes from this type of situation are anger and depression.”

Patience Andersen Faulkner, president of the citizens’ council, wanted the existing peer listener DVD updated with Picou’s current findings. Faulkner also wanted new peer listening training offered to the community.

“This entire documentation and training program has been sponsored by Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council,” Faulkner said. “Peer listener training is as simple as a friend, child or

See next page, **PICOU**

From the Executive Director

Anniversary is a time to reflect on lessons of spill

As I write this, the twentieth anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill is very much on our minds here at the citizens' council. Like many Alaskans, I'll never forget the morning of March 24, 1989, when I woke up to find that North America's largest oil spill had just occurred practically on my doorstep, and that it had come from a ship named after the town of which I was mayor: Valdez, Alaska.

As detailed elsewhere in this issue of the Observer, the council will be involved in a number of events dedicated to the anniversary, as well as several publications. We've already released "Then and Now: The Alaska Oil Spill at 20," a DVD on changes to the transportation system in Prince William Sound since 1989. Between now and the anniversary date, we'll also release a written report on the same subject, and an oral history book, "The Spill: Personal Stories of the Exxon Valdez Disaster."

The root cause of this signal event in Alaska history was, in our view, complacency—the assumption that, because no disaster had occurred in the 12 years since the startup of North Slope oil production, the system in 1989 was as safe as it needed to be and there was nothing to worry about.

As the Exxon spill demonstrated, that assumption was profoundly mistaken. While some citizen activists had long called for safety improvements in Prince William Sound, their voices were largely ignored by

the public. On March 24, 1989, the few prevention measures in place were inadequate to head off the spill, and the cleanup resources immediately available were inadequate to deal with it.

Since then, regulatory agencies, the oil industry, and citizens have worked together to use the painful memories and hard lessons of the Exxon spill to reduce the chances of another such catastrophe and to prepare for a better cleanup if one should occur. The tanker fleet is switching to double hulls, which do much to reduce or eliminate spills that result from groundings or collisions. Loaded tankers are escorted from Valdez to the Gulf of Alaska by powerful tugs designed to keep a disabled tanker off the rocks or begin cleanup if there is a spill. Detailed contingency plans for preventing and cleaning up spills are now mandatory.

Despite these strides in oil-spill prevention and response, we know that individual and institutional memories fade with time, that people, companies, and agencies can let down their guard. One of our biggest concerns at the citizens' council is that these tendencies will bring back the complacency that allowed the Exxon Valdez disaster to happen and that the system built up since then will start to erode.

That risk may be increasing as the twentieth anniversary approaches. Oil prices are in one of their periodic slumps and the industry is warning of possible cutbacks in its operations. The ongoing

decline of North Slope oil production could well intensify these pressures. In keeping with our mission, we at the council will be very much on watch to resist any move to reduce the safety margins.

In particular, we will be vigilant on the future of the escort system. The federal requirement that every loaded tanker must be escorted through the Sound by two tugs applies only to single-hulled tankers, though, for now, double-hulled tankers are escorted as well.

When, in a few years, the transition to double-hulled tankers is complete, there will be no federal escort requirement at all, but the council is determined to see that the escorts continue.

In our view, one of the most important lessons of 1989 is that safety is a fixed cost of transporting oil. It should not become subject to the fluctuations of the oil market and we will continue to do all in our power to prevent that from happening.

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



John Devens

Alyeska Viewpoint

Alyeska's fire brigade wins statewide competition

For the 10th consecutive year, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.'s Valdez Marine Terminal Fire Brigade captured the Alaska Firefighter Competition Governor's Trophy at the 2008 Statewide Firefighting Conference. The team has won the Governor's Trophy 14 times since 1993. As the Valdez Marine Terminal Director, this is an achievement that I am very proud of because it demonstrates the caliber of our employees.

The brigade also took first place in four individual events: the ladder raise; fire extinguisher; make and break; and the self-contained breathing apparatus.

This year's competition was held in Juneau with eight fire departments from around the state competing. Groups included the Alyeska brigade; Red Dog Mine Fire and Rescue; Capital City Fire and Rescue (Juneau); Alpine Fire Department; Valdez Fire Department; "Oosiks" Chapter; Cordova Fire Department; and others. The conference attendees also participated in over 400 hours of training that included classroom and hands-on workshops and training courses.

Alyeska's competition team included Brian Beauvais, Justin Major, Steve McCann, Matt Smelcer, Jennifer Stubblefield, Ken White, and Sean Wisner.

Our fire brigade is made up of technicians from all over the Valdez Marine Terminal including Oil Movements and Storage, Power Vapor, Marine, Maintenance, Instrument/Electricians, and Ballast Water Treatment. Fire Chief Brian Beauvais said, "When there is an



Members of Alyeska's fire brigade train at the Texas A&M University fire school in October 2008. Photo by Kathy Zinn.

emergency, the team has an expert represented from all areas of the terminal, and that diversity is what makes our brigade so strong."

I would like to share a rescue that our fire brigade/rope rescue team was involved with recently. We received a call from the Valdez Fire Department to help rescue a man who had fallen down a crude tower at the Petro Star Refinery, which is down the road from the Valdez Marine Terminal. Within minutes of the call, the rope rescue team was able to lift the man to safety. This challenging rescue is a testament to the different scenarios the fire brigade practices throughout the year.

The Valdez Marine Terminal Fire Brigade consists

of 60 professional firefighters. Sixteen are full-time firefighters contracted through Doyon Universal Services and 44 are trained Alyeska technicians who provide fire and rescue services on the terminal. Several of these men and women also volunteer for their local community's fire service as well.

Alyeska has six pieces of fire and rescue apparatus and one ambulance on the terminal. All are utilized and kept ready for emergency response events. The fire brigade is a key part of Alyeska's emergency response team. The team must be prepared to quickly respond to every possible contingency scenario. Ideally, this fire team would never be needed. But it must always be ready. That's why Valdez Marine Terminal firefighters follow a strict, year-round training regimen that includes weekly fire practice at the terminal facility and quarterly field exercises. Every member of the brigade must also complete a biannual fire academy training course.

I hope you will join me congratulating the fire brigade team.

• Kathy Zinn is the director of Alyeska's Valdez Marine Terminal



Kathy Zinn

Picou: Cordova spill studies

Continued from Page 2

co-worker just talking about what they are going through in life and having someone to just listen."

Thirty Cordovans attended the lecture and classes last fall. Public health nurse Susanna Marquette took away a new confidence in the techniques of listening.

"I really appreciated having the opportunity to review what was learned at the first peer listening training in 1996. What is so exciting about his work is not only the results of the 2006 survey done locally, but the research available from other communities traumatized by disaster," Marquette said.

Invasive species bill

private entities need a cooperative means of communicating, planning, coordinating, and collaborating in the development of a statewide plan of action in addressing the threat posed by invasive species," the bill says, under legislative findings.

It would create a 14-member council with five seats held by the commissioners of various departments of state government. The remaining seats would represent conservation organizations, farmers, commercial fishermen, commercial shippers, Native corporations, and the public at large, among others. The council, according to the bill,

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would "plan and coordinate efforts that address the threats posed to the state and its residents by invasive species." It would seek to involve federal departments and agencies in the process.

Lisa Ka'aihue, manager of the citizens' council's projects on non-indigenous species said the state council would be an important tool for addressing the issue. "If we're going to prevent the types of invasions that have wreaked environmental and economic havoc in other states, we have to start now and be very vigorous in our planning and management," Ka'aihue said.

Community Corner

Community events mark anniversary

March 24, 2009, is the twentieth anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. To commemorate it, the council is sponsoring multiple events connecting several communities affected by the spill. Each community will be able to gather and watch the presentations, ask questions, and perhaps pull in people who were present during the spill to talk about how things have changed in twenty years.

One of the presentations will be a panel discussion featuring a reunion of the Alaska Sea Grant Legal Research Team, which was formed in 1989 to study how the state of Alaska might improve its oversight of oil transport. The team’s legal analysis was provided to the Alaska Oil Spill Commission, which used the information in its 1990 report to Governor Steve Cowper. The commission’s report subsequently helped guide the Alaska Legislature in reforming Alaska’s rules governing the marine transport of crude oil and other hazardous substances.

Walter Parker, who was director of the state oil spill commission, will lead the March 24 panel discussion. Panelists will recount the role of the oil-spill commission, review Alaska’s pre-Exxon Valdez regulatory system and how it changed with the help of Alaska Sea Grant’s research, and discuss what might be done today to further improve the system. Three of the four members of the Alaska Sea Grant legal team will participate. They include Zygmunt Plater, professor of environmental law at the Boston College School of Law; Harry Bader, former University of Alaska Fairbanks professor of natural resource policy and Alaska Department of Natural Resources official; and Alison Rieser, emeritus professor of law, University of Maine School of Law, now associated with the Public Policy Center at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Others may participate as well.

Another panel is the Partners in Prevention and Response Panel, also at the Dena’ina Center on March 24. It tentatively includes Tim Plummer, president, Tesoro Maritime Co.; Anil Mathur, CEO, Alaska Tanker Co.; Greg Jones, vice president operations, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.; John Devens, executive director, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council; and a Coast Guard

representative. The moderator will be Anchorage attorney Bill Walker. The panel will discuss prevention and response improvements that have been made since the 1989 spill and how recommendations by the Alaska Sea Grant Legal Research Team have been addressed.

Also on March 24, Cordova will host a panel of scientists to discuss herring restoration, and Kenai will have a presentation by the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council at the Challenger Learning Center.

Homer will host two art shows opening on March 24. The first, at the Pratt Museum, is “Reflections of a Spill: 20 Years Later.” It will be followed by an exhibit sponsored by the Prince William Sound citizens’ council—“Spill,” at the Bunnell Street Arts Center.

A book signing for the council’s Oral History will be held in Kodiak, and the Kodiak Audubon Society and the Friends of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge plan to sponsor an event featuring Dr. Stanley (Jeep) Rice of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This event will include a photo display, “Images of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill on Kodiak Island,” and a reception with music by the Kodiak folk group Waterbound.

Barnes and Noble in Anchorage will feature a group of related books for the month of March.

Please check our website, www.pwsrcac.org, for updates and additions to the schedule of events.

In November, the council’s information booth traveled to the Alaska Municipal League conference in Ketchikan, the annual meeting of the Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry in Tampa Bay Florida, and Pacific Marine Expo In Seattle. Thanks to Pete and Marilyn Heddell, John French, Patience Andersen Faulkner, Blake Johnson, and Jacquelyn Olsen for helping out at these events.

Upcoming 2009 events include the Alaska Forum on the Environment, February 2-6, 2009, at the Egan Center and the Dena’ina Center in Anchorage; the Alaska Wilderness, Recreation and Tourism conference scheduled for March 4-6 in Girdwood; and the Kachemak Bay Science Conference, March 6-7 in Homer.

Happy New Year!



Linda Robinson

Retired Coastie takes on marine ops job

Joel Kennedy has taken the job of Marine Operations Project Manager in the council’s Valdez office.

Kennedy, who started in late November, left the Coast Guard with over 21 years of professional experience in maritime operations and management and over 10 years of sea going experience.

In his new job, Kennedy will monitor port organization, operations, and

incidents, as well as the adequacy and maintenance of the Coast Guard’s vessel traffic system.

Chenega Bay gets new rep

In another change at the council, Charles Totemoff was seated on the board in September to represent the community of as Chenega Bay. He replaces Donald Kompkoff, who has become the alternate representative for the community.

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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