



The Observer

VOLUME 19, No. 4/SEPTEMBER 2009

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

Collaboration boosts vessel safety in Gulf of Alaska

The Gulf of Alaska is home to a new state-of-the-art weather monitoring station that transmits information about current conditions in near real time to the internet. Information from the station will help mariners and commercial fishermen make better navigational decisions.

The council recently partnered with the Prince William Sound Science Center, Cape St. Elias Lightkeepers Association, and the Coast Guard to install the station on Kayak Island, in the Gulf of Alaska southeast of Prince William Sound.

The council purchased the station to help monitor conditions that could produce a weather phenomenon called “barrier jets.”

Barrier jets are very high winds formed when a low pressure storm system approaches a mountain range like the ones along the Gulf of Alaska coast. The mountains concentrate the air flow into jets of wind paralleling the coast. Wind speeds under these conditions can be dramatically higher than the locally forecasted winds.

The result can be ocean waves large enough to endanger passing tankers.

In 2007, the tanker Seabulk Pride left Prince William Sound laden with oil. As usual, conditions in the area were being monitored by the Coast Guard to ensure safe passage.

The Coast Guard does not allow tankers to sail if the winds are blowing at 45 knots (51 mph) or waves reach 15 feet. However, the weather at the time allowed traffic to continue.

Several miles out of the Sound, the tanker ran



The weather station was installed with the help of a Sitka-based air crew operating out of the Cordova air station. From the left: Fernando delCid, David Paquin, Joe Banta, Lieutenant Nate Hudson, Lieutenant Commander Nate Coulter, Rob Campbell. Photo by Ryan Feldmei.

into winds of 63 mph with gusts up to 132 mph and 35-foot waves. The tanker was damaged when a huge wave broke over the bow.

After a review of the satellite weather information, the strong winds were later to have been caused by a fast-moving barrier jet.

The new station will monitor wind speed and direction, air temperature, relative humidity, barometric pressure, and solar radiation, all conditions which can set the stage for barrier jets.

The station was installed in July through a joint effort of the council’s Joe Banta and the Prince William Sound Science Center’s Rob Campbell.

“It is our hope that this information will be useful to the National Weather Service to help predict barrier jets,” Banta said. “They need measurements from the area where the jets start to form, which this station should provide.”

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Council resumes Washington efforts on escorts issue

By **STAN JONES**
Director of External Affairs

Efforts by the citizens’ council to get federal legislation that would preserve double tug escorts in Prince William Sound moved to the back burner for much of the summer as Congress took its August recess.

Now, with Congress having reconvened on

Sept. 8, the council’s Legislative Affairs Committee is back at work on the escorts issue with plans being developed for a trip to Washington by council representatives this fall, possibly by mid-October.

The purpose would be to visit the offices of the Alaska Congressional delegation and other members of Congress to urge them to move the

legislation this fall.

The legislation has been before Congress since mid-May, when it was introduced by Alaska Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Mark Begich. Congressman Young is expected to help attach a similar provision to legislation in the House.

The bill, known as S. 1041, would amend the

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Sampling expert is boon to science committee

Like many Alaskans, Scientific Advisory Committee member Mark Udevitz never expected to end up in Alaska. He heard stories about the state from his father, who lived here in the 1940's and considered Alaska a good place for a vacation.

In 1990, he received a job offer with U.S. Fish and Wildlife as a wildlife biometrician. Wildlife biometricians conduct research on techniques for sampling wildlife populations, and estimating characteristics such as population size and survival rates.

One of Udevitz's first tasks upon arriving in Alaska was to help assess damages to the sea otter population from the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Udevitz would be dropped off on a rock in a remote area of Prince William Sound for hours at a time to observe and count otters.

Parts of his workday would be intense with planes flying overhead and lots of activity. In between, there was a lot of downtime. Rather than feel bored or isolated, Udevitz often took the opportunity to explore and examine tide pools.

"The Sound is a neat place to work," he said about the experience, "Anything that involves being out on a boat, I'm up for it."

More recently, Udevitz has been working for the U.S. Geological Survey helping to develop a new technique to estimate the Pacific walrus population.

Walrus depend on the floating Arctic ice for reproduction

and access to food. During recent periods of reduced sea ice, walrus were hauling out on Alaskan and Russian shores where they had never appeared before.

Scientists have been trying to monitor walrus populations to estimate effects of the reduced ice pack. Previous attempts to count walrus through low-altitude airplane surveys were slow. Results were unreliable and included a lot of guesswork.

Udevitz explained the new technique. High-altitude surveys use cutting-edge infrared technology to scan the sea ice to detect groups of walrus. Lower altitude flybys are then conducted to get high-resolution photos of selected groups, permitting a much more accurate estimate of the number of walrus on the ice.

The old surveys didn't have a reliable method to determine how many walrus were missed because they were in the water at the time of the survey. In the new survey, walrus are monitored to figure out the average time spent in the water. These new procedures will help Udevitz and his partners to more accurately determine the overall number of walrus.

Udevitz's expertise in designing such sampling surveys has been of great value to the council's Scientific Advisory Committee, known as SAC. Udevitz was recruited to the committee in 2008, and is excited to have joined the group during such

an interesting period.

To ensure the council's core issues are being addressed, the committee has been rethinking how the council fulfills its requirement for environmental monitoring.

"It's an interesting time right now for SAC. We're in the process of re-evaluating what's been done, and how that fits in with the bigger picture," Udevitz said, "We're going back to the founding principles of the council and taking another look at the Oil Pollution Act of 1990."

Udevitz says the council has gotten some really useful information from the Sound through the Long Term Environmental Monitoring Project, which has been scaled back in recent months. In the near future, "I expect some refinements and some improvements and some expansions that will improve its utility."

A more comprehensive monitoring program seems to be evolving from the committee's recent work. "That is sort of conceptual at this point," Udevitz said.

The committee may be interested in sampling other species, or using other methods to get a fuller picture of the environment of the Sound.



Mark Udevitz enjoys sailing with his family on their sailboat in Seward. Photo by Molissa Udevitz.

"We realize that the monitoring program can be more than this one project. It's kind of wide open right now and we're in more of a brainstorming phase."

Udevitz hopes the committee can work with other organizations, such as the council's recent partnership to install a new weather station on Kayak Island, to make the most of the council's resources. (See story, page 1.)

"There is a limit to what the council can do, so we're also trying to look hard at what other people are doing and how we can leverage that and use our resources to fill gaps."

"Right now there are a lot of ideas cooking. I expect good things."

Council loses good friend and oil spill advocate

By **LINDA ROBINSON**
Outreach Coordinator
SOPHIE BAHÉ
Vigipol

The citizens' council lost a good friend on August 3 when Jean-Baptiste Henry passed away in France after battling cancer for many years.

on the Brittany coast in March 1978, Henry was an elected official at the Institut National de Recherche Agronomique, a European agricultural research institute affected by the spill.

Henry convinced his colleagues from other local authorities to form Syndicat Mixte, a joint venture

Since Amoco was an American company, Syndicat Mixte fought its legal battle in a Chicago court. For more than twenty years, Henry was the soul of that fight and the thinker of the organization.

When the Exxon Valdez oil spill occurred, Henry visited Alaska to propose the idea of an 'oiled mayors' organization based on the French experience. The idea became reality, and the relationship between the two organizations continued.

In 2005, an invitation was extended to then-board president Patience Andersen Faulkner and council outreach coordinator Linda Robinson to share the Exxon Valdez experience at an event observing the 25th anniversary of Vigipol.

In 2006, Henry, along with Vigipol members Sophie Bahé and Marion Fourcade, visited a number of the council's board members, communities and member organizations to learn more about the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Henry had retired in 2004 but still volunteered with Vigipol as a science consultant.

Henry was a free mind, an artist and a great art collector. He



Henry and board member John Allen. Photo by Linda Robinson.

recently completed a book of poetry and drawings, and was working on one about his experiences in Alaska when he passed away at the age of 70.

On hearing of his passing, Faulkner had these words to say about the first time she met Henry.

"He was advertised as an encyclopedia of information on oil spills, oil industry, government relations, legal processes, and that he believed people are the most important element in dealing with the trauma of disasters." Faulkner said, "I think this was an understatement."

He will be very much missed by his Alaskan friends.



Henry and Linda Robinson aboard the Alaska State Ferry in 2006. Photo by Marian Fourcade.

Initially a geographer and agricultural researcher, Henry was keen on the culture of his land, Brittany, a region in northwest France. When the Amoco Cadiz oil spill occurred

between public authorities, to defend their coastline. Syndicat Mixte eventually grew into a permanent organization under the name Vigipol.

From the Acting Executive Director

Great project results require involvement from all

The citizens’ council is kicking off its long-range planning process. Sometimes, we’re asked how we select the projects we undertake and how we develop our annual budgets.

Someone even asked if we use a dartboard, or if there is something more systematic at work?

The answer is, it’s all in our five-year long-range plan, which gives overall shape to the development of our much more detailed annual work plans and budgets. We’ve been using this process since 2001.

The long-range plan is updated annually. As part of that process, we seek new project ideas from our staff, board and committee volunteers, and from stakeholders in the oil industry and regulatory agencies.

There are various ways that we strive to achieve our mission of promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska’s Valdez Marine Terminal and the oil tankers that load North Slope crude there.

One way is to foster partnerships and joint projects with industry, government agencies and citizens. We have learned that such partnerships lead to good policies, better response capabilities, safer oil transportation, and improved environmental protection.

Ideas for new projects need to be submitted

with a brief statement or description touching on the following five criteria: 1) relevance to the council mission; 2) value to the council; 3) benefit to the council’s constituents; 4) probability of success; and 5) anticipated cost.

Each year a handful of board members along with the five technical committee chairs volunteer to serve on the strategic planning coordination committee tasked with updating the five-year plan. These volunteers work with the council staff to fine-tune the planning process and assemble the input received.

Once all of the proposed projects are placed in the five-year framework, they are provided to our staff and full board of directors for ranking. Each ranker assigns points to his or her highest-priority projects based on the five criteria listed above. The points are averaged, and the scores are summarized in a ranking table.

This ranking table is instrumental in the development of our annual work plans and budgets, as the highest-ranked projects get the highest priority.

If you have a project idea for us, we’d love to hear about it; instructions for submitting them appear below.

Besides meeting the five criteria listed above, project ideas should relate to our mission. That mission includes, but is not limited to: monitor-

ing the environmental impacts of the terminal facilities and the tankers that use it; reviewing oil spill prevention and response contingency plans for the terminal and the tankers; monitoring drills and exercises; studying wind, currents, and other environmental factors; reviewing new technological developments and changes in other factors critical to oil transportation safety; providing advice and recommendations to industry and regulators on findings growing out of our work; and broadly representing our constituents in the region affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989.

To submit a project idea, send them to me at: schantz@pwsrca.org. The deadline for this year’s planning effort is October 2, 2009, but we will accept new project ideas at any time for consideration and inclusion in the next planning cycle.

- Donna Schantz is the acting executive director of Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council.



Donna Schantz

From the Alyeska Viewpoint

New boss takes the helm at SERVS facility

One of Arthur Knolle’s fondest memories was serving aboard the Australian-built replica of Captain Cook’s *HMS Endeavour*. The original *Endeavour*, captained by James Cook, was famous for Cook’s legendary voyages throughout the Pacific. Knolle’s time aboard the historic replica was short, a mere seven days; however, the knowledge and understanding he gained in that week have lasted him a lifetime. Indeed, for Knolle the experience aboard the *Endeavour* proved to be a perfect model for how an organization should be structured and managed, a model he plans to bring to Alyeska’s Ship Escort/Response Vessels System, known as SERVS.

The *Endeavour* replica was manned by more than 50 crewmembers. These crewmen had to come together as a team and perform the

individual duties that allowed the *Endeavour* to muscle through the waves of the Pacific: manning the helm, raising and lowering halyards, plotting courses, standing watch, etc. Each task came together in perfect unison and propelled the 368-ton wooden hull of the *Endeavour* through the Pacific seas. With clear lines of authority and communication, well defined roles, and an unwavering goal of navigating from point A to point B, Knolle and his fellow sailors maneuvered the *Endeavour* through the shoals and hazards of the Pacific coastline.

“The principles and practices that lead to success in sailing easily lend themselves to leading an organization such as SERVS,” states Knolles. “Team effort propels an organization, and I have the highest confidences in the SERVS team members. They have a proven track record, intimate knowledge of the demands associated with oil spill prevention and response, and the hard earned experience that will ensure the continued success of SERVS.”

“I also recognize the core of SERVS’ success has been its relationships with its regulators and organizations such as the PWSRCAC,” continues Knolle. “I plan to continue this strategy of partnership that has contributed to



Arthur Knolle

Alyeska’s success.”

In addition to his seamanship and nautical enthusiasm, Knolle brings extensive knowledge and management skills to the role of the SERVS Director, from leadership experience in the technology industry of Silicon Valley, to mining and mineral processing, and to both on-shore and off-shore petroleum operations.

Knolle comes to Alaska from Gilroy, California. His educational background includes an MBA from Golden Gate University in San Francisco and a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Knolle is especially happy to return to Alaska where he lived in the mid-1980s while attending the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Arthur and his wife, Carol, have three teenage children and will live in Valdez.

Knolle will play a critical role as the SERVS Director, developing and implementing future strategies for the organization. The duties and responsibilities of his new position began effective August 10.

Updated Peer Listening DVD training program now available

The council recently updated the award-winning video/DVD training course “**Coping with Technological Disasters: Peer Listener Training.**”

This training teaches peer-listening techniques that allow community members to counsel each other. A community member can learn to be an advisor, friend, and referral agent for people who may not want professional services or may not know that help is available. Developed during the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, this training is now being used to help victims of disasters such as Hurricane Katrina. The updated version is free and available now. If you would like a copy, please contact the council’s Anchorage office, 907-277-7222, or toll-free: 800-478-7221.

Citizens’ council volunteers and staff enjoy the sunniest Alaskan summer in recent memory...



Committee member Steve Bushong poses with his motorcycle along the Top of the World Highway between Chicken, Alaska and Dawson City, Yukon. The trip was part of an annual event (Dust to Dawson) for motorcyclists to meet in Dawson City. Photo courtesy of Steve Bushong.



The late evening July sun lights up Denali. Photo by Cathy Hart.



Board president Steve Lewis contemplates the view in Thompson Pass while on a camping and road trip into Alaska’s interior. Photo by Savannah Lewis



Staff member Jennifer Fleming’s daughter, Jillian, sang the national anthem at the kickoff of the Gold Rush Days parade in Valdez. Photo by Tyler Klevin.



Committee member John LeClair spent time camping and boating in Kachemak Bay with his family, friends and lots of kids. Photo courtesy of John LeClair.



Board member John Velsko, aboard his fishing vessel, the Wahoo, leaves Homer for a gillnet opening in Upper Cook Inlet. Photo by Teddi Velsko.

Staff member Linda Robinson paddling on the Kenai River in late summer. Photo by Debby Fairbanks.





A coastal brown bear catches pink salmon near Solomon Gulch Hatchery. Photo by Bob Benda.



Board member Al Burch and his wife Barbara celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary this summer. Al and his brother Oral celebrated 50 years since the two bought their first fishing vessel. Photo by Jeff Scott.

Committee member Bob Flint demonstrates his skills at the Alaska Woodturners Club booth at the Alaska State Fair in Palmer. Photo by Burt Biss.



Staff member Jacquelyn Olsen relaxes after a hard day of fishing on the Kenai River. Photo by Joel Kennedy.



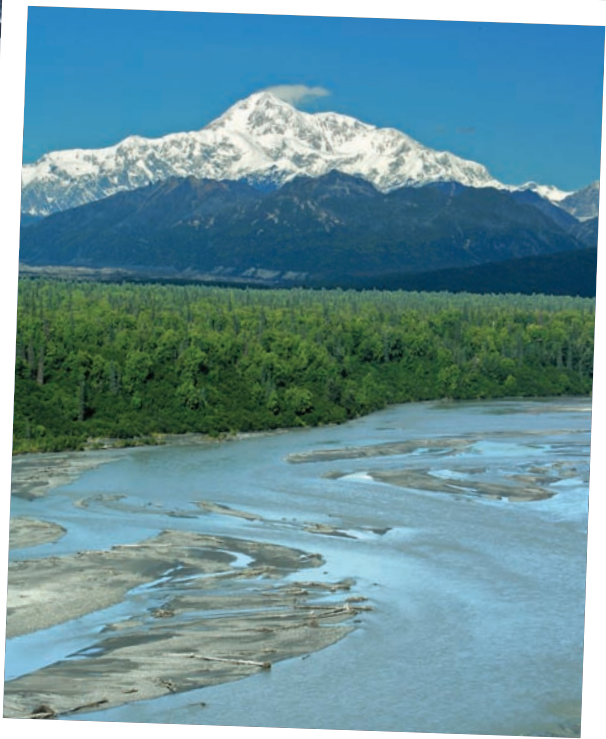
Donna Schantz and her two children, Ellie and Eider, pose on a mossy bank near Thompson Pass. Photo by Tom Schantz.



Committee volunteer Bob Jaynes and his crew for the Valdez Women's Silver Salmon Derby. Oboard: Bob Jaynes (Captain), Terrance Korenev (Deck Hand), Karen Stewart, Betty McIntosh, Georgiann Kannenberg, Carolyn Barker, Lisa Metzger, and Lori Saylor. Photo by Berry B Roberts.



In early summer, Amanda Johnson joined Linda Robinson and Roy Robertson aboard Roy's boat for a trip into Prince William Sound for her first shrimping experience. Photo by Linda Robinson.



A view of Mount McKinley from the south on a late summer afternoon on the Parks Highway. Photo by Stan Jones.

Spill: Alaskan Artists Remember

By: **LINDA ROBINSON**
Outreach Coordinator

In 2008, Homer’s Bunnell Street Gallery, in cooperation with the citizens’ council, invited artists to participate in a show titled “Spill”. The concept behind “Spill” was to provide an opportunity for artists to express the impacts of the Exxon Valdez oil spill through their chosen media. Thirty-three finalists were chosen, mostly from Alaska.

The show opened at the Bunnell Street Gallery in Homer on March 24, 2009, the 20th Anniversary of the Exxon Valdez spill. The show travelled to the Baranov Museum in Kodiak, the Cordova Historical Museum and the Artworks Gallery in Soldotna before ending its tour of Alaska at the MTS Gallery in Anchorage.

This provocative show included a variety of media from painting to copper, fabric to mosaic, mixed media to video. According to the curator, Asia Freeman, “these works confront and challenge, honor and anger, provoke and inspire questions for each of us.”

Two of the pieces were accepted into the bi-annual craft exhibition “Earth, Fire and Fibre” at the Anchorage Museum.

The council would like to thank all of the artists involved for their participation, courage and artistic endeavors.

The “Spill” booklet, featuring photographs of all of the artwork is available from the Bunnell Street Gallery for \$15.00. For more information, contact the gallery at info@bunnellstreetgallery.org.

Photos from Spill



“Reliquae” by Sheila Wyne of Anchorage (left) is cast glass fired twice to create the final shape of the feathers. The combination of clear and opaque black glass creates the effect of beads of crude oil on water or glacier ice.



“Closing the Book” by Kathy Smith of Homer (right) is a bound book made of mixed media including black tar and feathers.



The video “Eleanor” by Tim Geers, from Boston, (screen shot, left) is named after a Native Alaskan woman interviewed by the artist after the Exxon Valdez spill. The piece depicts grasshoppers trapped and struggling in black crude.

Drama explores community effects of Exxon Valdez oil spill

A new play about the Exxon Valdez oil spill opened Sept. 11 at Cyrano’s Off Center Playhouse in Anchorage.

The Big One: A Chronicle of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill was written by Dick Reichman, a Valdez resident 20 years ago when the spill occurred. The play focuses on the people

behind the headlines, the complexity of the experience, and the impact on individuals and Alaska.

The Big One runs through September 27 in Anchorage, and will tour Valdez, Seward, and Homer during October.

For more information, visit Cyrano’s on the web: www.cyranos.org.

Coming up in the January 2010 Observer...The citizens’ council turns 20! Join us for a look back at two decades of promoting the environmentally safe operations of the oil industry in Prince William Sound.

Arctic citizens’ council bill is delayed

Senator Mark Begich’s plan to create a citizens’ council for the Arctic has been delayed. On Aug 3, Sen. Begich introduced the first of his bills on Arctic policy into the Senate.

Establishment of the new council was not included among these bills.

In the Aug 3rd speech to the Senate, Sen. Begich said he is “considering introducing an additional piece of legislation,” which “would establish an Arctic Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council. It would be modeled after similar councils operating successfully in the Prince

William Sound and Cook Inlet regions of Alaska.”

Sen. Begich added, “At the request of North Slope Borough Mayor Edward Itta and our constituents there, I agreed to hold off on this bill for now so we can continue the conversation with the people of the region, along with industry and regulatory stakeholders.”

The creation of the council was proposed last June as part of a package of ideas presented in response to President Obama’s call for a new national oceans policy to help combat the effects of global warming.

Escorts: Council resumes Washington efforts on escorts issue

Continued from Page 1

Oil Pollution Act of 1990 to place double-hulled tankers under the same double-escort requirement that already applies to single-hull tankers.

The key passage of the bill says, “The requirement...relating to single-hulled tankers in Prince William Sound, Alaska...shall apply to double-hulled tankers...”

The Oil Pollution Act requires double escorts for single-hulled tankers, but is silent on the question of escorts for double-hulled tankers. The Act also requires a phase-out of single-hulled tankers by 2015, leading to the council’s concern the escort system might be discontinued or cut back without legislation to

preserve it.

Double-hulled tankers, which have several feet of protective space between their two hulls, can prevent or reduce some oil spills, but are not a cure-all. The Coast Guard estimated a double hull on the Exxon Valdez could have cut the oil outflow from its grounding on Bligh Reef in 1989 from 11 million gallons to 4.4 million gallons, which would still have been a catastrophic spill.

The council expects the escorts language to be attached to another bill rather than being passed by Congress as a standalone measure.

For more information on the Prince William Sound escort system, visit the council’s website at www.tinyurl.com/PWSescorts

Collaboration: New weather station

Continued from Page 1

Looking for a place to locate the station, Banta contacted Toni Bocci, keeper for the Cape St. Elias lighthouse. Bocci introduced the idea of locating the station on lighthouse property to the Lighthouse Keeper’s Association.

“When I talked to the board, I got all positive input,” Bocci said.

The association agreed to lease land for the station to the council for a nominal yearly fee.

Banta and Campbell were able to hitch a ride on a regularly scheduled

Coast Guard helicopter flight to the installation site.

“The average person has to take a fixed wing plane, land on a beach, and hike a couple of miles in to the lighthouse,” Bocci said.

Banta is excited about the possibilities that this example holds for the future.

“I think this demonstrates how several groups can collaborate to make a difficult project work out.”

Weather information from this station is available online: <http://denali.micro-specialties.com/CapeStElias>

Council Meeting Schedule

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

January 21-22, 2010: Anchorage

May 6-7, 2010: Valdez

September 16-17, 2010 (Seldovia)

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

THE OBSERVER is a quarterly newsletter published by the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council. Except where credited to others, articles are written by Amanda Johnson, council project manager.

Youth Connection

Students witness remaining Exxon Valdez oil

By: **JENNY RANKIN**
Cordova High School Student

This summer, ten students embarked on a journey around Prince William Sound. Coming from different backgrounds and communities, none of us really knew what to expect on this trip. Personally, I got the opportunity to grow up in Prince William Sound and enjoy everything it has to offer. However, some people miss out on all the cool things there are to enjoy around the Sound or just in their own environment. I want to share what I learned on this trip, and also encourage people to enjoy, protect, and not take for granted what nature has to offer.

One of the things we learned about on this trip was river otters. We learned about the habitat they live in and how they communicate through excretion. Since river otters excrete on land, they unknowingly fertilize the plants and trees. The fertilization that they provide for the trees increases their photosynthesis rate, which removes a higher amount of carbon from the atmosphere. This reduces the effects of global warming.

Other parts of the Sound are magnificent and contribute not only environmentally, but also make the Sound such a beautiful place. Glaciers and mountains are some of the largest components of the environment of Prince William Sound. The mountains contain vast amounts of wildlife and plant life. Glaciers are rivers of ice that are formed by the

accumulation and compaction of snow on mountains. These landmarks provide both habitats and enrapturing scenery.

We visited the AFK salmon hatchery and learned about the hatching process. Salmon eggs are collected and raised in a controlled environment through the fry stage and then released back into the wild. In this procedure, even the smallest alteration can ruin a whole batch. Learning this allowed me to understand how fragile and important the whole salmon life cycle is. The hatchery employees work hard to develop these fish for the commercial fishing industry. They make sure the fish are fit for nature, and nature is fit for them.

Historic sites show how important the Sound has always been to humans. Old canneries reveal that the area has been used to make money and provide food for many years. Preserving these sites reminds us of the history and importance of the Sound.

We journeyed to the old town site on Latouche Island. We learned about the history of the town, and attempts at building lodges after the town no longer existed. All that remains are tons of rubble with one original building left standing. The Latouche town site was forgotten after the copper mine closed in the 1930's and the Good Friday earthquake of 1964 occurred. Anything left had been bulldozed over.

After visiting the old town site, we traveled down to a point off



Jenny Rankin shows her gloves, blackened by oil remaining on the beaches of the Sound, 20 years after the Exxon Valdez spill. Photo courtesy of Jenny Rankin

Sleepy Bay and began looking for oil that remained from the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Sure enough, from just below the surface rocks to deep down below, oil still contaminates this environment.

I had always heard about the oil that remained and I just accepted that. However, when it's you in the field collecting the oil that remains twenty years later, it really gives you a different perspective. Once I got that thick, black, reeking substance on my hands, it showed me how real this whole catastrophe was. This thick, black poison still unquestionably infects the beautiful, fragile environment of Prince William Sound.

This trip taught me a lot and showed reasons for protecting my environment. No doubt, I respect nature much more, and want to do whatever I can to keep it beautiful and preserved. Prince William


Sound is a wonderful place, but disasters like the Exxon Valdez oil spill, disrespect, and neglecting the Sound will only make it weaker. People need to learn to be considerate of where they live, and take responsibility for their actions.

Jenny and 10 other Alaska students spent a week exploring Prince William Sound as part of the first annual Chugach Children's Forest Expedition Series. This is Jenny's story of her experience. To learn more about the program, and other students' stories, visit www.alaskageographic.org or contact amayokiely@alaskageographic.org. Support for the program is provided by the Chugach National Forest, Alaska Geographic, REI, National Geographic, and Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council.

For more information on the council's student grant program, contact the council's outreach coordinator, Linda Robinson: robinson@pwsrcac.org



Students explored the Sound's historic Nellie Juan cannery site during the Youth Media expedition. Photo by Jenny Rankin.



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Community Corner

Where did the summer go?

By: LINDA ROBINSON
Outreach Coordinator

In August, Dan Gilson and I attended the Sixth International Conference on Marine Bio-invasions. It was held at Portland State University in Oregon. The conference focused on marine bio-invasions around the world. I noticed, while driving from Oregon into Washington State, there was a sign warning drivers about the dangers of transporting invasive species across the border on boats or trailers.

The conference’s numerous sessions provided very interesting information on species that are migrating to areas where they can have harmful effects on local environments. Marine species, transferred by recreational boats, ballast water, and live bait, can cause significant problems. One presenter stated that the Alaska red king crab had been introduced into the White Sea of Russia and is expanding.

According to one speaker, informed citizens with the ability to recognize the out-of-place species are the key to mitigation.

On September 2, I attended the Anchorage School District’s community information sharing event. At the council’s booth, we provided information on our projects of interest to students, teachers, and administrators. Several participants expressed interest in the Oil Spill Curriculum, invasive species, and the council’s student grant opportunities. I received several requests for presentations at after school programs. The school district has added our information to the Science Department’s newsletter, “Science Bytes,” which provides weekly information on student opportunities in science.

Clean Pacific, a bi-annual conference which focuses on oil spill response, emergency planning, port security, and marine fire fighting and salvage, was held in Portland Oregon, September 14-16. Linda Swiss, Walt Parker and I attended. Linda Swiss chaired a session on citizen advisory council accomplishments. She discussed the council’s part in the reduction of emissions from the operating processes at Alyeska’s Ballast Water Treatment Facility. Cook Inlet Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council discussed its new Geographic Resource Information Network, and Shorezone Mapping.

The Information and Education committee will be holding an in-person meeting on Friday and Saturday, September 25-26, in Anchorage. Friday evening, com-

mittee members and staff will be attending the Chugach Children’s Forest event. Included in the event are projects completed by youth while working with National Geographic Explorers, biologists and Alaska teachers to study river otters, black oystercatchers, subsistence and fisheries in the Sound. The council co-sponsored the youth participation in the study program.

A key part of this meeting will be focused on long range planning, looking at ways to improve or expand our existing outreach and education programs.

Recently, the council was invited to make presentations at a conference in Murmansk, Russia. The conference’s focus is on “Fisheries in the Context of Hydrocarbon Resource Development on the Continental Shelf.”

As oil and gas fields on land become depleted, the role of hydrocarbon resources on the continental shelf has increased. The Barants Sea (south of the Arctic Ocean) is a valuable marine fisheries area and there is concern about endangering the resources by increased shipping and drilling.

One of the council’s mandates is to increase public awareness of Alyeska’s current capabilities and spill prevention and response. Part of the presentations will include discussion of the improvements which have been made since the spill.

Organizers of the conference include the Knipovich Polar Research Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography, the Federal Agency for Fisheries of the Russian Federation and the Administration of the Murmansk Region. I have been asked to present on the Exxon Valdez oil spill and its effects on resources and human impacts, followed by a presentation on the effectiveness of citizen involvement.

Look for more information on Murmansk and the conference in the January edition of the Observer.



Linda Robinson



Delphinium blooms on the Kenai Peninsula. Photo by Linda Robinson.

Prince William Sound
Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council is an independent, non-profit corporation formed after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill to minimize the environmental impacts of the trans-Alaska pipeline terminal and tanker fleet.

The council has 18 member organizations, including communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill and groups representing Alaska Native, aquaculture, environmental, commercial fishing, recreation and tourism interests in the spill region.

The council is certified under the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990 as the citizen advisory group for Prince William Sound, and operates under a contract with Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. The contract, which is in effect as long as oil flows through the pipeline, guarantees the council’s independence, provides annual funding, and ensures the council the same access to terminal facilities as state and federal regulatory agencies.

The council’s mission: Citizens promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers.

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