Initial findings: ‘gross human error’ on Pathfinder

Shortly after 6 p.m. on December 23, the 136-foot tug Pathfinder ran aground on Bligh Reef, one of the most infamous maritime hazards in North America. The tug spilled a worst case estimate of 6,410 gallons of diesel fuel into Prince William Sound.

The Pathfinder, which was on ice scouting duty, is owned by Crowley Marine Services, an international marine transportation company, under contract with Alyeska Pipeline Service Company’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System, or SERVS.

On December 30, the council’s Port Operations and Vessel Traffic System committee met to gather information on the incident. Participants included Crowley Maritime, the Coast Guard, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, SERVS, Tesoro Alaska, SeaRiver Maritime, Alyeska Pipeline, Prince William Soundkeeper, council staff and volunteers, and residents of affected communities.

Charlie Nalen from Crowley Marine Services reported that the company’s initial investigation showed the cause of the accident to be gross human error.

“Twenty years ago, the state of Alaska suffered the worst tragedy of its history during the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill,” Young said. “We are still learning from the mistakes of that disaster and this bill works toward a safer and better future for our waterways.”

See page 7, LEGISLATION

New ballast water regs a step in right direction

Regulations proposed by the U.S. Coast Guard to combat the spread of invasive species are better than what’s on the books now, but need to address the problem faster, according to comments submitted by the council.

Invasive species are organisms living in an environment or ecosystem to which they are not native. Invasive species can be transported in a variety of ways. A significant way aquatic invasive species are spread is by ships transporting cargo around the world.

Because empty cargo ships are too buoyant to balance safely during ocean voyages, they take sea water into holding tanks as “ballast water” for stability.

During this process, microorganisms, fish and shellfish are drawn into the tanks, then discharged with the ballast water when the ship reaches its destination and prepares to load cargo. Under current rules most ships are required to empty and refill their ballast tanks in the open

See page 6, BALLAST

Federal legislation on tanker escorts passes U.S. House, now before Senate

• Kodiak incident underscores need for escorts

By STAN JONES

Council staff

Efforts by the citizens’ council to save the system of dual escort tugs for loaded oil tankers in Prince William Sound took a major step forward last fall when the U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill with language included in the bill.

The measure was the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010, which passed the House on October 23.

Alaska Congressman Don Young, working with Chairman James Oberstar of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, was instrumental in getting the language included in the bill.

In a statement released after the bill’s passage, Young emphasized the importance of the double-escort requirement.

“Twenty years ago, the citizens’ council celebrates 20th birthday. Timeline, p. 4-5

The Pathfinder was taken to a dock in Valdez after the grounding on Bligh Reef. Photo by Donna Schantz, citizens’ council.
Council member entity profile

Cordova group’s roots go deep in Sound’s history

The Cordova District Fishermen United, a non-profit organization based in Cordova, is dedicated to preserving, promoting, and perpetuating the commercial fishery in the district that includes the Copper River and Cordova areas.

The group’s origins go back to 1935, when a group of Prince William Sound fishermen formed a union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The union’s first meetings were in April 1935, and its first president was Larry J. Wescott. The group’s roots go deep in Sound’s history.

Cordova District Fishermen United was officially founded in 1935, and as a union held strikes to protest wages, working conditions and fish prices.

In February of 1971, Cordova fishermen came together to oppose the plan to build an Alaska oil pipeline and terminal in Prince William Sound. This meeting re-focused the group on involvement with public political policy. The organization fought a legal battle against the placement of the oil terminal in Prince William Sound.

Today the group continues that involvement in the political arena by representing Cordova area fishermen before the Alaska Board of Fisheries, and employs a lobbyist to be their advocate in the state capital.

In 2007, the organization formed FishPAC, a political action committee which addresses a wide range of issues affecting the fisheries, including forest practices, water quality, and access to the fisheries for commercial fishermen.

Executive Director Rochelle van den Broek said the group runs a number of projects designed “to give back to the community, create awareness of the importance of the fisheries, and demonstrate how fishing is intrinsically vital to Cordova’s economy.”

The organization holds several annual events to distribute free fish and reach out to the community.

On December 10, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation surprised Alyeska Pipeline’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System with an unannounced oil spill drill.

The drill scenario was that an unknown amount of North Slope crude oil had spilled into Sheep Bay in Prince William Sound. The cause of the imaginary spill was not stated.

The council contends that pre-planning defeats the purpose of a drill, which is to determine how ready the system actually is to respond on a moment’s notice.

The council is hoping responders take full advantage of lessons learned during the exercise to improve response readiness and effectiveness.

The drill was designed by the Copper River Basin, such as Chitina, Glennallen, Mentasta, Tazlina, and Tonsina, to build good relations.

“A Sharing the fishers’ catch with those who may not have access to seafood is important to our members,” van den Broek said.

Fish Prom is an annual event sponsored by the group to raise money for scholarships and a range of activities, such as the Copper River Stewardship Program, and the Alaska Young Fishermen’s Summit.

The fishing vessel training program run by Ayleska’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System, or SERVS, is a major source of revenue for the organization, which recruits the fishermen and manages the contract with them. Fishing vessel teams are trained by SERVS in the use of oil spill response equipment so they can act as first responders in case of a spill.

This past year, the group partnered with other local organizations to coordinate a fishing net recycling program. van den Broek noted this was highly successful, and the organization is planning to continue the program.

Recently, the group was invited by the Prince William Sound Science Center to help with its herring restoration program. Local herring fishermen will be contracted to take environmental samples each March for the next three years.

The Cordova fishermen are represented on the citizens’ council board by Patience Anderson Faulkner, who is a voice for the fishing industry’s concerns with keeping the environment in Prince William Sound healthy and protected from oil industry pollution.

Cordova District Fishermen United on the web at www.cdfu.org. Keep up to date on the group’s latest issues by following them on Twitter or becoming a fan on Facebook. Find links to both on the Observer web edition: www.bit.ly/ObserverJan2010

With this issue, we are introducing a new addition to the Observer. Alternating with the regular committee volunteer spotlight will be a spotlight on one of our member entities, a community, or an organization represented by our council. We hope you enjoy these features.

Cordova group’s roots go deep in Sound’s history

Each June, Senior Salmon Day ensures that senior members of the community have access to Copper River salmon. Volunteers fillet, clean, bag and distribute salmon donated by the fishing fleet. Fishermen from the group also donate halibut which is given away to community members in the Copper River basin, such as Chitina, Glennallen, Mentasta, Tazlina, and Tonsina, to build good relations.

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Tug grounding reinforces lessons of Exxon spill

The Coast Guard is still investigating the December 23 grounding of the Pathfinder ice- break-er at Bligh Reef, south of Prince William Sound. The Coast Guard has also been investigating the Exxon Valdez grounding, which occurred on March 24, 1989, off the Alaska Peninsula. The two events are significant in history because they are the most recent tanker groundings in the U.S. and both resulted in major oil spills.

In the case of the Exxon Valdez, the grounding occurred in Prince William Sound, an area that is highly sensitive to oil spills due to its unique ecosystem and commercial and recreational importance. The spill resulted in the loss of approximately 11 million gallons of crude oil, which killed thousands of seabirds and marine mammals, and had a significant impact on the local economy and environment.

The Pathfinder grounding occurred in the Gulf of Alaska, near the eastern end of the Bering Sea, and resulted in the loss of about 2,100 barrels of oil. Although the amount leaked was much smaller than the Exxon Valdez spill, the incident highlighted the need for improvements in oil spill response and preparedness.

Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, the operator of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS), has been working to improve its oil spill response and preparedness since the Exxon Valdez spill. The company has implemented new safety measures and technologies to prevent and contain spills, and to reduce the environmental impact of any spills that do occur.

Some of the key lessons learned from the Exxon Valdez spill that are relevant to the Pathfinder grounding include:

1. The importance of effective communication and coordination among all stakeholders involved in oil spill response.
2. The need for rigorous testing and maintenance of response equipment and procedures.
3. The importance of having contingency plans for unexpected situations.
4. The critical role of trained personnel in oil spill response.

Alyeska Pipeline Service Company has been working to implement these lessons in its own operations, and has developed a comprehensive oil spill response plan that includes a range of response and containment technologies.

The company has also been working to improve its emergency response capabilities by investing in new response equipment and technologies. These efforts have included the installation of new response vessels, the development of advanced response technologies, and the enhancement of its emergency communication and coordination systems.

In conclusion, the Pathfinder grounding is a reminder of the ongoing challenge of oil spill prevention and response in Alaska. While the event was relatively small in comparison to the Exxon Valdez spill, it serves as a reminder of the importance of continued investment in oil spill response and preparedness, and the need for ongoing study and learning to improve response capabilities.

Steve Lewis
President
Alyeska Pipeline Service Company

Alyeska meets new challenges, reinforces safety

Alyeska Pipeline Service Company is adapting and reshaping its business to manage the challenges connected to declining throughput, the amount of oil that flows through the pipeline, while staying focused on safety and integrity.

All employees in the Trans Alaska Pipeline System have been asked to look for inefficiencies in the company and to think about how they can simplify business. This includes analyzing operations at urban offices, along the pipeline, and in Prince William Sound.

Change can be difficult and we recognize that it can cause anxiety when it has the potential to impact our people. The point of this movement is that we want Alyeska and the pipeline to remain viable in our communities and to be around to serve Alaska’s economy for many years to come.

Why does declining throughput affect the pipeline system? Throughput peaked in 1988 when 2.1 million barrels a day flowed from the North Slope. Then, the challenge was figuring out how to move all that Alaska crude through the line.

Times have changed. Throughput today is about 700,000 barrels a day and declining every year. The lower the throughput, the slower the oil moves, the longer it takes to get to the terminal in Valdez, and the colder the crude is when it arrives. This collection of facts makes for challenges in operations, and for more expensive operating costs.

Throughput is projected to dip to 500,000 barrels within the next five years and to 300,000 barrels a day sometime around 2023. We can’t wait and react to these conditions later. The time to act is now, and as a company, that is what we are doing.

Our leaders are working within the company and with representatives of the owner companies, BP, ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, Unocal, and Koch Alaska, to strengthen the pipeline’s future. One step included developing a 2010 budget that is lower than in 2009.

To meet this challenge, Alyeska cut sixty jobs and is spending less on contractors and businesses. This includes adopting a new contracting strategy that bundles a number of contracts and saves tens of millions of dollars each year.

We are also assessing our facilities footprint in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Valdez. In some cases such as Fairbanks, we have significant excess capacity. With spare room at each site, we will be consolidating and looking for efficiencies in delivery of support functions. We anticipate that some form of consolidation is anticipated, and some employees will be likely to have their positions reassigned to other job sites.

We are making all changes with the utmost care. Alyeska will become more efficient, but we won’t compromise our relationships, or our commitment to safety, integrity and the environment. We are very proud of winning the 2008 API Distinguished Operator award and want to build on this foundation of excellence. We know that being a prudent operator of TAPS is our utmost responsibility.

Greg Jones
Senior Vice President
Valdez Operations and Health, Safety, Environment, and Quality
Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.
One of the most radical innovations to come out of the Exxon Valdez spill was born 20 years ago this winter: the establishment of permanent, industry-funded citizen oversight for both the oil transportation industry and its government regulators.

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council was incorporated in December 1989. On this 20th anniversary of that event, the Observer begins a four-part series sketching the council’s history over the past two decades. This first installment covers the council’s first five years, from 1989 through 1994.

Efforts to form the Prince William Sound council began soon after the Exxon Valdez struck Bligh Reef on March 24, 1989, and spilled 11 million gallons of North Slope crude into the Sound. After incorporating in December 1989, the group in February 1990 signed the contract with Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. that specifies its rights, powers, duties and funding.

Four months later, the council was already deeply involved in what over the years would turn out to be one of its most important responsibilities: helping make sure that the next major oil spill—should there ever be another—would meet with a better cleanup effort. In June 1990, the council joined a working group on oil-spill contingency plans that also included representatives of government regulators and the oil industry.

In August 1990, President Bush signed the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, which gave the council the protection of federal law, as well as additional powers and responsibilities.

Here are some additional highlights of the first five years of the council’s work to foster safer oil transportation in Prince William Sound.

- **April 1991:** Council begins independent monitoring of effluent from ballast water treatment plant at Alyeska tanker terminal.
- **May 1992:** First Nearshore Response Plan is submitted to Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. Council notes gaps but says there is much to be pleased about.
- **September 1991:** Council seeks proposals for assessing socioeconomic effects of oil spills.
- **December 1991:** Council board votes to co-sponsor independent jointly funded study of towing disabled tankers. Also, Coast Guard appoints council to federal committee helping draft regulations for oil tanker preparedness and safety under a process called “regulatory negotiation.”
- **August 1992:** In an early round of what will become a years-long battle over tanker vapors, scientists hired by council dispute Alyeska claims that the tanker terminal is not responsible for most of the benzene in Valdez air. Alyeska had claimed the terminal produced only 25 percent of the benzene in outdoor air; the council analysis puts the figure at 90 percent or more.
March 1993:
Council launches Long-Term Environmental Monitoring Program. Blue mussels and subtidal sediments are sampled twice a year from nine sites around Prince William Sound, the Kenai Peninsula and Kodiak Island.

October 1993:
Part I of disabled tanker towing study completed. Main recommendations: Quick-deploy towing packages on all tankers, more drills and training, and closer escorts in Valdez Narrows.

May 1993:
The council board adopts official position on chemical dispersants for oil-spill cleanup: They should be used only in non-sensitive areas and only after mechanical recovery methods, such as booms and skimmers, have been deemed inadequate.

May 1994:
Tanker Eastern Lion leaks about 8,400 gallons of North Slope crude while moored at Alyeska terminal. Afterward, council recommends more aggressive initial spill response in the future, even to spills thought to be small. First reports had put the Eastern Lion leak at 50 gallons.

June, 1993:
Gordon Scott, current member of the council’s Oil Spill Prevention and Response committee, testifies at a U.S. Coast Guard hearing on escort requirements.

September 1994:
ARCO conducts first nearshore response drill in Port Valdez.

November 1994:
New Coast Guard rules require additional escorts, tighter wind restrictions and changes in escort configuration for laden single-hull tankers. There are hints that new tugs, possibly the tractor tugs recommended by council, will eventually be used in Valdez Narrows. Council-supported disabled tanker towing study is used by Coast Guard in writing the rules.

November 1993:
Alyeska announces plans to install vapor control system to reduce emissions at tanker terminal.

September, 1994:
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October, 1993
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May, 1994
The tanker Kenai is escorted out of Prince William Sound. (Date is approximate)
These ports have well documented water discharged in the Valdez area. About 86 percent of the ballast per trip. An estimated 260 tankers, 150,000-400,000 barrels, or 6-17,000,000 gallons of ballast water at the arrival port. The system already in place contains resources such as pipes and other equipment that can be used to treat for invasive species. The council suggested the Coast Guard consider the use of existing shore-based facilities to help solve the problem. The council has proposed that facilities at the Valdez terminal could provide an opportunity to bring the Prince William Sound tankers into compliance ahead of a proposed 2016 deadline and at a reduced cost.

While ballast water exchange reduces hitchhiking invaders, research has shown that this procedure is not 100 percent effective. An estimated 260 tankers visit the Valdez terminal each year. About 86 percent of the ballast water discharged in the Valdez area is transported from Prince William Sound, San Francisco, and Long Beach. These ports have well documented infestations of invasive species. These repeated, high-volume doses pose a serious risk for the waters of Prince William Sound, in the council’s view.

The Coast Guard’s proposed regulations would require the installation of special devices inside the holds to kill living organisms present. The second step would require much stricter control over organisms in ballast water with a target date of 2016. By this date, tankers must have equipment installed which would effectively kill all organisms in ballast water. However, if the Coast Guard deems the more rigorous standards impractical to meet by the 2016 deadline, the agency could re-evaluate the second goal.

The council and other organizations believe that the process could, and should, be accelerated. The process for judging the standards as “practical” is seen as a loophole that could lead to protracted delays.

The council believes that improving ballast water treatment technology sooner would help stop the spread of creatures such as the green crab, and protect the native species of Prince William Sound. Untreated ballast water from oil tankers could soon have a profound adverse impact to our region’s economy, fisheries, wildlife and recreational resources. For more information on this regulation or on non-indigenous species affecting our waters, visit our website: www.pwsrcac.org.

**Ballast: New regs may not go far enough in addressing problem**

**Staff departures revise roster in Anchorage office**

Recent weeks have seen two staff changes in the council’s Anchorage office.

In the first, Lisa Ka’aihue, who joined the council staff in 1993 and has served as director of administration since 2006, resigned effective Jan. 27.

In addition to serving in the director position, Ka’aihue managed the council’s invasive species project. She had also held a seat since 2008 on the federal Invasive Species Advisory Committee, which supports the National Invasive Species Council.

“Lisa’s organizational skills, institutional knowledge and keen attention to detail have benefited the organization,” said Donna Schantz, the council’s acting executive director. “I know everyone in our organization joins me in wishing her success in future endeavors.”

Lisa Ka’aihue shares a laugh with Peter Armacat, volunteer with the council’s Information and Education committee. Photo by Linda Robinson, citizens’ council.

“Lisa is the perfect role model for women in the field of science and administration,” said council board member Jane Eisemann. “She combines intelligence with class, protocol with thoughtfulness, seriousness with wit, archival knowledge with forward thinking.”

Also leaving the council staff is Telena McQuery, a project manager assistant. She joined the council as administrative assistant in August 2008, and was promoted to present position a year later. Her husband, Mike, is a member of the U.S. Army and is being transferred to Kentucky after his return from Afghanistan. Her resignation is effective Feb. 26.

Lisa Ka’aihue

Telena and Mike McQuery

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Except where credited to others, articles are written by Amanda Johnson, council project manager.
**Legislation:** Issues at state, federal levels

Continued from Page 1

The double-escort system gained additional urgency and intensified support after a January 17 incident in which the Exxon tanker Kodiac lost engine power at Hinchinbrook Entrance after problems with an electrical generator. The escort tug Tanerliq and Aware hooked up to the tanker to keep it on track. It was towed to a safe anchorage at Knowles Head and was cleared by the Coast guard to depart Prince William Sound the next day. Alaska’s U.S. senators, Mark Begich and Lisa Murkowski, both cited the Kodiac assist as further proof of the need for dual escorts.

“The tug escort prevention system works, and even though it is rare for a tanker to lose power, this is not the first time it has happened and it won’t be the last,” Murkowski said. “We must maintain the present escort system indefinitely.”

Under a federal law passed after the April 24, 1989, Exxon Valdez grounding in Prince William Sound, the law bans loaded single-hull tankers in Prince William Sound. The same law bans single-hulled tankers after 2013.

Fornow, the practice is to escort all tankers regardless of hull configuration. The council is concerned this could change with the switch to all double-hulled vessels. This is what prompted the council’s effort to maintain the status quo by extending the requirement to double-hulled tankers.

While double hulls on a tanker can reduce the size of oil spills and prevent others, the design feature is not a cure-all. A Coast Guard study after the single-hulled Exxon Valdez’s grounding on Bligh Reef concluded a double-hull could have cut the 11-million-gallon spill by as much as 60 percent. But that would have left a still-catastrophic spill of non-indigenous species of plants, animals, and fish.

The issue has long been of concern to the citizens’ council because of the risk that non-indigenous species arriving in oil tanker ballast water could establish themselves in Prince William Sound and harm indigenous populations, including commercial fish species.

The bill, introduced last year and sponsored by Anchorage Rep. Craig Johnson, would create a 14-member council. Five seats would be held by the commissioners of various state departments with the remaining seats representing soil and water conservation districts, conservation organizations, farmers, landowners, commercial fishermen, commercial shippers, the University of Alaska agricultural program, Native corporations, and the public at large.

The council, according to the bill, would “plan and coordinate efforts that address the threats posed to the state and its residents by invasive species.” It would involve federal departments and agencies in the process.

The citizens’ council’s efforts in Washington and Juneau are managed by the Legislative Affairs Committee, made up of council board members. John Velisko is chair, with Blake Johnson as vice chair. The other members are Patience Andersen Faulkner, Al Burch, Iver Malutin, Pat Dufty, John French, and Walt Parker.

**PATHFINDER:** Human error was factor

Continued from Page 1

(Bridge team management refers to communication among crew members on the bridge.)

Statements about their actions at the time of the grounding have not been released.

Crowley informed the council that the Pathfinder’s captain had 30 years of sailing experience, mostly in Prince William Sound waters, and Lewin, 20 years as captain. The second mate had 1-1/2 years of experience. Both had proper licenses and were in good health.

Nalen also offered an apology on behalf of Crowley.

“We will do everything in our power, together with our partners, to ensure it never happens again,” Nalen said. “That is our utmost commitment.”

Crowley pledged to remain as open as possible to keep the council updated on findings during the investigation.

Separate investigations are still underway by Crowley and the Coast Guard. The council will closely review the results of both investigations.

“We will be pursuing the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ in order to come up with the ‘what’ to make sure it doesn’t happen again,” said Steve Lewis, president of the council board.

At the time of the grounding, the Pathfinder had just finished surveying the area for icebergs that would pose a threat to tankers leaving the Valdez terminal, and had begun the trip back to port.

The official time of the grounding was put at 6:14 p.m. By 6:30 p.m., the crew reported that the vessel had been freed from the barge.

**DRILL:** Nighttime drill beneficial

Continued from Page 2

scene.

“The amount of time the four man barge crew is expected to work is unrealistic, especially considering today’s safety environment,” said Roy Robertson, the council’s drill monitor. “We just don’t believe it’s safe to require these barge guys to work with dangerous equipment off the deck of a barge in the middle of winter for 18 hours, especially considering they may have just worked a regular 12 hour shift.”

Among the council’s other suggestions were adding lights to the barge and oil spill containment boom to help the fishing crews judge whether the equipment and boats are aligned in the right formation. Council noted, however, that it appeared this response drill was managed fairly efficiently without lights, much to the credit of participants.

Redistribution of some tasks was also advisable, as the taskforce’s manager on the barge seemed overwhelmed with duties.

Also, more safety officers would be needed during a real spill.

Council staff commended the crew’s efforts on the drill, noting the job given the limitations in crew size and the fact that this was the first nighttime drill on the open water for Cordova fishing vessels.

The council expressed appreciation for the opportunity to observe and saw this unannounced drill as a chance to collaborate and improve spill response in Prince William Sound.

**Upcoming citizens’ council meeting**

J oin the citizens’ council board of directors in Valdez on May 6-7, 2010. Board meetings are open to public. Agendas and other meeting-related materials are available on the council web site at www.pwsrscac.blogspot.com about/bardinfo.html.
Community Corner

Citizens worldwide are concerned about effects of oil development

This fall, I was invited to make two presentations at the “Fisheries and the Context of Hydrocarbon Resource Development on the Continental Shelf” conference in Murmansk, Russia. My first presentation was on the Exxon Valdez oil spill and the second was on the effectiveness of citizen oversight.

An Arctic sea shelf in the Murmansk region is home to valuable marine resources. Exploration is increasing in this area as oil and gas fields on land become depleted. The city of Murmansk must satisfy the need for fuel and food provided by the fisheries and encourage economic development.

Organizers of the conference were looking for successful examples of citizens, government, and industry working together. Attendees expressed a lot of interest in the council and the after-effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Others requested information on topics such as the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, ocean observing and modeling systems, oil spill dispersants, and sediments from the Exxon Valdez oil spill. As a “model” organization, our council is paving the way for others to continue the sustainable production of seafood while developing environmentally friendly ways to generate energy.

Thank you to Jane Eisenmann and Blake Johnson for helping out with the booth during November’s Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle. Once again, this well attended event provided the opportunity to speak with many fisheries from Alaska and the west coast. Many attendees were particularly interested in information about the dual escort system in Prince William Sound.

The council sponsored our annual Science Night on December 4. Science Night is an evening of public presentations on various topics of interest to the council. This year, we heard presentations from:

- Scott Pegau, from the Oil Spill Recovery Institute in Cordova, discussed a joint experiment conducted along with the Alaska Ocean Observing System to test the accuracy of their current predictions in Prince William Sound.
- Stanley “Ivy” Pfeffer, from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, talked about the long-term environmental effects of lingering Exxon Valdez oil.
- Tad Pfeffer, glaciologist and professor of civil engineering at the University of Colorado, spoke about Alaska glaciers, Columbia Glacier in particular.
- Tom Kuckertz and Joel Kennedy, council project managers, discussed the status of the ice radar system, which was implemented by the council several years ago to monitor icebergs flowing from Columbia Glacier. Jim Payne and Bill Driskell, researchers for the council, talked about their work monitoring oil pollution from the Exxon Valdez in Prince William Sound.

During the volunteer workshop held on December 4, staff, board, and committee volunteers held an annual review and evaluation of council projects—both ongoing project and ideas for new projects in the upcoming budget year. The annual volunteer appreciation party followed the workshop at Anchorage’s downtown Hilton Hotel. We are grateful to all of the volunteers who put in so much time toward the protection of our waters.

Upcoming 2010 conferences of interest include the Alaska Marine Science Symposium and the Alaska Forum on the Environment. The Science Symposium will be held January 18-22 at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage. Regional themes include the Bering Sea, the Arctic Ocean, and the Gulf of Alaska.

The Alaska Forum on the Environment will be held February 8-12, 2010 at the Den’ina Convention Center, also in Anchorage. Youth sessions will be held February 9-10. During these sessions, according to the forum’s agenda, “youth and young adult participants will be able to interact with potential mentors and peers, sharing experiences, asking questions and learning more.”

For more information on any of these topics or conferences, visit The Observer online: www.bit.ly/ObserverJan2010

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.

Board of Directors
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Vice Pres.: Walter Parker - Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition Secretary: Cathy Hart, Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Treasurer: Sherri Buretta, Chugach Alaska Corporation
John Allen - Community of Tatitlek
Nancy Bird - City of Cordova
Al Burch - Kodiak Island Borough
Pat Duffy - Alaska State Chamber of Commerce
Jane Eisenmann - City of Kodiak
Patience Andersen Faulkner - Cordova District Fishermen United John S. French - City of Seward
Marilynn Heddell - City of Whittier
Blake Johnson - Kenai Peninsula Borough Board position vacant - Community of Cheneya Bay
Iver Malatin - Kodiac Village Mayors Association
Thane Miller - Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation
Dorothy M. Moore - City of Valdez
Stan Stephens - City of Valdez
John Velsko - City of Homer

Staff
Donna Schantz, Acting Executive Director

Anchorage
Joe Banta, Project Manager
Gregory Dixon, Financial Manager
Amanda Johnson, Project Manager
Stan Jones, Director of External Affairs
Lisa Ka’aluhe, Director of Administration
Serena Lopez, Administrative Assistant
Tolena McQueen, Project Manager Assistant
Linda Robinson, Outreach Coordinator
Linda Swiss, Project Manager

Valdez
Jean Cobb, Data Entry Assistant
Vanessa Dawson, Administrative Assistant
Jennifer Fleming, Executive Assistant
Dan Gilson, Project Manager
Joel Kennedy, Project Manager
Tom Kuckertz, Project Manager
Jacquelyn Olson, Project Manager Assistant
Roy Robertson, Project Manager

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Linda Robinson speaks about the council and the Exxon Valdez spill during the Murmansk conference.