

THE OBSERVER

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New federal law to preserve dual escorts in Sound!

By **STAN JONES**

Director of Administration and External Affairs

Two escort tugs will continue to accompany loaded oil tankers in Prince William Sound on a permanent basis, thanks to action by Congress and President Obama last fall.

On Sept. 30, Congress included a provision mandating the dual escorts in the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010. Obama signed the measure into law on Oct. 15.

"This is a huge milestone for Prince William Sound and for all who want to make sure the Sound is never subjected to another major oil spill," said Mark Swanson, executive director of the citizens' council. "We're very pleased that Congress and the president have taken this action."

The Coast Guard act amends the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, which required dual escorts only for single-hulled tankers in the Sound. Until last fall's action, the Oil Pollution Act was silent on the need for escorts for double-hulled tankers.

Though oil industry practice in Prince William Sound was to escort loaded all tankers, regardless of hull configuration, the council was concerned that might end once the fleet com-



The Seariver Baytown performs maneuvers during a tanker escort exercise in 2005. Photo by Roy Robertson.

pleted the transition to double-hulled vessels as required by 2015 under the Oil Pollution Act. With passage of the Coast Guard act and its signature by the president, dual escorts will continue as long as oil moves through the Sound.

The council began its efforts to secure federal escorts legislation two years ago, near the 20th anniversary of the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill.

"We worked hard on this for a long time and so did a lot of other people and we want to thank them all," said Walt Parker, president of the citizens' council board.

He cited U.S. Senators Lisa Murkowski, Mark Begich, Maria Cantwell, and Olympia Snowe; U.S. Representatives Don Young and See page 7, **NEW LAW**

Unannounced drill valuable chance for responders to sharpen skills

By **ALAN SORUM**

Council Project Manager

On October 10, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, or ADEC, initiated an unannounced nearshore oil spill response exercise in Prince William Sound. This extensive drill simulated a major oil spill at Port Fidalgo, 30 miles south of Valdez.

Spanning three days on the water, this drill represented a major investment of time and resources by the oil industry, agency regulators, and the council. Council staff helped plan the drill and monitored the event as it unfolded.

Several council volunteers played a role. Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee member John LeClair spent three days on an oil spill response barge as a drill evaluator. Board member Stan Stephens chartered his vessel, Glacier Spirit, to the council to carry drill evaluators from the U.S. Coast Guard and ADEC as well as Mark Swanson, the council's executive director, and Monty Morgan, a ConocoPhillips representative.

One of the goals of the drill was to verify Alyeska Pipeline Service Company's ability to See page 4, **UNANNOUNCED DRILL**

Staffers Robinson and Banta dedicate 20 years of service to council



Linda Robinson, outreach coordinator



Joe Banta, project manager

See page 6, **INSPIRED**

AK Chamber of Commerce - AK Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Assoc. - Chenega Bay - Chugach Alaska Corp. - Cordova - CDFU - Homer - Kenai Peninsula Borough - Kodiak - Kodiak Island Borough - Kodiak Village Mayors - OSREC - Port Graham Corp. - PWS Aquaculture Corp. - Seldovia - Seward - Tatitlek - Valdez - Whittier

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*Breaking news: BP Deepwater Horizon spill commission recommends citizen oversight for Gulf and Arctic. See council website—www.pwsrccac.org—for details.



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Volunteer Spotlight

Physical oceanographer joins science committee

Dave Musgrave may be a new volunteer with the council’s science committee, but he is certainly not new to the council, or to volunteering. Before joining the Scientific Advisory Committee last year, Musgrave worked with the council on several projects. Most recently, he worked on a collaboration between the Prince William Sound Science Center and the council on a project that may be useful in the future in determining the effectiveness of chemical oil-



Musgrave admires a view of Canning River in the Brooks Range. Photo courtesy of Dave Musgrave.

spill dispersants. Dispersants depend on wind and waves to work. The energy and motion of waves must be present to mix the dispersants into floating oil. Musgrave and his team tried to establish how far down into the ocean depths dispersants or floating oil might mix. The project looked at what is called the “mixing layer,” or the surface layer of the ocean

where wind and waves keep the water moving. One goal of the project was to determine how deep the mixing layer is and how much wind and wave action is needed to mix beyond that top layer. Musgrave’s calculations looked at how much wind it would take over a certain amount of time to mix into deeper depths. Musgrave gave a presentation on this project during the council’s annual Science Night event in December, held at Anchorage’s Alaska Zoo. In another project of interest to the council, Musgrave helped set up the Alaska Ocean Observing System in the early 2000’s. This system gathers information about the ocean that helps stakeholders and users to make better decisions about the way that they use Alaska’s marine environment.

The council’s science committee is happy to find someone with Musgrave’s expertise. “Dave brings a great physical oceanography background to our committee,” said John Kennish, chair of the science committee. “It’s something that we have been needing.” In 1988, Musgrave returned to Alaska after leaving the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, and went to work for the University of Alaska Fairbanks teaching physical oceanography until his retirement in 2007. Musgrave was living in Fairbanks when the Exxon Valdez ran aground on Bligh Reef in 1989. He said his reaction was “shock and awe.” “I like Alaska for its pristine environment and Prince William Sound is part of that. When I heard there was a giant oil spill, my throat sank into my heart.”



Musgrave and his dog Kobe paddling in Kachemak Bay. Photo courtesy of Dave Musgrave.

Musgrave talked about the complacency that had taken over prior to the 1989 spill. “Nobody was watching the shop at all,” he said. Musgrave is active in the outdoors, and has spent many volunteer hours encouraging others to participate in skiing, hiking and biking. In 2010, Musgrave started and ran the Junior Nordic program for the Mat-Su Ski Club. Junior Nordic teaches cross country skiing to kids ages 6-14. This past summer, Musgrave also established Mat-Su Kids Bike N Hike, a program that introduces kids ages 6-18 to mountain biking and hiking. More information on the web: • Alaska Ocean Observing System: www.aoots.org • Mat-Su Kids Bike N Hike on Facebook: www.facebook.com/MatSuKidsBikenHike • Mat-Su Junior Nordic on Facebook: www.facebook.com/MatSuJuniorNordics

Spill response training for oiled wildlife held in December

By JEREMY ROBIDA
Council Project Manager

In December, Alyeska’s Ship Escort Response Vessel System, known as SERVS, conducted wildlife oil spill response training in Valdez and Cordova. This training was conducted for crews of vessels involved with the fishing vessel oil spill response program. The other participants and I had a mix of hands-on time and lectures. Representatives were on hand from the International Bird Rescue and Research Center, a non-profit organization specializing in oiled wildlife cleaning and rehabilitation techniques; the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and International Wildlife Research, an organization of scientists, veterinarians and wildlife specialists with expertise in the care and rehabilitation of oiled wildlife. Instructors spoke about wildlife hazing, capture and rehabilitation, animal behaviors, the effects of oil on wildlife and the many bird species of the Sound as well as sea otters. Other classroom lecture topics were on the paperwork and documentation required for those involved with wildlife operations, what happens at the rehabilitation centers, which governmental branches have control over which species, and how the wildlife response would fit into the overall spill response and incident command system. The field session involved hands-on time with the equipment and tools the responders would be using as part of their jobs. At the SERVS equipment warehouse, participants had

a chance to look at the “capture kits.” These are issued to the response boats and contain all of the necessary implements and safety gear to capture oiled birds and otters. Live ducks were brought in and participants were able to practice how to safely hold a bird and get it into the carriers. In another field session, participants had a chance to fire propane cannons used to scare or keep animals from an oiled area. Of course, with any of these field sessions, the required personal protective equipment was donned as instructors stressed safety for the responders. In a real spill, oiled wildlife would be collected by these trained responders and brought to a rehabilitation center. As specified in the oil spill contingency plan for Prince William Sound, an otter hospital would be set up near the Valdez Marine Terminal. Some of the birds would enter rehabilitation in special facilities at the SERVS equipment warehouse, and some would be sent to International Bird Rescue and Research Center in Anchorage. Prince William Sound’s tanker contingency plan requires two wildlife task forces, consisting of seven vessels each, to be operating within the first 72 hours. The first task force must be operational within the first 24 hours. The physical capture of wildlife is very stressful for an animal and often dangerous to the person attempting the capture. Animals already stressed due to a spill need to be handled in the least intrusive manner possible. Sometimes this could be as simple as monitoring lighting so a normal circadian rhythm is maintained. This

training taught those basics. Because handling wild animals could be dangerous, it’s required that all responders dealing with wildlife have this training. This sets up the responders, for success, and the wildlife for survival. A 2009 SERVS drill was the last time an oil spill exercise in Prince William Sound involved a wildlife component.



Wildlife response class participants George Levasseur (former council board member, right) and Scott Caruthers (left) hold a duck during the hands-on portion of the class. Photo by Jeremy Robida.

From the Executive Director

Are we doing everything we can to prevent spills?

Prevention of oil spills is a lot better than response to oil spills. But, are we seriously doing everything we can? To really answer that question you need to organize your thinking a bit.

When you think about prevention, to be thorough and effective, you also really have to think about consequences and outcomes and not just specific events. For the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, the consequence we want to prevent is simply: oil pollution in the water. Many different events or accidents like collisions, groundings, explosions or failures caused by plain old rust and corrosion could lead to oil pollution.

What are all these hazards or risks we need to manage in order to prevent an oil spill?

In the broadest terms they can be lumped into big categories like complacency, mechanical failures, structural failures, navigational failures, human error, weather risks, procedural failures, and just plain loss of containment. Here in Alaska, we can add seismic hazards like earthquakes and tsunamis to the list.

In December, Alaskans breathed a collective sigh of relief when the stricken cargo ship Golden Seas was rescued by a tug instead of grounding and breaking apart on the Aleutian Islands as was feared. It was a simple mechanical failure of the ship's engine in really bad weather that put the Golden Sea and her crew at risk.

To be certain, oil transportation by water and pipeline are mature industries and there are many industry, regulatory and even citizen-based measures already in place to manage some of these hazards.

For example, Congress established citizens groups like the Prince William Sound and the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Councils to help manage the risks of complacency on the part of regulators and the oil industry. However, to manage all the risks or hazards, even in just one particular category, you really need

expertise, folks who have enough experience to truly appreciate and understand all that could really go wrong. It's almost necessary to adopt a mindset similar to that of a worried adult trying to safeguard against all the risks to which a rambunctious teenager might be oblivious.

For the tankers plying in and out of Prince William Sound, let's just look at ALL the prevention measures in place to prevent navigational failures. Safe navigation for ships, just like for passenger cars, is not just about avoiding getting lost and ending up on a reef; it also encompasses steering clear of fixed or moving objects along the way.

First and foremost in terms of prevention is the U.S. Coast Guard's Vessel Traffic System. The system's "watch-standers," similar to air traffic controllers, manage ship movements via the Automatic Identification System, known as AIS. The Vessel Traffic System uses equipment such as radar, cameras, and automatic transponders to track ships through Prince William Sound. The Coast Guard's Vessel Traffic System also routinely employs ice routing measures to route tankers around known concentrations of ice or limit their transits to daylight or good visibility.

In addition to the U.S. Coast Guard's traffic system, Alyeska's Ship Escort and Response Vessel Service, known as SERVVS, has its own watch-stander that monitors and directs the activities and navigation of tugs and tankers as they transit in and out of the Sound.

To manage the ever-present hazards associated with ice calving off of the Columbia glacier and drifting into shipping lanes, an ice-detection radar system feeds detailed ice location and movement information to the SERVVS watch-stander. SERVVS routinely dispatches ice scout vessels to take visual observations of ice locations.

A mandatory traffic separation plan keeps inbound and outbound ships out of each other's way. A requirement is in place to use a state

licensed ship's pilot to assist navigation from Bligh Reef all the way into Port Valdez. There are a bevy of navigational markers including a large tower and light atop Bligh Reef. Speed limits for the tankers as they pass narrow constrictions or other dangers along the route are based on the difficulty of steering and stopping a tanker if there were an engine or steering problem at just the wrong moment. Tug escorts are tethered to the tankers with similar considerations in mind. Annual tethering and towing exercises for ships and tug crews are held to ensure proficiency at emergency braking and towing. Weather limits for transiting the narrowest areas and Hinchinbrook Entrance are based mostly on the limits of safe ship and tug interoperability. Ship navigation and handling simulator training for ship and tug captains in places like Seward's Alaska Vocational Technical Center even further increase familiarity and proficiency with emergency procedures.

With all these risk management and prevention measures to safeguard against an oil spill resulting from a navigational failure already in place in Prince William Sound, what more in the way of navigational risk prevention is needed? What more do we really need to be doing? What could go possibly go wrong?

To answer that question we need to think like a worried parent.

Right off, the council can list two things we ought to be doing to prevent spills that we are not and one that we may want to be moving

See page 6, **PREVENTION**



Mark Swanson

Alyeska People

Alyeska hires retired Coast Guard Barrett as new president

Retired U.S. Coast Guard Vice Admiral Thomas Barrett began his new position on January 1, 2011 as president of Alyeska Pipeline Service Company.

Barrett is the first company president hired as an Alyeska employee since Alyeska was founded in 1970. Previous company executives have been employees who were on loan from various companies who own the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, known as TAPS.

Barrett follows Kevin Hostler who served as Alyeska President from 2005 to September 2010. The selection was announced in November at a meeting of the TAPS Owners Committee.

Barrett previously served as the deputy federal coordinator for the Alaska Natural Gas Transportation Projects, managing the Alaska field office. Before joining the Office of the Federal Coordinator he was Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Transportation, serving under both President Bush and President Obama.

Barrett oversaw national safety programs as the first administrator of the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. He served thirty-five years in the U.S. Coast Guard, attaining the position of Vice Commandant. His Coast Guard service included time in Alaska, serving tours in both Kodiak and Juneau.

"Tom brings many years of transportation experience to Alyeska and has a strong commitment to Alyeska's mission of providing a safe, environmentally responsible, cost-effective and reliable means to move Alaska's liquid hydrocarbons to market," said Chuck Coulson, Chair of the TAPS Owners Committee, in an announcement about Barrett's hiring. "He is committed to Alaska and to our industry and has the proven leadership ability needed to move the company forward," Coulson said.

"I have enjoyed being part of the Office of the Federal Coordinator, advancing the gas pipeline effort in Alaska," Barrett said. "Now I am delighted to have the opportunity to lead a company that is so critical to Alaska's future. I'm eager to meet the people of Alyeska, and work together with them to ensure the continued safe delivery of oil to the American people."

Barrett earned a B.S. in Biology from Le Moyne College, Syracuse, N.Y., and a Juris Doctor with honors from the George Washington University. He is a Vietnam veteran. His wife, Sheila, is a former kindergarten teacher who taught in Kodiak and Juneau, as well as other states. They have four children: Tom, an Army aviator stationed in Hawaii; Matt, an information technology professional in Missoula, Montana; Becky, a special education teacher in

Spokane, Washington; and Paul, a facility supervisor at University of Alaska Anchorage.

Alyeska operates the 800-mile Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, which runs from Prudhoe Bay on the North Slope south to the port of Valdez. Alyeska operates out of Anchorage, Fairbanks and Valdez and at various facilities along the line. The company was formed to construct, operate, and maintain TAPS for the owner companies. The current TAPS owners are BP Pipelines (Alaska) Inc., ConocoPhillips Transportation Alaska Inc., ExxonMobil Pipeline Company, Unocal Pipeline Company Inc., and Koch Alaska Pipeline Company LLC.

For more information, visit www.alyeska-pipe.com, or follow Alyeska on Facebook or Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlyeskaPipeline.

• This article was submitted by Alyeska Corporate Communications.



Thomas Barrett

Unannounced drill: Valuable chance for responders to sharpen skills

Continued from page 1

comply with Prince William Sound’s tanker oil spill contingency plan requirements. Alyeska is required by Alaska law to be able to control and clean up 300,000 barrels of oil within three days.

October’s drill tested the capabilities for “nearshore” response. A nearshore response is designed to recover freely floating oil and protect shorelines and sensitive areas.

This drill brought out Alyeska’s Incident Management Team and a deployment of oil spill responders consisting mainly of commercial fishing vessels under contract to the company for this purpose.

Small working groups of commercial fishing vessels called “strike teams” can provide a rapid response to an oil discharge. As the response to a major oil spill develops, strike teams are combined into larger groups known as “task forces.” A nearshore task force contains substantial numbers

of vessels, personnel and cleanup equipment. The contingency plan defines a near-shore task force as consisting of twelve oil storage barges, six oil skimmers, 7500 feet of oil containment boom, two Current Buster boom systems, and 27 work boats or fishing vessels.

Alyeska’s oil spill contingency plan has specific targets for conducting a near-shore response during a major incident. During the first 24 hours, one task force should be on the scene and operating. Three more task forces are required to be operating by the time 36 hours have elapsed.

Part of the reason the agency called for a sustained three-day drill was to test whether the required personnel and fishing vessels would be available to staff at least three full task forces within the first 36 hours.

Other objectives of the exercise included using the 500-2, a large barge loaded with response equipment; effectively operating three full nearshore task forces; evaluating fishing vessel captains as incident leaders; and demonstrating effective communications between responders.

Overall, more than 500 people were involved in the response exercise. Responders placed deflative boom to protect the shoreline, towed oil containment boom, collected free oil, loaded and off-loaded storage barges and operated a decontamination area for response vessels, all on a simulated basis. Over 250 fishing vessel crew onboard 81 fishing vessels came from Valdez, Cordova and Whittier. Because the location was close by, fishing vessels from Cordova were first on-scene and waiting for the beginning of operations on the second, full day of the drill.

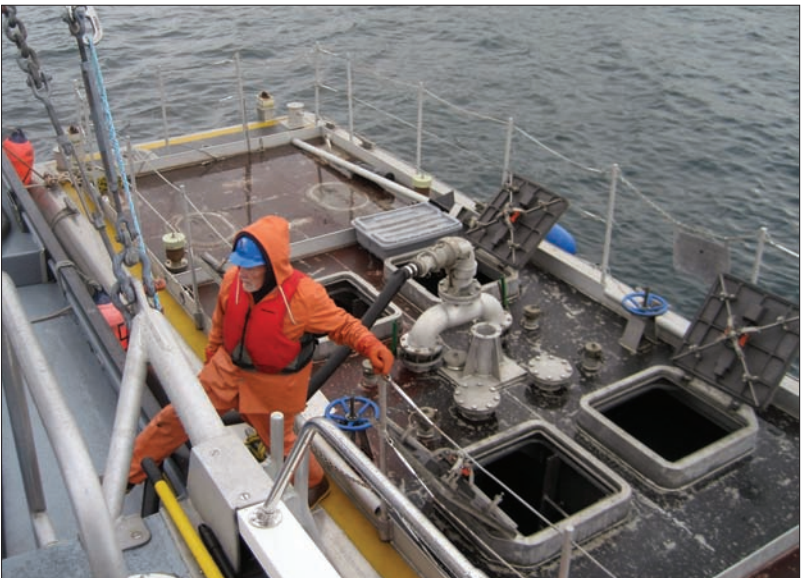
The council and ADEC are still reviewing results from the drill, however it was considered a valuable chance for responders to sharpen their skills and practice all the elements that are entailed in an effective spill cleanup effort.



Cordova houses one of many equipment stockpiles located around Prince William Sound. Here is a mini barge being moved from the storage yard to the water. Photo by Linda Swiss.



A crane lifts skimming equipment from the large 500-2 response barge onto the deck of a fishing vessel. All boats will get a power pack and skimmer delivered to them. Photo by Alan Sorum.



Above: A mini barge alongside a bigger fishing vessel. Oil and oily water would be pumped from the skimmers into the mini barges for storage. These mini barges are then taken to a bigger storage barge once they are full of oil. Photo by Jeremy Robida.



Above: A fishing vessel practices towing oil spill boom. Photo by Mark Swanson.



Oil skimming equipment is set onto the deck of a fishing vessel from the 500-2 response barge. Note the boats in the background waiting for their turn. Photo by Alan Sorum.

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, public communications project manager for the council. For a free subscription to the Observer, contact the council office in Anchorage or in Valdez. See back page for contact information.



Crowley director speaks frankly to council about problems aboard Pathfinder

Crowley Maritime Services' Charlie Nalen joined the council board meeting this past September to speak about the causes of the 2009 Pathfinder grounding incident and the resulting company improvements.

On December 23, 2009, Crowley's tug Pathfinder ran into one of the most infamous maritime hazards in the world, Bligh Reef. In 1989, the Exxon Valdez ran into this same reef, spilling an estimated 11 million gallons of North Slope crude oil. The Pathfinder spilled approximately 6,410 gallons of diesel fuel into Prince William Sound.

Nalen wanted the council to know "how sorry we are about an event that never should have happened" and offered frank and open comments on the causes of the incident.

Nalen said that "all machinery was working" however the mariners on board "weren't following any good seamanship practices whatsoever."

Nalen said the captain was an experienced mariner who, senior management discovered, had a reputation for creating an "environment of intimidation" on board vessels under his command and standard requirements for change of watch were not followed.

According to Nalen, minutes before the Pathfinder struck the reef, the captain passed control to a young, inexperienced second mate. The captain then reached past the second mate's shoulder, increased the speed to full ahead, turned off the autopilot, set the course, and said, "Take us home, you're going too slow." The captain then returned to personal business on his computer. The second mate, having been overridden by the captain, was distracted and looking out the window.

Neither mariner knew the location of the Pathfinder at the time. Minutes later, the vessel struck the

reef. Nalen described Crowley's recent efforts to improve the culture of safety aboard their vessels. He said that Crowley's management is working to create an environment where people are comfortable with speaking up about problems.

Directly after the incident, senior staff met with all of their mariners to explain what had happened and to listen to complaints and suggestions.

Resulting changes include a requirement for all captains to spend a year working as a safety coach. Senior staff members are conducting ongoing "listening sessions" with crews aboard all vessels. Shoreside staff has been increased to support these additional duties.

Training in areas such as team leadership, bridge resource management, and situational awareness has been strengthened, Nalen said. (Bridge resource management refers to communication among crew members on the bridge.)

Nalen spoke to the council's Port Operations and Vessel Traffic System committee in January 2010 about initial findings of Crowley's investigation, stating at the time that human error appeared to be the cause of the incident.

Alan Sorum, council project manager, said that he appreciated Crowley representatives' attendance at council committee meetings since September. Nalen has also been helping Sorum with a council project related to Prince William Sound's escort tugs.

"Charlie has been a good resource," Sorum said.

A report on the incident from the U.S. Coast Guard has yet to be released.

For more details on the Pathfinder incident, visit the council's Pathfinder incident blog: www.pwsrccac.blogspot.com/

Council board forms new Board Governance Committee

The citizens' council established a new standing committee during the September 2010 board meeting in Seldovia. Called the Board Governance Committee, the new group is responsible for organizational health and effectiveness of the board of directors.

Responsibilities of the committee include board development and training for new board members, along with ongoing development of job descriptions for board member positions. The committee will conduct annual reviews of the council's by-laws and will

make recommendations for related changes in the board's structure or operations. The committee may expand its role in the future.

John French of Seward was elected as chair of the committee. Other board volunteers serving on the standing committee are: Patience Andersen Faulkner, representing the Cordova District Fishermen United; Rochelle van den Broek, of the City of Cordova; Sheri Buretta, from Chugach Alaska Corporation; Jane Eisemann, of the City of Kodiak; and Stan Stephens, of the City of Valdez.

Council delegation visits DC

Council board president Walter Parker, board member Patience Anderson Faulkner, and staff members Stan Jones and Mark Swanson visited Washington, D.C. in late September, 2010. Roy Jones, the federal legislative monitor for the council, coordinated visits with Alaska Rep. Don Young, Alaska Sen. Mark Begich, and staff members of various congressional committees. The council representatives took the opportunity to talk about the dual escort tug legislation, among other concerns.



Left to right: Faulkner, Jones, Representative Young, Parker, and Swanson. Photo courtesy of the office of Representative Young.



Left to right: Senator Begich, Swanson, Parker, Faulkner, and Jones. Photo courtesy of the office of Senator Begich.

Sociologists from Korea studying impact of Hebei Spirit spill visit council



Left to right: Joe Banta and Linda Robinson, council staff, Soonyawl Park and Jae-Mook Park. Photo courtesy of Jae-Mook Park.

Mook Park (right) from Chungham National University are working on a research project about the socioeconomic and psychological impacts of the Hebei Spirit oil spill in December 2007. The Hebei Spirit leaked approximately 2.8 million gallons of crude oil into the sea off of South Korea's west coast, about a third as much as the Exxon Valdez spilled.

In September, council staff met with sociologists from two Korean universities to talk about the council, and the social impacts and changes to the communities due to the Exxon Valdez spill. Soonyawl Park (second from right) from the Seoul National University Asia Center and Jae-

Native Village of Eyak holds 17th Annual Sobriety Celebration



Mark Swanson was invited to speak on behalf of the council at the 17th Annual Sobriety Celebration hosted by the Native Village of Eyak in Cordova in November. The celebration spanned two days and included performances by Native dance groups from all over Alaska. Council board members John Allen, Rochelle van den Broek, and Patience Andersen Faulkner (also on the board of directors for the Native Village of Eyak), former council board member Nancy Bird, and Alaska Sea Grant extension agent Tory Baker attended as well. The keynote speaker for the event was retired Coast Guard Admiral Tom Barrett, recently hired as president of Alyeska Pipeline Service Company (see Alyeska column, page 3).

Inspired by mission, staffers dedicate 20 years of service to council

“Citizens promoting the environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers.”

Those words have inspired council staffers Linda Robinson and Joe Banta for the last 20 years. Together, that’s an estimated 83,000 hours of dedication to keeping Prince William Sound safe from spilled oil.

Robinson, outreach coordinator, and Banta, project manager, both joined the staff shortly after the formation of the council in 1990.

“I love the mission,” Robinson said when asked what has kept her with the council so long. “I know that the industry is here to stay and that we are able to work together to make Prince William Sound safe. The people I have gotten to know over the years have been great, too. I have really enjoyed them. It’s wonderful to see so many people with different backgrounds getting together for one mission.”

Robinson started out as an administrative assistant.

“I did everything,” she said, “I took minutes, set up meetings, bought computers, managed finances, you name it, I did it.”

After a while, when the council hired more staff, Robinson concentrated just on the finances until the council hired Gregory Dixon. Robinson has been the council’s out-

reach coordinator since that time.

“You aren’t always blessed with finding a job with such a great mission,” Banta said when asked about his longevity with the council.

Growing up in Cordova created a special connection between Banta and the council.

“The council’s mission is important to me because I was raised in a coastal community in the Sound. I grew up fishing and it paid my way through college, and I still hold a fishing permit.”

Banta has worked closely with the council’s Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee and the Scientific Advisory Committee over the years.

• All photos from council archives.



Linda Robinson at 1999’s “Fiesta” themed Volunteer Appreciation Party.



Joe Banta poses for a staff portrait in 1999.



Linda Robinson and Marilyn Leland talk with visitors to the council’s information booth at the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce annual event in 1997.



Left to right; board president Bill Walker, volunteer George Skladal council administrative assistant Andrea Archer and Banta at the 50’s themed Volunteer Appreciation Party in 2000.

Spill Prevention: Thinking like a worried parent helps keep Sound safe

Continued from page 2
towards doing.

The first has to do with the Automatic Identification System. This system’s equipment on ships and other vessels sends out and receives navigational data such as course, speed and vessel type.

Unfortunately, these signals have some of the same disadvantages as VHF radios. System signals don’t see each other around and over mountains and physical barriers. The U.S. Coast Guard has signal repeaters on mountaintops in Prince William Sound which are currently turned off. The Coast Guard gathers these signals but does not rebroadcast them citing “security” concerns.

Turning the repeaters back on would improve navigational safety in the Sound by helping small, fast-moving vessels, tankers, and other large craft “see” each other around headlands and other blind spots.

The second prevention measure that needs to be restored is the ice radar information. From 2002 until 2009, information about weather and

sea ice position flowed twenty-four hours a day to the Coast Guard and SERVS’ watch-standers.

Due to various equipment upgrades, the Coast Guard’s ability to view and use this ice position information disappeared, although SERVS’ connection remained functional. The Coast Guard, with both the authority and mandate to safely manage the navigational risks of transiting oil tankers, no longer has access to the best information. Instead, the U.S. Coast Guard relies on visual ice scout information which is only as good as the eyes of the scout. Such information may not be good in low visibility, at night, or several hours after the ice scouting vessel has moved on to a new position.

The Coast Guard has been unclear regarding their interest in restoring this ice-radar capability. While it’s good for the SERVS watch-stander to have this ice information, to prevent collisions with hard-to-see ice (its intended purpose), the ice position picture is really needed at the Coast Guard and onboard the vessels actually out in the ice.

A new prevention measure which we should

be aiming for is actually equipping tankers and tugs with their own ice detecting radar systems. The oil industry uses this type of equipment in other ice affected areas. The risk of not seeing and then hitting ice big enough to do significant damage to a tanker is real. It has already happened once in Prince William Sound when the Overseas Ohio collided with an iceberg in 1994. It begs the question, why not equip tankers and escort vessels in Prince William Sound with their own ice radar systems?

Evaluating risks for oil spills and proposing solutions is what we do at the council. Whether your interest and expertise is in ships or navigation, in tank design or in human error, I encourage you to seriously ask yourself a basic question:

“What could go wrong?”

Then, get involved with us. Through our various committees, we explore possible prevention measures and share solution ideas with the oil industry and with their regulators.

• Mark Swanson is executive director of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council.



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New project manager joins Valdez staff

Valdez resident Jeremy Robida has been hired as the council’s new project manager for oil spill prevention and response operations.

He came to Alaska in the summer of 2006 for a summer job. However, the surrounding mountains and waters of the Sound cast a spell on him, he says, and when that job ended, he stayed.

Robida has worked as a sea kayak guide, a commercial fisherman, and spent time working for a local Valdez heli-ski operator during the winters. He worked for the state of Alaska prior to arriving at the council.

He has a bachelor of arts in cultural anthropology from University of Wisconsin in Madison. He volunteers with the local backcountry search and rescue, the fire department as an emergency medical technician, the local avalanche forecast center, and holds a seat on the Valdez Arts Council board.

When not at the council or one of his

volunteer jobs, Robida is an avid skier, climber, cyclist, and works on photography and graphic design projects.

Robida replaced long-time staffer Dan Gilson, who resigned in July to take an oil spill response coordination position with Alyeska’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System.

Robida started work with the council in September 2010.



Robida climbs a needle couloir, a deep, narrow mountain gully, leading to the top of Sugarloaf Mountain near Valdez. Self-portrait by Jeremy Robida.

New law: Federal Coast Guard Act of 2010 to preserve escorts in Sound

Continued from page 1

James Oberstar; the Alaska Legislature, former Governor Sarah Palin and Governor Sean Parnell; and the many individuals affiliated with the citizens’ council whose support made this important legislation a reality.

The citizen’s council has long recognized the importance of the dual tug escort system for loaded oil tankers traveling Prince William Sound.

The escort system was developed by the oil industry working in concert with the U.S. Coast Guard, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the citizens’ council. The tugs can rescue tankers in danger of groundings or other accidents, and the escorts can also begin oil-spill response should the worst happen. Thanks in large part to the escort tugs, Prince William Sound has one of the safest marine oil transportation systems in the world.

Though the escorts have sometimes been characterized as unnecessary, they have proved their worth by providing assistance to tankers in distress many times since the Exxon Valdez spill.

More information on the legislation is available at tinyurl.com/escortsbill on the citizens’ council website.

City of Seldovia shows off fall beauty for September meeting



Above: Seldovia hosts an annual wood carving contest and the amazing results are all over town. Photo by Serena Lopez.



Above: Seldovia residents Steve and Savannah Lewis volunteer with the council. Steve represents the city of Seldovia on the board of directors, and Savannah volunteers on the Information and Education Committee. Many thanks to Steve and Savannah for their help making the September meeting a successful and enjoyable one. Photo by Stan Jones.



Above: A quiet afternoon mist hovers over the Seldovia harbor. Photo by Stan Jones.



Above: The sun sets over Kachemak Bay as an evening mist starts to drift in. Photo by Linda Robinson.



Above: Board president Walt Parker and board member Iver Malutin watch the sun set over Kachemak Bay. Photo by Linda Robinson.

Council Board Meetings

The citizens’ council board of directors meets three times annually. The January meeting is held in Anchorage, the May meeting in Valdez, and the September meeting is rotated between the other communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. This past September’s meeting was held in the City of Seldovia.

Here is the tentative board meeting schedule for the coming year:

- May 5-6, 2011: Valdez
- September 15-16, 2011: Kenai
- January 20-21, 2012: Anchorage

Board meetings are open to public, and an opportunity for the public to provide comments is provided at the beginning of each meeting. Agendas and other meeting-related materials are available on the council web site at www.pwsrca.org/about/boardintro.html. Or, contact either council office: Anchorage, 907-277-7222, or Valdez, 907-834-5000.



A busy fall hosting more visitors interested in the work of the council

By **LINDA ROBINSON**
Outreach Coordinator

This was a very busy fall season. Following the September board meeting, Pat Duffy, who represents the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce on our board of directors, and I took the council booth to the Chamber's annual tradeshow in Juneau. Alan Sorum, staff member, represented the council at the Alaska Association of Harbormasters and Port Administrators annual meeting in Wrangell in October.



Linda Robinson

October went by quickly, starting with attendance at the Clean Gulf conference in Tampa, Florida. Director John French, along with staff members Mark Swanson, Roy Robertson and I, participated. This is the first time the council has participated in the Clean Gulf, a large oil spill training event and exhibition which focuses on the Gulf of Mexico area.

The focus this year was on the BP/Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. We have been contacted numerous times by people affected by this incident, and so decided this would be a good venue for outreach. The booth saw a lot of activity at this conference with many people stopping by to ask advice on how to start a citizens' oversight group(s) in their region. There were also many presentations on various topics related to the incident by ExxonMobil, BP UK, National Resource Damage Assessment, and the U.S. Coast Guard as well as scientists working on the Gulf spill. For more information on this conference, visit www.cleangulf.org.

The next week the council hosted a group of nine guests from the Gulf of Mexico. This group included members of University of New Orleans Center for Hazards Assessment, Response and Technology, community spokespersons from Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe and the Chief of Isle de Jean Charles, representatives from the Jean Lafitte and Grand Bayou communities, the Zion Travelers Cooperative Center in Plaquemines Parish, and the Vietnamese fishing community, and the director of the Jean Lafitte Senior Resource Center.

We took the ferry to Cordova where we met with people that had been involved in the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Board member Patience Andersen Faulkner organized the Cordova agenda and kept us quite busy. We visited Shoreside Petroleum to see the spill response equipment stored there, and the Prince William Sound Science

Center to hear about the development of the science center and their science and education programs. From Cordova we ferried to Valdez where we saw presentations by Alyeska and the U.S. Coast Guard, and visited the Salomon Creek Hatchery. A highlight of the Valdez portion of the trip was taking an evening break to watch the New Orleans Saints beat the Pittsburgh Steelers with genuine Saints fans!

The final two days were spent in Anchorage. We met with two former council board members, Bill Walker and Marilyn Leland, and with Rick Steiner, Chaplain Bert McQueen and representatives from the World Wildlife Fund.

Great personal and professional contacts have been created through hosting these three groups from the Gulf. The visitors and the Alaskans had many questions for each other, and everyone involved gained knowledge from the comparisons and lessons learned about oil spill response in 1989 and the current lessons in 2010.

The final two conferences of the year were the Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry in Portland, Oregon, attended by director John French and the Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle, Washington, attended by directors Jane Eisemann and Blake Johnson.

At the council's annual Science Night on December 3, one of the presentations was given by Anchorage high school student Drew Walker, who participated in one of the Prince William Sound Expeditions. On December 4, the council held a long range planning meeting and annual volunteer appreciation party.

The following week, directors Blake Johnson and John French accompanied Executive Director Mark Swanson and me to host a reception at the Soldotna Assembly meeting. Prior to the reception we visited with Dr. Paula Martin of the Kenai Peninsula College and KSRM radio station where Mark and Trent Dodson, Public Outreach Director for CIRCAC were interviewed about citizen oversight. We toured Cook Inlet Spill Prevention and Response, Inc., and the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council's new office. Following the reception, we presented the Kenai Assembly with an appreciation plaque thanking them for their support on the dual escort system.

From all of us at the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, we wish you a peaceful and rewarding New Year.

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND REGIONAL CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

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

The council has 19 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.: Dorothy Moore - City of Valdez
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Patience Andersen Faulkner - Cordova District Fishermen United
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Cathy Hart - Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association
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Blake Johnson - Kenai Peninsula Borough
Iver Malutin - Kodiak Village Mayors Association
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Donna Schantz, Director of Programs
Alan Sorum, Project Manager

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