

THE OBSERVER

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Environmental Protection Agency revising rules on oil spill dispersants

By Joe Banta
Council Project Manager

The Environmental Protection Agency is updating the rules for using chemicals, including dispersants, to respond to oil spills in the United States. This update is intended to address the concerns that arose during and after the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010. During that disaster, an estimated 210 million gallons of oil was spilled, and over 1.8 million gallons of dispersants were applied to the spill.

Dispersants are chemicals applied to spilled oil to try to break down the oil into small particles with the hope that these particles disperse into the water column rather than remain floating on the surface in a slick.

This spring, the EPA solicited public input on the section of the National Oil and Hazard Substances Pollution Contingency Plan known as "Subpart J." Subpart J governs the use of dispersants and other chemical and biological

agents when responding to oil spills. This section is a catalog of dispersants and other chemical mitigation methods that have been vetted by the EPA to treat oil spills. It also spells out where dispersants can be used, and how much may be used.

This was the first opportunity the council has had in over 20 years to provide input on the national policy governing the use and regulation of dispersants.

"Under the Clean Water Act, the EPA has a fundamental responsibility to prevent the introduction of harmful pollutants into the environment," said Mark Swanson, executive director of the council. "While the potential and planned use of dispersants in spill response is intended to do more good than harm, the plain truth is dispersants are highly toxic to people and the marine environment. This rule-making and

See page 6, *Dispersants*

First known springs found beneath Columbia Glacier

By Alan Sorum
Council Project Manager

Researchers working with the council have found what are believed to be the first documented freshwater springs found at the base of a tidewater glacier in Alaska.

This investigation was conducted by the Prince William Sound Science Center in support of ongoing council research focused on Colum-

bia Glacier. The glacier has been retreating rapidly from its terminal moraine near Heather Island since the early 1980s. Columbia Glacier's main face is approximately 11 miles from Heather Island now.

"The survey found several small freshwater springs in the bottom of the bay - places where fresh, clear water was seeping out of the bottom

See page 7, *Springs*



Columbia Glacier. Photo by Bill Rome.

New regulations mean cleaner air in Prince William Sound

By Austin Love
Council Project Manager

Crude oil tankers in Prince William Sound are using cleaner fuel than they were just a few years ago. New regulations, created by the International Maritime Organization, aim to improve air quality by limiting pollutants emitted from large ships. The regulations target three air pollutants produced by internal combustion engines

See page 7, *Cleaner air*

State spill prevention and response division prevails in fight for funding

By Steve Rothchild
Administrative Deputy Director

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's division of Spill Prevention and Response, often referred to by the acronym "SPAR," has been facing a significant funding shortfall for some time due to declining oil pro-

See page 6, *Spill prevention and response*

How do you define burdensome?

By Amanda Bauer
Council President

As a personal rule, I try not to get caught up in the words that people choose. But there is one word that has been used so much in conversations about funding for oil spill prevention and response, and when talking about the cost-efficiency of regulations: that word is burdensome.

I would like to tell you about some things I would consider a burden.

See page 6, *Burdensome*



Amanda Bauer

AK Chamber of Commerce - Chenega Bay - Chugach Alaska Corp. - Cordova - Cordova District Fishermen United - Homer - Kenai Peninsula Borough - Kodiak - Kodiak Island Borough - Kodiak Village Mayors - Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition - Port Graham Corp. - Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp. - Seldovia - Seward - Tatitlek - Valdez - Whittier

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Volunteer Spotlight

New volunteer's expertise benefits terminal projects

Mikkel Foltmar, one of the newest additions to the council's volunteer roster, is almost as new to Alaska as he is to the council. However, he hasn't wasted time putting his knowledge and experience to work to help protect the waters of Prince William Sound.

Originally from Belgium, Foltmar arrived here in May 2014 to join his then girlfriend of four years, Jessica, now his wife. When he first arrived, he couldn't start working due to his visa status.

"I ended up going to the Public Lands Information Center [in Anchorage] for their Coffee with a Scientist programs," Foltmar recalls. "Partially because free coffee is awesome, and partially because the programs were rather good, a lot of interesting talks."

One of the programs was about the Exxon Valdez oil spill, presented by the council's outreach coordinator, Lisa Matlock. Matlock encouraged him to join as a volunteer, and worked with him to find a good fit for his expertise.

Foltmar attended the Technical University of Denmark, where he earned a Bachelors of Science in Engineering with a focus in Applied Chemistry, and a Master's in Environmental Engineering.

For his thesis, Foltmar helped test a prototype filtration system for stormwater drainage. A Danish company created the system, and together with the local municipality, wanted to

find out if the system would clean the water well enough that it could be released into a nearby lake instead of sending it to a treatment facility twenty miles away. The company approached Foltmar's university for help with testing the system. Foltmar ended up on the project, testing the stormwater runoff for oil pollution and toxicity.

"The goal was to see if the water became more toxic, whether it became less polluted with oil, or what exactly happened in the whole process of it getting filtered by the prototype."

With his background, it was an easy decision for Foltmar to end up on the council's Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee, whose mission is to identify actual and potential sources of episodic and chronic pollution at the Valdez Marine Terminal.

Foltmar visited the terminal soon after joining the committee. He noticed the stormwater system at the terminal had some similarities to his thesis project. He realized that his previous experience might be useful in evaluating the system, so he talked about his idea with council project manager Austin Love. Love agreed, so the two worked up a project idea, which will be conducted next year.

Corrosion in pipes at the terminal is another issue the committee has been working on in recent months. Last year, Alyeska discovered that the corrosion in a 6-inch spot of pipe was worse than previously thought. It needed imme-

diated attention since it was part of the piping to the tanker berths, and was located over the waters of Port Valdez.

"This was interesting because it was almost last minute that we got the email that Alyeska found corrosion," Foltmar said. At first it seemed a bit worrisome, but Foltmar soon realized the system was working well.

"It showed not only how professional Alyeska actually is in dealing with these situations, but also shows the importance of the council," Foltmar said.

"I was thinking about the situation," he added. "Basically in the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, no one was really informed of anything until several weeks after it was a serious problem. In contrast, up here, a couple of days after they figure out there's an issue, they confirm it, they let us know."

"Ultimately, the communities are informed, and they are not kept in the dark," he said. "They inform stakeholders without the whole community panicking."

"That showcases the importance of the council, and showcases the differences the oil spill created in changing the culture at Alyeska."



Mikkel Foltmar

Budget cuts threaten spill response equipment in remote Alaska communities

In an effort to reduce spending, the U.S. Coast Guard is considering decommissioning caches of oil spill response equipment stationed around Alaska. The caches will be funded through the next fiscal year, however, long-term funding is not secure. The Coast Guard has invited the public to share their thoughts.

The equipment in these caches includes boom, skimmers, and other oil spill cleanup equipment. The caches are located in remote areas so local communities can mount an early response to pollution incidents. In the council's region, equipment caches are located in Chenega Bay, Cordova, Valdez, Port Graham, Seward, Kodiak, Homer and Kenai. Equipment caches in locations outside the council's region are equally important, and span from the Pribilof Islands all the way down to Ketchikan.

The remote location of many of the sites means the cost of maintaining this equipment can be high. However, in a letter to the Coast Guard voicing support to retain the caches, the council noted, "In many cases, these equipment caches may be the first and only line of defense to respond to and protect sensitive areas during the early hours of an oil spill."

A second reason for considering removing the caches, is that several are co-located with oil spill response equipment owned by either private oil spill response organizations such as Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, or the State of Alaska. The council pointed out that most of the co-located equipment is listed in industry's oil spill contingency plans, and the equipment would likely not be available for use on all spills. Allowing the equipment that is owned and maintained by the oil industry to be used for a non-crude oil spill

See page 7, **Response equipment**

New council members to represent Kenai, Seward, Kodiak, Homer communities

Several seats on the council's board of directors are changing hands this spring.

Steve Lewis, City of Seldovia representative, left the board in March, following the city's election of a new representative. Four others have announced they will be leaving in May at the end of their terms: Blake Johnson, representative of the Kenai Peninsula Borough; Jim Herbert, representative of the City of Seward; Emil Christiansen, representative of the Kodiak Village Mayor's Association; and Nick Garay, representative of the City of Homer.

Blake Johnson joined the council in 1993, just a few years after the council was formed. He served on the council's executive committee for 14 of those 22 years, as member-at-large for 13 terms, and as secretary for one term.

Johnson also served on the council's Legislative Affairs and Finance committees at various times over the years, as well as helping to advise and shape policies. He was a common sight at the council's information booth at various conferences and visits to legislators in Washington, D.C. He provided valuable insight into state and federal governmental affairs as well as tug operations in Prince William Sound.

Johnson, a retiree, no longer lives full-time in Alaska. Mako Haggerty of Homer is expected to be seated at the May meeting to replace Johnson.

Steve Lewis joined the council's board in 1999, and has represented the City of Seldovia for 16 years. He was first elected to the council's executive committee in 2000, serving as member-at-large. He was elected to serve as



Blake Johnson

vice president of the board in 2000, as president in 2002 and 2003, as secretary in 2004, again as vice president from 2005-2008, again as president in 2009, and as member-at-large in 2011 until his resignation in 2015.

Lewis also served as a member of the Legislative Affairs Committee, Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee, Strategic Planning Coordination Committee, ad-hoc committees for policy updates, and funding negotiations. He also worked on projects related to tug escorts, dispersants, and contingency plans. Lewis helped develop a strategic plan for the council in 2001. The framework of that plan is still being used at the council today.

Lewis was chosen to represent the council on the Prince William Sound Tanker Contingency Plan Steering Committee, a group which included industry personnel, government regulators and council representatives. The group worked to improve contingency plans and communications related to oil spill prevention and response in Prince William Sound.

Lewis, a petroleum engineer with projects all around Alaska, no longer lives in Seldovia. Alisha Sughroue of Seldovia is expected to be seated at the May meeting to replace Lewis.

Jim Herbert joined the council in 2012. He represented the City of Seward on

See page 6, **Board**



Steve Lewis



Jim Herbert

From the Executive Director

In tough economy, good news for risk of oil spills in Alaska

Everywhere we turn, we see fiscal belt tightening. State budgets are the leanest we have seen in almost three decades. Federal budgets are also lean.

We all know the conversation around the kitchen table when home finances become tight. When unexpected expenditures exceed projected revenue, something's got to give. We ask ourselves what's needed and what's discretionary. The house looks like it needs paint but maybe that could wait a year. Can we delay without incurring expensive damage to increasingly exposed wood? Can we get another year or two out of those already four year old tires without risking an expensive or dangerous accident?

For many of us, when budgets are tight, the wished-for turnaround to a time of budgetary ease is probably not just around the next corner. When we cannot afford a broken-down car, we get meticulous about maintenance, we use the brakes gently, we get out the touch-up paint, and we change the oil a bit more rigorously.

The oil industry and our state budgetary coffers have a long history of boom and bust cycles in Alaska, often in rapid fluctuations. When money is tight, budgetary pencils get sharpened, wages get frozen, and personnel vacancies go unfilled. Maintenance projects and safety upgrades can get deferred or cancelled. If everything is in great working order when the budgetary crunch hits, deferring discretionary expenditures is an obvious and reasonable cut.

As a council, we work with regulators and industry to prevent complacency and promote the environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and the associated oil tankers.

That mission and goal persists in good economic times as well as in challenging ones.

Good news for the state

We rely upon Alaska's Department of Environmental Conservation and in particular the Spill Prevention and Response division to monitor industry. With its direct linkage to a decreasing volume of crude oil produced in the state, the current funding was no longer sufficient to pay for current operations and response capacity. To help fix this deficiency, legislation was recently introduced in both the House and the Senate, by Representative Munoz and Senator Micciche. Governor Walker's leadership, together with the good work and tireless advocacy of the department's commissioner and staff were ultimately successful in persuading this legislature that protection of citizen's interests require that Alaska sustains a robust, fully funded prevention program and be prepared to respond to spills immediately and with full vigor. A combined version passed both houses and is scheduled to become law.

Good news at the terminal

Oil prices are down dramatically. Important and needed inspections of buried terminal crude oil piping are expensive and arguably discretionary from a regulatory standpoint. Our concern, and one clearly shared by Alyeska, is that nobody actually knows what kind of shape some sections of those deeply buried pipes are in after 37 plus years in the ground. The planned modifications needed to render that pipe inspectable will be expensive. This expense pales in comparison to the probable cost of an oil leak that could shut down the

whole system.

The good news is that Alyeska reports they are proceeding with planned projects to make the terminal's piping inspectable and may even be accelerating that implementation. Alyeska reports that recently developed internal pipeline inspection technologies, in use at the pump stations, may be used on buried terminal piping in combination with pigs similar to those already used by Alyeska to inspect the main 800 mile pipeline. This is excellent news for all of us who have an interest in preventing an accident.

In these tight budgetary times, it seems everything in the state budget is on the chopping block. It would have been easy for a less thoughtful legislature to justify a substantial downsizing of the state's spill prevention and response. It would have been equally easy for a less forward thinking industry to justify shelving or deferring pipe inspection enhancement activities at the terminal. Neither is happening. Instead, the legislature re-affirmed their commitment to protecting the Alaskan environment and Alyeska re-affirmed their commitment to wisely manage pipe corrosion risks with innovative newer technologies. Both are good news indeed.

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



Mark Swanson

From Alyeska

Alyeska program wins award for stewardship and sustainability

Alyeska Pipeline Service Company's Vessel of Opportunity Program recently received a 2015 Alaska Ocean Leadership Award by the Alaska SeaLife Center. Alyeska received the Stewardship & Sustainability Award, which honors an industry leader that demonstrates the highest commitment to sustainability of ocean resources. The award was presented to Alyeska leadership at the Alaska Marine Gala on February 21 in Anchorage.

The Vessel of Opportunity Program, often referred to as the "fishing vessel program," started in 1990 to ready citizens and fishing industry professionals around Prince William Sound to provide oil spill response support in the unlikely case of an actual incident. Each year, staff from Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System, known as SERVS, provides education and training to more than 1,500 crew members of approximately 450 vessels from six Prince William Sound ports: Valdez, Cordova, Whittier, Homer, Kodiak and Seward.

"It is phenomenal to be recognized for sustainability and stewardship by the Alaska SeaLife Center," said Andres Morales, Alyeska's SERVS Director. "Our mission is prevention, and if needed, to be ready to respond. The Vessel of Opportunity Program is truly emblematic of how fishermen and industry share a common interest and work together to protect Prince William Sound. This is a wonderful and deserved recognition of our joint work to be the best

stewards of this tremendous resource we have."

The rigorous, multiday training strengthens the crews' skills in spill response, containment and recovery, which allows them to be safe while playing an integral role in Alyeska's response readiness and protecting Prince William Sound. The trainings take place in each of the six ports, spending time in the classroom and on the water. Crew members get hands-on experience in loading equipment, deploying boom, setting up skimmers and rehearsing other recovery tactics. A smaller segment of participants are trained in wildlife management and treatment. SERVS staff is assisted in the training by the U.S. Coast Guard, Prince William Sound Community College, and other entities.

The center noted in its award announcement that, "The local knowledge and commitment of

the Prince William Sound fishing communities is evident in this program's ongoing success – ensuring that the fisheries and environment are protected and sustained for years to come." The award was sponsored by the center's Awards Committee member Jason Brune.

Learn more about Alyeska's Vessel of Opportunity Program at www.alyeska-pipe.com/TAPS/SERVS/VesselOfOpportunity.

• Submitted by Alyeska Corporate Communications



Alyeska personnel accept the 2015 Alaska Ocean Leadership Award. From left: Alyeska president Tom Barrett; Kate Goudreau, Kelsey Appleton, Henry Irish, Todd Taylor and Andrés Morales. Photo courtesy of Alyeska.

A look back at the early years of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

One of the most radical innovations to come out of the Exxon Valdez spill was the establishment of permanent, industry-funded citizen oversight to promote the environmentally safe operation of the oil industry. It's been over a quarter of a century since the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council was formed. To mark that anniversary, The Observer is running a four-part series documenting the founding and early development of the council, and the hopes and

intentions of some who were closely involved with the early days of the council.

These stories help us understand how citizens and the oil industry rallied together to create a citizens' oversight group to protect Prince William Sound from future oil spills.

The stories are in oral history format. Oral history is the practice of preserving personal testimonies about the human experience. Subjectivity is both the greatest strength and weakness of oral history; it can convey emo-

tions linked to a specific time period, but the information may not be as accurate as other methods of documenting history. As stated by Mark Hutton in his interview, "sometimes memories are colored by the hope of what you thought you were trying to do and not necessarily exactly the way it happened. Twenty years ago was a long time ago, and this is my best recollection."

Part two of four

In January, we read about efforts to form a council before the spill and immediately after. In this issue, you will read about the emotional turbulence of the first few years of the council and how members learned to channel that emotion into a professional, effective organization. Next issue will cover the positives and negatives of the way the council was organized, and finally, in September, we will hear lessons learned about the value of citizen oversight in our region.

All four parts, plus the full interviews, are now available on our website, please visit: www.bit.ly/PWSRCACstories.



Board members Bill Walker and Anne Rothe discuss council business with Alyeska representative Gary Bader.

"In the early days we were so caught up in the emotions of the devastation, it was hard to remember that we were trying to launch and stabilize an organization that would exist far into the future, and far beyond the Exxon Valdez disaster itself. You could hardly fault people for being passionate and upset, but we had to remember that in order to be effective we had to put our efforts into building a strong foundation for the future and not to be sidetracked too much by the crisis of the day, because there will always be some kind of crisis of the day. The key is to be ready for it and have a good system for dealing with it."

- Scott Sterling

Sterling represented the City of Cordova on the council's board of directors from December 1990 to March 1993.



Scott Sterling and Rick Steiner.

"Conflict was inherent and a natural component in RCAC's establishment and history. While conflict has some positive aspects, in general, it had negative effects and many times kept both sides from moving forward in a positive direction. The grudges were deep and mistrust was rampant."

- Sheila Gottehrer

Gottehrer was the council's first executive director, serving from January 1991 to July 1993.

"The negative is that it was formed out of a disaster. The horse was out of the barn, so to speak, and we went about closing the door. The positive side is that it has matured over the years. I would say during the first ten years, it was a pretty contentious relationship between industry and the board. I can remember some meetings where there were some very fiery exchanges, and that was a necessary part of the process.

A month or so following its formation, the president of Alyeska confided to me that he was disappointed that the relationship hadn't advanced further. I think my remark to him was, "You can't reach into the charred forest and get the victims of the fire, then dust them off and expect them to be anything other than what we are."

- Bill Walker

Walker represented the City of Valdez on the council's board of directors from July 1989 to September 2001.

"Those of us who were originally involved were pretty overwhelmed with all the stress and harsh conditions that we all went through. Even today it brings back a lot of bad memories. Personally, it turned me strongly against the oil industry and against the state and the federal government. So there was a lot of bitterness.

When you start a group with a lot of people being very bitter, professionalism isn't always what it should be; there's always going to be a mix-up between doing things right and allowing your emotions to get in the way. In the first year or two we had to sort that out.

Once we did that, it became a very efficient machine and we were able to really take a strong look at what we needed to do. When we worked with the oil industry and the shippers and others, it was pretty tough. There was a lot of give and take. Industry had to learn that they had to put up with us and that we had better find a way to work together. But it didn't happen overnight. It took a while."

- Stan Stephens

Stephens represented the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce on the council's board of directors from May 1991 to March 1992, the Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association from March 1992 to January 2008, and the City of Valdez from January 2009 to February 2012.



The council was created during a time when citizens' emotions were volatile and a lot of anger was directed at the oil industry. The council had to learn how to channel that emotion into an effective organization.

"We tried to deal in good faith with a high degree of civility and professionalism, but it did get contentious at times. Part of that was due to the extreme sensitivity to the disaster itself. Building trust was not easy and it took a lot of work and a lot of time. On top of that, we had to learn the technical aspects of what we were dealing with. We had to learn to understand and address the technical and engineering questions, the consciousness of the global oil industry and the role that TAPS and Alyeska and its parent companies all play. We had to raise our consciousness greatly to understand how the oil industry views things, and the role it plays in international oil supply and demand and international oil economics."

- Scott Sterling

"When we first got started, the first few meetings, the only issue on the table was oil spill response, but there were a few of us who worked hard to get the mission to include all the environmental impacts of the tankers and terminal. That was somewhat of a contentious issue, but it got resolved within about three meetings, then we took on all the environmental impacts. There was so much work that the RCAC ended up doing, invasive species and air quality, just to name a couple; none of that would have been included if it had remained what it started out being."

- Marilyn Leland

Leland represented the Cordova District Fishermen United on the council's board of directors from July 1989 to September 1991.

"I used to kid about "Meetings R Us" because in the early days we attended so many meetings. All in all, I think the RCAC was set up very well. I think it was a hard time for the oil companies to accept that citizens should have any say about anything having to do with them. I can kind of understand that, because, if I'm the captain of a military ship, I wouldn't expect civilians to tell me how to run my ship. I think that's essentially the way the oil companies felt about it. I think ultimately it worked out extremely well because we managed to realize that everybody had the same goal. None of us wanted to have another oil spill and if we did, we wanted to have something in place that was going to mitigate it to the maximum extent, and hopefully prevent it in the first place. In the beginning it was a little contentious between the oil companies and the RCAC. They weren't sure why we were even there."

- Stan Stanley

Stanley was one of the first staff members. He managed projects for the Port Operations and Vessel Traffic System Committee and later served as executive director.

"At those early meetings, I think there were people from Alyeska who were skeptical and they didn't really want to participate, but I think there was also a lot of people from Alyeska who were glad we were there because we helped them to do their jobs better. Our presence lent weight to things they may have wanted to do anyway, and we may have made that a little easier for them."

- Marilyn Leland

"Once we did towing studies and the risk assessment, it became obvious that we had something that the shippers could go back to the owners and higher-ups with and say, "Hey, look, these guys are right. If we have a major accident, it's going to be 100 per cent our fault because they have proven themselves.""

- Stan Stephens

"We were also able to insert local fishermen and their boats into the response plan. That was something that had never been done before and, in fact, in the early days of the spill had been rejected by Alyeska and Exxon. In fact, when I talked to Alyeska and offered assistance from some of our fishermen, I was told "we can't afford the liability of using amateurs." The good news is that now, Alyeska and the shippers now know that Alaska fishermen are professionals and the most qualified to assist in a response."

- Marilyn Leland

"Safety is bound up with all the other issues that affect the industry. It has economic implications, it has legal implications, it has management implications, it has political implications. Every sphere of human endeavor is affected by safety and concentrating the intelligent discussion that keeps you mindful of all that is an education, to say the least. In the realm of politics and safety and engineering and commerce and maritime law, it just goes on and on. It was pointed out to me that you cannot become an instant expert on everything and you probably shouldn't even try, but what you should do is keep in mind the goal and learn what you need to learn. Don't try to be an instant expert because that can lead you down the wrong path. So that was me, I was a lawyer generalist, I didn't try to become an expert on anything, I just tried to keep in mind the goals."

- Scott Sterling



Tim Robertson working during an early Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee meeting.

"There were tens of thousands of volunteer hours in the first few years of the organization. When you have that kind of volunteer effort, and then on top of that you can fund travel and meeting locations, and legal expertise, and technical expertise to advise the volunteers, you're leveraging their dollars way beyond what they can do with those same dollars, and I don't think they realized or expected that.

There was a lot of emotion and a lot of energy that came out of the oil spill by people who were upset by the fact that it happened to us, and it gave a channel for that energy and that emotion to do something positive. Those are all really good things.

The downside is that we are sort of dependent on the industry for the funds, although I haven't seen that to be a tremendous downside."

- Tim Robertson

Robertson represented the City of Seldovia on the council's board of directors from July 1989 to December 1991.



Council volunteers and industry working together for a better system.

Spill prevention and response: Funding expected to be signed into law

Continued from page 1

duction. The division works to prevent, prepare and respond to spills of oil and hazardous substances as well as oversee the cleanup of contaminated sites. Their work includes facility inspections, contingency plan review and approval, drills and exercises and site monitoring.

In the 1980s, the State legislature instituted a per barrel surcharge on crude oil to provide funding for the division. Unfortunately, when originally enacted, there was no inflation protection in the bill and production has declined.

Running out of money

This year, without inflation protection or another funding source, the crude oil surcharge became inadequate to support SPAR's work, necessitating staff reductions and other cost savings. Starting in early 2014, department personnel provided projections to both the House and Senate showing the decrease of funds due to lower oil production. SPAR has been relying on large oil spill settlements and penalties to address the shortfall for several years but those are now spent. This year, SPAR reduced expenses by combining the planning and prevention program with the prevention and response program, reducing personnel, and more actively pursued cost reimbursement, however the shortfall was projected to be \$7 million annually. Without a fix to funding, essential services would cease and SPAR would have to reduce personnel by approximately 40 percent.

Support from the council

The council has been an advo-

cate for sustained funding of the division since the decline of oil flowing in the trans-Alaska pipeline began in the mid-1990s.

In January, the council approved a resolution of support for the SPAR division, outlining possible ways to develop new funding for consideration. The resolution was sent to every legislator in Juneau in advance of the annual council trip to meet legislators, this past February. Fully funding SPAR was at the top of the list during meetings with legislators.

Proposed solution approved

In March, two similar bills were introduced in Alaska: House Bill 158 and Senate Bill 86. Legislators recognized that the crude oil industry was already paying its share into the fund and put some of the onus on the wholesale refined fuel industry, since the majority of spills and contaminated sites in Alaska are caused by refined fuels.

As The Observer went to press, the latest version of the bill adds a 0.95 cent per gallon tax on refined fuels. It passed both the House and Senate, and it is anticipated that Governor Walker will sign this new legislation so the revenue can be collected starting July 1 this year.

"In today's lean budgetary climate, it is noteworthy that our legislature proposed and approved a new tax in order to keep this critical oversight function of the state fully operational," said Mark Swanson, executive director of the council. "Kudos to all involved in advocating for the sustained protection of Alaska's amazing natural resources and environment."

Board: New members to be seated in May

Continued from page 2

the council's board of directors. He was elected to two terms as treasurer and chaired the council's Finance committee both years. Herbert came to the council with years of experience in Prince William Sound as a fisherman and participant in the Alyeska/SERVS fishing vessel program.

Herbert is moving from Seward to Homer, and will continue to volunteer on the council's Oil Spill Prevention and Response committee. Orson Smith of Seward is expected to be seated at the May meeting to replace Herbert. Orson volunteers for the council's Port Operation and Vessel Traffic System committee.

Nick Garay joined the board

in 2012, representing the City of Homer. Robert Archibald is expected to be seated at the May meeting to replace Garay.

Emil Christiansen joined the council's board in 2013, and represented the Kodiak Village Mayor's Association. Melissa Berns of Old Harbor is expected to be seated at the May meeting to replace Christiansen.



Nick Garay



Emil Christiansen

Dispersants: Rules for use to change

Continued from page 1

the formal consideration of public comments may be the public's only opportunity to ensure that the protections we expect from the EPA are actually provided."

Cautious approach to use of chemicals

One positive change is the EPA's cautious approach to use of chemicals. Chemicals should only be applied to oil spills when there is clear, science-based evidence that they will be effective and lessen the adverse impacts. The chemicals should also not pose a risk of enhanced toxicity from the treated oil or the agent itself. The council strongly supported this caution, and identified several areas that need clarification to reinforce this critical concept.

Decisions informed by science

The council also strongly supports the EPA's emphasis on using science when making decisions. However, the council also urged the EPA to acknowledge areas where science on dispersants is uncertain.

Toxicity and chronic effects

EPA has traditionally relied

upon a limited set of tests on a few species to establish toxicity data for oil spill treating agents. The proposed changes do not include sufficient testing for a complete understanding of toxicity, particularly for low-level, long-term exposure.

Emphasis on authorizing dispersants before a spill happens

The proposed rule heavily emphasizes a "preauthorization" process. Preauthorization means that dispersants are approved for use before the spill happens. The council expressed support for pre-planning, and encouraged collaboration and rigorous science, but expressed concern that the EPA is over-emphasizing preauthorization at the potential expense of collaborative, case-by-case decision-making.

Next steps

This comment period is closed. The EPA is expected to conduct a second round of public comments before any changes become final, however there is no requirement for additional public review.

For more information, visit: www.bit.ly/DispersantComments

Burdensome: What is a burden?

Continued from page 1

Burdensome would be leaving my native village with my vessel to go clean up a multi-billion dollar company's oil while watching my financial security, how I take care of myself and my family, my way of life, my already fragile culture, die before my eyes. Knowing yet another generation will be lost to the ways of their people. Knowing that I may be emotionally, mentally, and physically ruined forever.

Burdensome, to me, is the world not eating our seafood, the world not travelling our waters, tourists' cameras aimed not at breaching whales, but at beached whales.

Burdensome is a 13 foot tide, in and out, twice a day, re-oiling every rock and pebble, painstakingly cleaned just hours before.

Burdensome is surfacing to breathe the oxygen you can't live without; exhaling just below the surface of the ocean, then breaking through a surface now covered in thick crude oil, to breath in heavy, polluted air.

I have been anticipating change with prevention and response for years. As captain of a tour boat in Prince William Sound, I tell the story of the Exxon Valdez about a hundred times every summer. Around the 20th anniversary of the spill, I remember thinking to myself: "20 years is a long time. Soon someone is going to want to start reducing prevention and response." I thought

the same at 21 years, 22, 23, 24, and 25 years.

Already, we are being told of the first steps – tightening travel, delaying large purchases, merging programs, and not filling vacated positions. I remember a time, long before I joined the council, when just the talk of not replacing a single employee at the Alaska Department of Environmental Conversation was grounds for a tough battle.

I am extremely concerned about the Sound and downstream communities. Prince William Sound plays a major role in North American standards for spill prevention and response. At a time when Alaska's Arctic will certainly be developed, I can't help but speculate what effect any reduction, be it the slightest, in prevention and response, may have on undeveloped areas. If we loosen our standards, make our regulations and statutes less burdensome, in a place that has suffered one of the worst oil spill disasters in North American history, why push for strict standards anywhere else?

We need to do all we can to protect the regulations and statutes that are in place today. We have gone 25 years without a major spill because of our regulations and statutes. Society should not have to suffer repeated failures, but instead celebrate our successes.

We have already suffered our burden.

THE OBSERVER is published in January, May, July and September by the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council. Questions or comments can be emailed to: newsletter@pwsrccac.org

Cleaner air: New laws mean less pollution

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and released in vessel exhaust: sulfur oxides, particulate matter, and nitrogen oxides.

These pollutants can have a variety of negative impacts on the environment and human health. Sulfur and nitrogen can cause acidification in the environment leading to declines in species abundance and biodiversity of plants and fish. They can cause nutrient enrichment that can lead to excessive algae growth and fish kills in aquatic ecosystems. Human health impacts can include increased risk for lung disease, asthma, autism, and heart disease.

The new regulations mandate that ships use either cleaner fuels or new technologies, such as exhaust scrubbers, to reduce pollution from large marine vessels. The tankers in Prince William Sound are complying by burning fuel with low sulfur content. As of August 2012, ships had to burn fuel with a sulfur content of 1.0 percent or less if they were within the North American Emission Control Area, which extends approximately 200 miles offshore. As of January 1, 2015, vessels within the emission control area had to burn even cleaner fuels, meaning tanker fuel emissions in Prince William Sound now have a sulfur content of 0.1 percent or less. Comparatively, tankers in international waters, more than 200 miles offshore, are allowed to burn fuel with sulfur content up to 3.5 percent. The new low sulfur fuel is about 60 percent more costly than traditional fuels used to run ships, but using low sulfur fuels can significantly lower engine and fuel

systems maintenance costs.

One caveat in the new regulations allows certain types of ships to burn higher sulfur fuel in Prince William Sound and coastal waters until 2020. This exception applies to ships that were built before 2011 and use steam boilers for propulsion power. Only one ship currently calling in Port Valdez, the SeaRiver Sierra, uses this type of propulsion. The Sierra could burn 3.5 percent sulfur fuel and be in compliance; however, the Sierra typically burns cleaner fuel while operating in the Sound, averaging 1.4 percent. This ship is expected to be replaced by a new ship, the SeaRiver Eagle Bay, by the end of 2015. The Eagle Bay will use 0.1 percent or less sulfur fuel while operating in Prince William Sound and coastal waters.

Burning the cleaner fuel will lead to significant pollution reductions in the region. Tankers burning cleaner fuels will likely reduce the amount of these pollutants released into Prince William Sound by hundreds of tons per year. Using U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates, nitrogen oxides could be reduced from 340 to 300 tons per year, sulfur oxides from 300 to 11 tons per year, and particulate matter could be reduced from 70 to 9 tons per year. The council has commissioned a study that will more accurately quantify the reductions from tanker's emissions resulting from the new regulations. Results of that study should be available in the fall of 2015.

Springs: Flow could affect glacier melt

Continued from page 1

and mixing with the cloudier, saltier water of the bay," said Dr. Robert Campbell, researcher for the Prince William Sound Science Center.

"Subsurface seeps have been observed elsewhere, but to our knowledge this is the closest they have been identified to a tidewater glacier. Groundwater inputs could even have an impact on calving and iceberg production as the Columbia Glacier continues to recede," Camp-

bell added.

The council supports research efforts at Columbia Glacier to better understand its behavior and help ensure the safe transportation of crude oil through the Sound. A copy of this report and reports related to research being conducted at Columbia Glacier can be found on the Council's website. Links to the information are found below.

For more information, please visit: www.bit.ly/MaritimeOps

Response equipment: Send your comments

Continued from page 2

would mean the industry could be out of compliance with regulations.

The council also noted that due to the remoteness of the sites, it could be days before equipment could be brought in from another location.

Public comments in support of the caches are needed.

The Coast Guard needs to receive support from interested

stakeholders in order to justify the long-term funding required to maintain these equipment caches.

Readers can send their own letter of support. Comments are due to the U.S. Coast Guard by July 1, 2015 and should be directed to:

LT James Nunez:
James.d.nunez@uscg.mil
17th Coast Guard District
P.O. Box 25517
Juneau, AK 99802-5517

ABOUT THE COUNCIL'S ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Much of the council's work is done through permanent volunteer committees made up of board members, technical experts, and citizens with an interest in making oil transportation safer in Alaska.

These standing committees work with staff on projects, study and deliberate current oil transportation issues, and formulate their own advice and recommendations to the council's full board of directors.

Our committees provide an avenue for public participation in the council's work.

The council has five technical committees:

Terminal Operations & Environmental Monitoring:

The Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Committee identifies actual and potential sources of episodic and chronic pollution at the Valdez Marine Terminal.

Members:

Chair: Harold Blehm, Valdez	Steve Goudreau, Valdez
Vice-chair: Mikkel Foltmar, Anchorage	Tom Kuckertz, Anchorage
Amanda Bauer, Valdez*	George Skladal, Anchorage

Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems:

The Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems (POVTS) Committee monitors port and tanker operations in Prince William Sound. POVTS identifies and recommends improvements in the vessel traffic navigation systems and monitors the vessel escort system.

Members:

Chair: Amanda Bauer, Valdez*	Bob Jaynes, Valdez
Cliff Chambers, Seward	Orson Smith, Seward
Pat Duffy, Valdez*	Jeremy Talbott, Valdez
Pete Heddell, Whittier	

Scientific Advisory:

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) sponsors independent scientific research and provides scientific assistance and advice to the other council committees on technical reports, scientific methodology, data interpretation, and position papers.

Members:

Chair: John Kennish, Anchorage	Dorothy M. Moore, Valdez*
Vice-chair: Paula Martin, Soldotna	Debasmita Misra, Fairbanks
Sarah Allan, Anchorage	Mark Udevitz, Anchorage
Roger Green, Hope	

Oil Spill Prevention and Response:

The Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) Committee works to minimize the risks and impacts associated with oil transportation by reviewing and recommending strong spill prevention and response measures, adequate contingency planning, and effective regulations.

Members:

Chair: John LeClair, Anchorage	David Goldstein, Whittier
Vice-chair: Jerry Brookman, Kenai	Jim Herbert, Seward*
Robert Beedle, Cordova*	Gordon Scott, Girdwood
Colin Daugherty, Anchorage	Alisha Sughroue, Seldovia*

Information and Education:

The Information and Education Committee's mission is to support the council's mission by fostering public awareness, responsibility, and participation in the council's activities through information and education.

Members:

Chair: Patience Andersen Faulkner, Cordova*	Cathy Hart, Anchorage
Vice-chair: Linda Robinson, Kenai	Ruth E. Knight, Valdez
Trent Dodson, Kodiak	Kate Morse, Cordova
Jane Eisemann, Kodiak	Savannah Lewis, Anchorage

*council director

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You can also reach us at: newsletter@pwsrccac.org

Community Corner

Listening to downstream concerns

By Lisa Matlock
Outreach Coordinator

Over the past two months, Executive Director Mark Swanson and I have been traveling as part of the council's community outreach program to a good number of our downstream communities. The term "downstream" was coined after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, when oil spread across more than a thousand miles of coastline in southcentral Alaska, including the



Lisa Matlock

southern Kenai Peninsula and Kodiak Island. Because of this, when industry works on contingency planning for safe oil transportation through Prince William Sound, the council regularly speaks up for downstream communities and resources that

could be affected by an accident. So it is important for us to visit these communities to hear from these citizens about how our mission connects to their priorities and community needs.

Visiting Kachemak Bay

In March, we presented a scientific poster at the Kachemak Bay Science Conference about recent chemical dispersants research sponsored by the council. Every two years, at this conference, scientists with ties to the communities of Homer, Seldovia, Port Graham, and Nanwalek get together to share information about their research. Presentations, field trips, workshops, and poster sessions help community members better understand the health of their marine backyard and learn about all kinds of research projects happening there.

Kachemak Bay communities showed great interest in what the council has learned about chemical dispersants through our 25 years of research and how communities can weigh in on changes to policy about dispersants and their use in Alaska. As a recent example, the Environmental Protection Agency accepted public comments about a section of the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan that regulates which chemical dispersants can be used and how they are used. The scientific poster the council presented at the conference continues to be available through a Homer-based board member for continued outreach in that area.

Visiting Kodiak Island

In recent weeks, the council exhibited our information booth at Kodiak ComFish, an exposition focused primarily

on commercial fishing and related subjects in the largest town on Kodiak Island. We met with people from throughout the community to talk about the council and spill response preparedness activities we monitor, such as the Alyeska's fishing vessel oil spill response program. Through this program, Alyeska pays fishing vessel crews to learn to help clean up oil spills and to be ready to respond quickly if there is a spill. This program helps satisfy Alyeska's commitment to the residents of Alaska to be ready for an oil spill. The final spring classroom and on-water training days for Kodiak fishing vessels overlapped with the week of ComFish so we were busy answering questions about the

program.

After ComFish, we joined Melissa Berns of the Old Harbor Native Corporation on flights to four remote Kodiak Island communities: Old Harbor, Port Lions, Ouzinkie, and Larsen Bay. The opportunity to meet with village and tribal leaders was both instructive and delightful. People living in these small downstream communities are quite interested in council projects, especially the fishing vessel program, chemical dispersant science and policy, and youth involvement activities. Leaders in these Kodiak Island communities also showed great interest in our Incident Command System for Stakeholders workshops. These workshops can help local residents identify how to get their voices heard during an incident such as an oil spill.

Remote but connected

Sometimes these remote communities can seem very far downstream from the tankers that ply Prince William Sound waters, but the people living in them understand perfectly their connection to the larger Gulf of Alaska ecosystem. It is a reminder of the old adage that when we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else.



Vern Hall, Mark Swanson, Lisa Matlock, Al Burch, Bill Burch at ComFish 2015. Photo by Lynda Giguere.

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

- Pres.: Amanda Bauer - City of Valdez
- Vice Pres.: Thane Miller - Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp.
- Secretary: Bob Shavelson - Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition
- Treasurer: Jim Herbert - City of Seward
- Ian Angaiak - Community of Chenega Bay
- Robert Beedle - City of Cordova
- Al Burch - Kodiak Island Borough
- Emil Christiansen - Kodiak Village Mayors Association
- Wayne Donaldson - City of Kodiak
- Pat Duffy - Alaska State Chamber of Commerce
- Patience Andersen Faulkner - Cordova District Fishermen United
- Nick Garay - City of Homer
- Blake Johnson - Kenai Peninsula Borough
- John Johnson - Chugach Alaska Corporation
- Andrea Korbe - City of Whittier
- Jim LaBelle - Port Graham Corporation
- Alisha Sughroue (Pending confirmation) - City of Seldovia
- Dorothy Moore - City of Valdez
- Roy Totemoff - Community of Tatitlek

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COUNCIL BOARD MEETINGS

The citizens' council board of directors meets three times annually. The January meeting is held in Anchorage, May in Valdez, and the September meeting is rotated among communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Board meetings are open to the public, and an opportunity for public comments is provided at the beginning of each meeting. Agendas and other meeting materials are available on our website: www.pwsrcc.org

The tentative board meeting schedule for the coming year is: September 17 and 18, 2015 in Kodiak; January 21 and 22, 2016 in Anchorage; and May 5 and 6, 2016 in Valdez.

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