

THE OBSERVER

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Planning for marine services changeover under way

The changeover for the marine services contract for Alyeska is underway. By July of 2018, Edison Chouest Offshore, or ECO, of Louisiana will replace Crowley Marine Services for prevention and response services in Prince William Sound. Crowley Marine Services has held the contract since the creation of Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System after the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Changeover planning

Most of the current activity involves planning for the change. Even though the new vessels will not be arriving in Alaska until next year, ECO will be hiring personnel this year to begin training.

The Council has been participating in a series of information-sharing meetings with Alyeska, ECO, Crowley, the oil shippers, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, and the U.S. Coast Guard. In late May and early June, Council representatives will travel to Louisiana to view the early stages of vessel construction. It is anticipated that another group will visit the shipyards in October and November when the construction is further along.

The Council will also provide input on expected revisions to the oil spill contingency plans for Prince William Sound, possibly as early as this summer. Anytime a new vessel or equipment is introduced into the system, changes must be made to the plans.

The Council is partnering with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation to host a workgroup that will provide advice on drills, exercises, and training. The U.S. Coast Guard, Alyeska, and representatives from the

oil shipping companies have indicated they will participate.

The Council is developing recommendations for drills and training protocols to help verify that the new ECO vessels and personnel are able to meet their intended use in the spill prevention and response system. All of the vessels, except the utility tug Ross Chouest, are brand new and some aspects of the designs are untested.

Independent Council review of tug designs finds many improvements, some areas of concern

A Council report released in February caused concern about some of the design aspects of the new vessels. After the Council received drawings and technical information, the Council commissioned a report that looked at each vessel and its intended use.

Significant improvements

The new vessels, including five escort tugs, four general purpose tugs, a utility tug, and four open-water response barges, represent a significant improvement for the oil spill prevention and response system. In some cases, the new general purpose tugs will replace existing conventional tugs that are over 40 years old.

Winch technology has improved drastically in recent years. The ECO vessels will be equipped with "render/recover" winches, by Rolls-Royce. These new winches automatically maintain constant tension on a line, improving safety and performance, which helps prevent losing a tow.

Another upgrade to the escort tugs is the

Social scientist's studies of subsistence fisheries helps communities adapt to changing environments



At 17, Davin Holen left his home in the woods outside of Wasilla, Alaska, to travel the world. He lived and studied in South America and Europe for several years before joining the Peace Corps, where he ended up in Mali, West Africa, living in a small mud

See page 2, Volunteer Spotlight

Council recertified by Coast Guard through February 2018

The U.S. Coast Guard has recertified the Council as meeting its responsibilities under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

In a February 17 letter to the Council, Rear Admiral Michael McAllister, commander of the Coast Guard's District 17 in Juneau, notified the Council of the recertification.

The 1990 Act requires the Council to reapply

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See page 3, Recertification

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

Social scientist uses knowledge of subsistence fisheries to help communities adapt to changing environments

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hut on the edge of the Sierra Desert with his wife, Cara.

“No running water, no electricity. It was like camping in the desert for two and a half years,” Holen says.

Holen’s experience in Africa sparked a curiosity about human culture that has turned into his life’s work.

“I was really interested in people’s interactions with the environment, especially in a subsistence economy.”

He realized that even though he grew up in Alaska, he did not know much about the cultures in his home state. He returned from Africa and enrolled in the Master’s program at the University of Alaska Anchorage in Applied Cultural Anthropology. The department was brand new, and Holen was its first graduate.

After earning his degree, he went to work for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game’s Division of Subsistence, working his way up from an internship to program manager over 15 years. Holen assessed subsistence harvests all over the state, from Southeast Alaska to the Arctic. He tried to understand and document these fisheries, in order to anticipate problems that could arise, so he could find ways to address upcoming expected needs.

Davin Holen is a member of the Council’s Scientific Advisory Committee. The committee supports the Council’s mission by sponsoring independent scientific research and providing scientific assistance and advice to the other Council committees on technical reports, scientific methodology, data interpretation, and position papers.

This committee is one of five committees of volunteers from communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Volunteers like Holen dedicate their time and expertise to advise the Council on technical issues related to the safe transportation of oil through Prince William Sound.

“We did a lot of work looking at the subsistence hunt in the Copper River basin. That’s an interesting case. In some areas, there is high pressure from urban hunters in Alaska traveling into the area, the resident Ahtna population, and others who rely on the area for subsistence,” said Holen. “So you have this intersection of thousands of people desiring to hunt the same resources. How do you ensure that all of those people get what they need, or have the same opportunity? We had to find a balance to ensure that everybody has opportunities to hunt, maybe not successfully, but the opportunity to participate.”

His work at Alaska Department of Fish and Game led to a dissertation on how fisheries help build culture and community in rural Alaska, which he recently finished. He will graduate with a Ph.D. in anthropology this May.

Holen was curious about the struggles people were having making a living in certain fisheries.

“I had done a lot of harvest assessments in places like Bristol Bay and Cook Inlet and I knew from those assessments that people were not making a good living, they weren’t even breaking even in many cases.”

Holen wanted to understand and document why people stay in those rural communities, even though they may be barely making it economically.

“One person said, ‘if I don’t fish every year, I feel like there’s a part of me that’s missing, something wrong’.”

“The interaction between people as they are working together and passing those traditions on to their kids is really important for a lot of people.”

The work will help outsiders understand how to evaluate potential vulnerability to disaster and resilience in those communities.

Helping communities plan for approaching climate change

Holen left Fish and Game in 2015, to spend more time with his family. He ended up at Alaska Sea Grant.

“This is the greatest job ever,” Holen says. “I

get to work with communities. I feel like I have taken a lot of information from communities, constantly asking them for things. I feel like now I can give back.”

Projects that Holen thought were important, but that he could not do at Fish and Game, are now possible.

His biggest focus is helping communities create plans to deal with climate change. He talks to Alaskans about the impacts from the changing climate, and helps develop adaptation and mitigation strategies to deal with possible changes.

Development of a regional plan for parts of Southeast Alaska is the farthest along. A two-day planning session consisted of representatives from 17 Alaska Native tribes; experts doing the latest science on different resources such as berries, salmon, shellfish, yellow cedar, or cultural sites; and nonprofits doing monitoring studies. Participants in the session started putting together a plan. Holen is consulting with the Tlingit/Haida Environmental Council, advising as they write the climate adaptation plan.

The project is funded in part by the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy. Holen is working collaboratively with them to develop regional plans based on the Southeast Alaska plan, which can be tailored to individual communities’ needs for the rest of Alaska.

“The outcome of all of this is we are building a central repository online of a new website called ‘Adapt Alaska.’ It will bring together all of the adaptation and resilience work that’s going on in the state,” said Holen. The site will have interactive portals that tell stories about what people are working on, and then provide access to tools for various issues.

“We just want to be able to provide materials for people to build better well-being in their communities.”

Hear more from Holen, including how the Scientific Advisory Committee is planning to study the post-Exxon Valdez recovery of subsistence fisheries in Prince William Sound communities, on our website: www.bit.ly/CouncilVolunteers

Transition: Review of vessel designs finds improvements, concerns

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addition of forward-looking infrared and digital radar signal processing systems to improve the detection of icebergs, as well as enhancing the ability to detect spilled oil in water should prevention measures fail.

Response equipment has also improved. The barges will carry new “coated disc skimmers” developed by Louisiana’s Crucial, Inc. During testing, these new skimmers collected crude oil more efficiently than older skimmers, which means less water mixes with the oil as it is skimmed off the water.

Remaining concerns

The Council’s initial analysis found some potential flaws in the design of the tugs. In some cases, the information provided by Alyeska before the analysis was not detailed enough to fully verify certain aspects.

“Our job is to independently review spill prevention and response plans, verify equipment and personnel capabilities, and advocate

for the highest level of safeguards to protect the environment as well as the economic, social, and overall well-being of the people who live and work in the region,” said Donna Schantz, executive director for the Council.

Most vessels are already under construction at ECO shipyards in Louisiana.

“While the Council is encouraged by some of the improvements that will come with this transition, our review has revealed some areas of concern that the Council has brought to the attention of Alyeska, so they can hopefully be addressed before construction is complete,” added Schantz. “Alyeska has been responsive to the concerns identified, and has stated that some modifications are already being worked.”

Alyeska has stated that some of the information covered in the Council’s analysis has been updated, and has shared some of those details with the Council. The Council is continuing to review information as it is provided by Alyeska and may modify findings and recommendations as appropriate.

The Council has also shared the report with

the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Coast Guard, as the state and federal regulatory agencies overseeing the transition.

The marine services contract includes escort tugs, general purpose tugs, a utility tug, oil recovery storage barges and associated personnel, all of which are key oil spill prevention and response assets for Prince William Sound. For instance, two state-of-the-art escort tugs accompany every laden tanker that leaves Port Valdez. One tug is tethered through the confined waterway called the Valdez Narrows, and one tug stands by at Hinchinbrook Entrance until the tanker is 17 miles into the Gulf of Alaska. The primary responsibility of these escort tugs is to rescue or “save” a tanker that may experience problems and prevent oil from spilling, as well as initiate response efforts should these prevention measures fail.

From the Executive Director

Citizens and partnerships in the safe transportation of oil

March 24, 2017, marked the 28th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Each anniversary is a time for reflection on how far we have come, as well as how much there is left to do. It is also a time to recognize the efforts of those who used the lessons of the Exxon Valdez to advocate for safeguards to ensure nothing like it ever happens again. Thanks to the foresight, vigilance, and tireless efforts of elected officials, government regulators, industry, and citizens, the oil spill prevention and response system now in place in Prince William Sound is an example to the rest of the world. A big part of the success in Prince William Sound is that all these partners work together. We all share one goal: to promote the safe transportation of oil. While every partner has played a vital role in the success in Prince William Sound, special recognition is warranted to honor past and current technical committee and board members of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council. Our volunteers have put in countless unpaid hours dedicated to the mission of our organization.

Congress found that complacency on the part of industry and government personnel responsible for monitoring the operation of the Valdez Marine Terminal and associated oil tanker traffic in Prince William Sound was a major contributing factor to the Exxon Valdez oil spill. To combat this complacency, Congress established two regional citizens' advisory councils, ours in Prince William Sound and another in Cook Inlet, to involve citizens in an environmental

oversight and monitoring. Neither council could satisfy the provisions under this federal mandate without dedicated volunteers from throughout their respective regions.

Successful prevention can lead back to complacency for some. We have gone twenty-eight years without a major oil spill in Prince William Sound. Having gone so long without a major spill, some might think it is acceptable to cut back on efforts or relax oversight.

The first board and committee members, who joined the Council in 1990, witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of the oil spill. Some of them are still volunteering for the Council more than a quarter of a century later. These experiences played a big part in the passion and drive of all parties to put systems in place

designed to prevent another accident, and to make sure there are trained personnel and equipment available to respond should prevention measures fail.

The idea for regional citizens' advisory councils was that citizens who have the most to lose from oil pollution must have a voice in the decisions that can put their livelihoods and communities at risk.

The Council serves as

that voice for Prince William Sound through our board, committee volunteers, and staff. The work of the Council since our formation has helped bring about some changes and advancements that I am sure would not have happened had we not been in existence. I would like to thank all of the citizen volunteers that have given so much of their time to support our work, both past and present, as well as all of our partners and

industry and regulator colleagues. Everyone involved should be proud of what has been accomplished, but we also should never become so satisfied with the current services or processes that we become complacent. As far as we have come since 1989, there is always room for improvement.

Partnerships are a cornerstone of our fight against complacency. If we all work together, including citizens, regulators, industry, and other stakeholders, we can leverage our expertise and resources to maintain and improve the system that we've worked so hard to put in place. Recently, the Council has been expanding collaboration with the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council on issues of importance to both organizations. While our regions and some of our issues may differ, our efforts are aligned and our voices are stronger when we are working together. We look forward to fostering a continued relationship with the Cook Inlet RCAC in the future.

Being a citizens' council is more than just a title, it is the meaning behind our mission. It is only when citizens are involved in the process, working together with industry and government, that we can strive for best available technology and practices and improved safeguards designed to prepare for and prevent future oil spills.

• Donna Schantz is the executive director of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council.



Donna Schantz

Sec. 5002	OIL POLLUTION ACT OF 1990	274
SEC. 5002. TERMINAL AND TANKER OVERSIGHT AND MONITORING.		
(a) SHORT TITLE AND FINDINGS.—		
(1) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the “Oil Terminal and Oil Tanker Environmental Oversight and Monitoring Act of 1990”.		
(2) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds that—		
(A) the March 24, 1989, grounding and rupture of the fully loaded oil tanker, the EXXON VALDEZ, spilled 11 million gallons of crude oil in Prince William Sound, an environmentally sensitive area;		
(B) many people believe that complacency on the part of the industry and government personnel responsible for monitoring the operation of the Valdez terminal and vessel traffic in Prince William Sound was one of the contributing factors to the EXXON VALDEZ oil spill;		
(C) one way to combat this complacency is to involve local citizens in the process of preparing, adopting, and revising oil spill contingency plans;		
(D) a mechanism should be established which fosters the long-term partnership of industry, government, and local communities in overseeing compliance with environmental concerns in the operation of crude oil terminals;		

From Alyeska

Alyeska staff find creative solutions for safe snow removal

While spring officially arrived in March, the snow keeps falling in Valdez, the snowiest city in America. The white stuff has long stymied crews at the Valdez Marine Terminal, who often spend weeks clearing snow from areas around the 1,000-acre facility, including crude oil storage tank roofs. It wasn't always that way.

“When I started here in the mid-nineties, all we had to do was move oil from tank to tank,” said Al Laudert, a Terminal Maintenance Coordinator. “The oil was so warm, enough of it in the tank would make the snow shed right off the top.”

But with declining throughput, the crude oil leaves the North Slope cooler, takes longer to arrive in Valdez, and isn't warm enough to melt the snow of the tops of the storage tanks. Alyeska has always had a busy snow removal program, but has had to bring in crews for the tank farms since the early 2000s.

The tank top snow removal crews are made up of 7-10 people who can take up to a week to clear off one tank. This shoveling job is quite a bit bigger than your driveway; the roofs are about an acre in area and more than 60 feet off the ground.

In Valdez, where a “light snow year” is a seasonal accumulation of around 200 inches, snow removal is a problem in search of a solution.

Earlier this winter, maintenance and engineering teams continued their innovative pilot program to use steam piping to melt snow on half of Tank 14.

Crews installed small diameter piping with tiny holes on the half of the tank's roof, and then hooked it up to a boiler installed on the road below. For the last three winters, the team has run tests, changing variables like the spacing on the holes in the piping and the length of time the boilers run. The tests originally ran for 12

hours at a time, but this winter the crew took advantage of a deeper snowpack and got approval to run the steam for a 36-hour stretch.

The 36-hour test was especially promising, melting a significant amount of snow. The tests will continue next year and Alyeska personnel will start looking at factors like cost, scalability, air quality monitoring of the boilers and other factors to see if steam is a viable long-term solution.

• Submitted by Alyeska Corporate Communications.



Photo courtesy of Alyeska.

Recertification: Approval recieved through February 2018

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yearly for the Coast Guard's approval as the official citizens' advisory group to the oil industry in Prince William Sound.

Guidelines established in 2002 streamlined the recertification process for two out of three years, with every third year requiring stricter procedures. That process—known as compre-

hensive recertification—was used this year.

The new recertification expires in February 2018. At that time, the Council is scheduled to undergo the streamlined version of recertification.

The council received 73 letters of support from organizations, agencies, businesses, Native corporations, elected officials, and members of the public during the recertification process.

THE OBSERVER is published in January, May, and September by the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council. Except where credited to others, articles are written by Amanda Johnson, the public communications project manager for the council. Questions or comments about anything in The Observer? Another topic that you want to hear about? Let us know! Contact us: newsletter@pwsrca.org

Local government: Important conduit for sharing information and concerns

By Lisa Matlock
Outreach Coordinator

The Council’s staff and volunteers have visited with many South-central Alaska city councils and managers, tribal councils, borough assemblies, and state legislators this year. The upcoming marine services contract for tug and barge services in Prince William Sound will soon change, and this event alone has driven a great deal of interest in the Council’s mission from communities all over the Exxon Valdez oil spill region. There have also been oil spill planning policy changes that could affect communities, about which the Council has helped share information.

Local government continues to be one of the most important places for the Council to focus on issues that require public comment and scoping. Policy changes regarding community access to decision-makers, a new chemical dispersant use plan for Alaska that includes a preauthorized zone, and upcoming geographical changes to oil spill planning are just a few of the important policies that communi-

ties have had the chance to weigh in on this year. Often these issues are technical enough that local RCACs and governments may be a citizen’s ultimate voice for commenting on the issue. Local governments work regularly with permitting issues and zoning that lend themselves to commenting about similar policy changes the Council tackles in the oil spill prevention and response world.

The change in Alyeska’s tug and barge services contractor, from Crowley Marine Services to Edison Chouest Offshore in 2018, has generated many questions from our local communities. Residents and their local representatives have wondered how the change might affect the safe transportation of oil through Prince William Sound, what kind of new equipment and personnel might be coming to the area, and even if there are new job prospects for residents due to the change. Council staff and volunteers have attempted to share what information we have at local meetings when possible, and we will continue to do so. Please let us know if you would like a community visit and presentation, as we are happy to oblige.

Many thanks go out to the city and borough clerks and councils, local government members, tribal councils, and others who have commented on oil spill issues and asked the Council to share information with them. Communities that are engaged with us on spill prevention and response issues and help provide local knowledge and perspective by writing public comment emails and letters from both individuals and communities, can have positive effects on oil spill prevention.



Matlock and Council volunteers Wayne Donaldson and Trent Dodson at the Kodiak ComFish, an annual commercial fishing conference. Photo courtesy of Lisa Matlock.

Mountain Village middle schooler receives oil spill award from council at state-wide science and engineering fair

For the past few years, the Council has recognized outstanding oil spill science fair projects at the Alaska Science & Engineering Fair. Youth come from all over the state to compete for a chance to represent Alaska internationally. This year, we recognized both a middle and high school level project. Middle school winner, Carter Andrews from Mountain Village, is pictured here with Information and Education Committee volunteer, Savannah Lewis. His project “Oil Spill Effects” tested the effects of motor oil on temperature and oxygen in saltwater to understand effects of oil spills on marine life.



Andrews and Lewis with Andrews’ project “Effects of Oil Spills. Photo by Lisa Matlock.

High school student, Zoza Oberle of Juneau, was also recognized for her project “How Location Affects the Condition Index of Blue Mussels” which used Council-based protocols for sampling these filter feeders which were then tested for environmental effects on mussel health.

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND REGIONAL CITIZENS’ ADVISORY COUNCIL

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

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

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

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

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