

THE OBSERVER

September 2015 Volume 25, No.4

A publication of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

Researchers say ice drifting into tanker lanes will be smaller but more numerous in future

By Alan Sorum

Council Project Manager

Columbia Glacier, located in the Chugach Mountains of Alaska, is losing mass faster than almost any other glacier in the state. Columbia is a tidewater glacier, a type of valley glacier that

flows into the ocean.

In 1996, the council began a project to monitor and analyze the calving and drift of ice from the glacier, through Columbia Bay, and into Prince William Sound. The ice sometimes drifts into the established tanker shipping lanes. Loaded tankers leave their designated lanes to avoid this ice.

In 2012, the council began to update information developed in the original 1996 project to determine the future risk of Columbia Glacier icebergs to the tanker traffic. Funded by the council, researchers W. Tad Pfeffer and Shad O'Neel studied several aspects of ice loss at Columbia Glacier.

The study found that icebergs discharged by the glacier during the retreat have largely been contained within the moraine shoal, located at the position of the terminus prior to the glacier's retreat. The fraction of icebergs that cross the moraine and enter Prince William Sound proper still pose a potential hazard to ship traffic in the Sound.

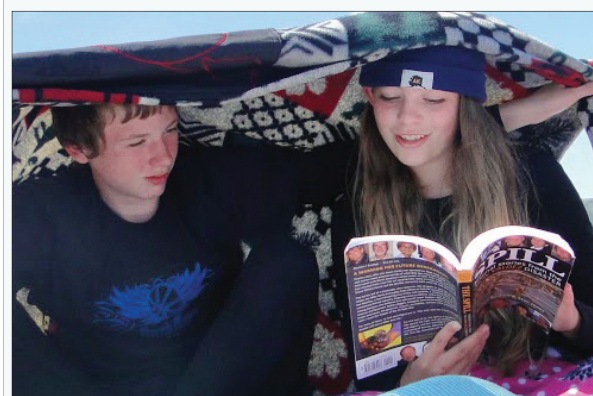
The researchers say the size of icebergs arriving at the Heather Island moraine shoal is smaller than in the past. A number of factors have reduced the size, including increased time floating in the fjord and warmer ocean temperatures.

See page 5, **Study results**



Around 2012, Columbia Glacier split into two branches (the west branch is pictured here) due to the retreat into the Chugach Mountains. For a closer look at the retreat of the glacier since 1980, see graphic on page 5. Photo by Dave Janka of Cordova's Auklet Charters, www.auklet.com.

Oral history teaches new generation about Exxon spill



Students read stories from "The Spill" to each other during this summer's Copper River Stewardship Program. Photo courtesy of the Copper River Watershed Project.

By Alicia Zorzetto

Digital Collections Librarian

Students in the annual Copper River Stewardship Program studied the Exxon Valdez oil spill from a different perspective this year. They learned about the spill directly from some of the most affected citizens in the region.

The program, run by Kate Morse, program director for the Copper River Watershed Project,

See page 6, **Engaging students**

Banta marks twenty-five years of service to the council



Joe Banta

On October 1, 1990, Joe Banta started a new job managing oil spill planning projects for a young organization, the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council.

"It was really amazing and rewarding to work for an organization like ours, especially in

See page 7, **25 years of service**

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

Kodiak volunteer passionate about working for the council

Jane Eisemann, volunteer on the council’s Information and Education Committee, first came to Alaska in 1976 to visit her brother in Kodiak. She immediately fell in love with the state.

“It was a beautiful place,” Eisemann said of her first impression. “My brother lived off the grid, I liked that lifestyle.”

Eisemann returned to California with her mother, but before she left, she secured a job at a local pizza parlor, promising to return for good in two months. The island of Kodiak has now been her home for the last 38 years.

Eisemann began commercial fishing in 1978 for crab, herring, and salmon. That year, she also got a winter job in the small community of Chiniak as a teacher’s assistant. With encouragement from the teacher, Eisemann decided to go back to school for a teaching degree while she continued to fish during the summers.

Before she graduated, the Exxon Valdez



Jane Eisemann is a member of the council's Information and Education Committee. The committee supports the council's mission by fostering public awareness, responsibility, and participation in the council's activities through information and education. This committee is one of five committees of volunteers from communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Our volunteers dedicate their time and expertise to advise the council on technical issues related to the safe transportation of oil through Prince William Sound.

ran aground and she ended up working on the cleanup effort. She noted it was a time of upheaval in the community.

“The oil spill just changed everybody’s life,” she said.

The spill also made her reevaluate many aspects of her own life. Not knowing if she’d ever fish again, she turned her focus back on education.

“My first degree is actually in art education, but I never really taught that.”

When she applied to be an art teacher in Kodiak, the administrator noticed her background in commercial fishing and her license to pilot large vessels. He hired her, but not for art. Eisemann took over the fisheries program.

The Kodiak school district owned a boat which Eisemann ran and took students out for Maritime Science and Technology classes. Her experiences during the Exxon Valdez cleanup added to classroom discussions about resource management and safe marine practices.

“The oil spill was firsthand experience of what can go wrong as far as how we handle our natural resources, I’ve been there, done that,” Eisemann said. “I’m not sharing a newspaper article, I was there. I saw it. I smelled the oil.”

“I watched the progression from building the pipeline and all of the issues that people were concerned about, from the time that it opened up, then the complacency set in because we thought it was all working so great,” Eisemann said. “Then we had a big spill.”

“It’s like anything in history, if you talk to someone that experienced that event, it’s more meaningful than reading about it in a book.”

Joining Alyeska’s spill response program

Eisemann recently retired from teaching and now works with a partner, Shelley Eagle, coordinating Kodiak’s fishing vessels that are contracted to Alyeska as part of their oil spill response program. Vessel crews from Kodiak, Valdez, Cordova, Whittier, and other local communities are trained every year on how to respond and clean up an oil spill.

“What I’ve experienced so far is that people are always looking for ways to do things better.”

“I mean, it’s huge, the whole spill response program is huge. I feel like I’m contributing even though I’m getting paid. I feel like it’s honorable.”

“Representatives from each of the fleets from the oil-affected communities get together with Alyeska and talk about how things could be done better from a fishermen’s point of view,” she said. “The logistics of moving boats from

point A to point B, what really works on the water, and what really doesn’t work. It’s a nice collaboration between the experts, our fishermen in the region who have local knowledge, and Alyeska, who are charged with making sure that they can clean up that oil if it ever spills again.”

Volunteering for the council

In early 2001, Eisemann joined the council’s board of directors.

“I just fell in love with it,” Eisemann said. “On the council, everybody can find a niche. There is something for everybody, depending on what your interests are. I’m not an oil scientist or a chemical engineer, but we do have people who are and who have a passion for what they know. My passion was education and the environment.”

Eisemann had to resign from the board and the council’s Port Operations and Vessel Traffic System Committee this year after taking the position with Alyeska, but she has stayed involved as a member of the Information and Education Committee.

“My favorite of all the things I’ve done is definitely that committee,” Eisemann said. “That’s right up my dirt road.”

Eisemann has been a member of that committee since it was formed in its current configuration in 2008.

“Thanks to Linda [Robinson, former council staff and current committee volunteer]. She had the vision of what more we could be doing as a council to get the word out there.”

Robinson, Eisemann, and others were concerned that the younger generation was not involved with the council.

“We weren’t connecting them with our mission and how it’s just as relevant today as it was in 1989.”

The group believed that the council needed to reach a broader audience to be successful into the future. Now, the committee spreads the council’s mission through classroom lessons, internships, oral histories of the spill and the council, and social media.

“It just keeps growing. Now I can’t imagine not having that committee. I think it rounds out what the other committees do.”

Eisemann is enthusiastic about the council and the mission to promote the safe transportation of oil.

“I just wanted a way to give back, because you know what? I use oil every single day, and this is my way to try to make that OK.”

Expedition reshapes Kodiak educator’s feelings about Prince William Sound

By Lindsey Cassidy
Kodiak Middle School Teacher

The name Prince William Sound causes ominous memories of my childhood in Kodiak to reverberate in my brain. For many years, the name was synonymous with dirty words such as “oil spill,” “toxins,” and “Exxon Valdez.”

I was 5 years old and living in Kodiak on March 24, 1989. My memory does not know a time before the spill; the Exxon Valdez oil spill has always been an event my community suffered from and is still rebuilding from.

During the summer of 1989, weeks after the spill, my family camped on neighboring Woody Island. When my younger sister and I returned

from the tide pools, oil covered our clothes and hands. The oil did more than just soil clothing: it oiled our communities, ecosystems, lands, seas, and our lives. Kodiak fishermen and women had families to feed and bills to pay, but Exxon took even longer to respond effectively to the disaster in Kodiak than its initial delayed response to the spill in the Sound. I rode on my father’s shoulders during the protest march held in Kodiak shortly after the spill as a public demonstration against Exxon’s ineffective response to the disaster. My parents had saved for their dream house, and suddenly found themselves wondering if it would be just a dream. For me, these events were inseparably linked to the name Prince William

Sound.

After graduating from Kodiak High School, I left the island for college and later, rural teaching experience. I returned to Kodiak in 2012 to teach English and seek outdoor adven-



Lindsey Cassidy

See page 7, *Redefining the Sound*

From the Executive Director

Falling oil prices shouldn't mean reduced environmental protections

Oil prices have been falling for a long while now. Stock markets and energy sectors are volatile. This is good news or bad news depending on whether you are in the business of buying or selling crude oil, heating a home with expensive heating oil, or funding a government from revenue derived from the oil industry.

Our dependence on oil revenues and oil products, along with our vulnerability to oil spills and fossil fuel-related climate changes, place us on an increasingly unpredictable roller coaster. You may have a slightly different ride depending where in the train of cars you sit, but make no mistake, we are all on the same track, and live in the same environment.

A state full of resources like ours deserves the best protection

Sometimes, when the legislature, oil industry, regulatory agencies, and everyone else are so preoccupied with the money side of daily life, it is tough to remember we have other things going for us. Alaska's natural environment is the source of our fishing and tourist industries and the envy of the rest of the world. Alaska has stunning scenery, abundant wildlife, natural resources, oil, gas, minerals and vast

“Nobody wants an environmental disaster. Let’s keep our heads in the game and pull together to make sure these low oil prices do not become an excuse to reduce our protections, and perhaps increase the risk, for an accident with environmental damages none of us can afford.”

hydroelectric potential, and we think Prince William Sound is the crown jewel in a state full of environmental riches. This year, with low fuel prices, abundant fish returns, and perhaps the warmest, sunniest summer on record, more Alaskans and out-of-state visitors than ever travelled to our region to soak up the majesty of Alaska's seaside.

As more of us come to appreciate just how special what we have is, unfortunately the state and industry have fewer dollars and staff resources to sustain the robust environmental protections that Alaskans have demanded and benefited from since the tragic Exxon

Valdez oil spill in 1989. Both the oil industry and the regulatory agencies have reduced their headcount due to decreasing revenues and oil prices. This is understandable and necessary when balancing tight budgets. However, consequences of a major environmental accident have not decreased with the price of oil.

Try to find ways to save, safely

Recently, regulators have been seeking new ways to save. They are looking for ways to reduce the burden on their staff and on the oil industry to conduct spill response exercises. Recent news articles say that our state's environmental regulatory agency declined to enforce critical air pollution regulations on cruise ships, while wait-

ing for federal and international fuel quality measures to take effect. We must ensure that the state has the resources to enforce environmental protections that are already enshrined in law and regulation, as well as newly emerging environmental threats like invasive species. We have well-established vulnerabilities and a poorly resourced state response capability for invasives. Federal and international measures are aimed at preventing invasive species by requiring filtration and treatment of oil tanker ballast water, but these measures are slow to kick in.

Low oil prices have given us opportunity to travel to our coastal communities, get out on boats to experience all that coastal Alaska has to offer, and better understand what is at stake. Nobody wants an environmental disaster. Let's keep our heads in the game and pull together to make sure these low oil prices do not become an excuse to reduce our protections, and perhaps increase the risk, for an accident with environmental damages none of us can afford.

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



Mark Swanson

From Alyeska

Robotic inspection tool redefines Trans-Alaska Pipeline innovation

This is a tale of perfect timing and imperfect piping, insistent independence and trusted teamwork, hundreds of hurdles and millions in savings, a simple Russian robot and a seismic company culture shift.

This is the story of the Robotic Inline Inspection Tool Team, which received Alyeska's 2015 Atigun Award for Innovation. The seven team winners, and the dozens of individuals, teams and organizations that supported the effort, were all integral in a game-changing three-year journey that led to the world's first crawler pig integrity inspection of a liquid pipeline: the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, known as TAPS.

In the summer of 2014, a 200-pound Russian-owned robotic crawler pig inspected around 850 feet of 36 inch buried TAPS piping at Pump Station 3, providing a level of clarity on its system integrity that was previously inaccessible. The success of that inspection resulted in reduced risk and significant cost savings for Alyeska and TAPS. It also inspired similar inspections – as well as similar cost savings and risk reduction – in 2015 and the years ahead.

“There were so many people and teams involved; we all did our jobs, and we did our jobs well,” said Bhaskar Neogi, Alyeska Senior Director of Risk and Compliance. “But this was also about luck, perseverance, stubbornness not to give up, and a willingness not to worry about if we failed.”

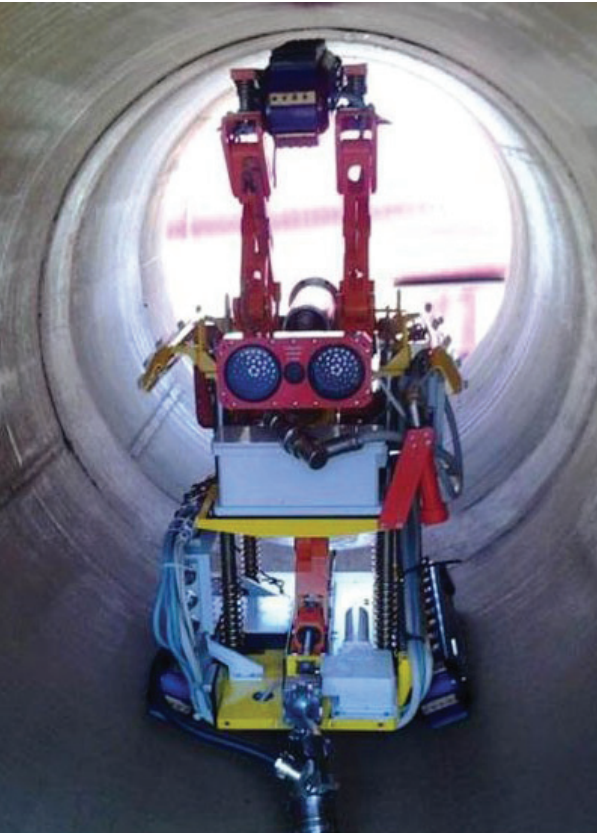
Almost immediately after the 2011 Pump Station 1 spill incident, Alyeska leaders had

discussions about risk ranking of all TAPS pipe, the pipe's expensive replacement options, and new approaches and technology of pipe inspection. Neogi met with a vendor, Russia-based Diakont, at an Outside conference. A few months later, he tested the tool and liked what he saw. Although “simple” in his words, Neogi noted the robotic crawler's numerous sensors, its three points of contact that allowed for smooth travel around curves and bends, and the instant data it provided. The only problem: the machines had only inspected gas lines, never liquid pipelines.

Still, Neogi shared news of the tool with key TAPS staff and leadership. Almost everyone bought in, though many also were concerned about testing, and possibly using, new system integrity technology inside TAPS. There were many regulatory hurdles ahead from local, state and national agencies, as well as countless meetings and even public hearings. There was the process of identifying a testing area. And then there was TAPS history.

“TAPS is not a guinea pig,” Neogi said. “TAPS is 100 percent assurance. You didn't try new things on TAPS. And there was no precedence for this. But the culture of our company had changed under President Tom Barrett. Tom backed this project. He said, ‘What's the opportunity cost? If there's potential for a big benefit, be brave and try it.’”

The best news: “It went really well – the pipe didn't need a single repair, there wasn't much corrosion,” Neogi said.



A crawler pig like this one reduces cost and risk during pipeline inspections. Photo courtesy of Alyeska Corporate Communications.

This year, the inspection tool was used on pipe at Pump Stations 3, 4, 9 and 10. In 2016, it will travel to Pump Station 1 and Valdez.

• Submitted by Alyeska Corporate Communications.

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 emotions 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."

"You could talk about all kinds of lessons learned about spill prevention and response, but I'm going to stick with the big picture: Involve citizens with the appropriate amount of money and they can be at the table with industry and agencies. The people with the most to lose will be out there protecting their livelihood and making sure they don't have to lose. That's a pretty powerful model. I think it's an applicable model throughout the country and throughout the world."

- Joe Banta

Banta was one of the first staff members for the council. He has managed projects for the Oil Spill Prevention and Response and the Scientific Advisory Committees.

"Similar to the ombudsman institution, the RCAC has no power or authority to implement its recommendations and therefore its power is derived through the quality of its research and the effective presentation of facts and logical arguments. This is an important and positive aspect."

- Sheila Gottehrer

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

"That you can get a lot further by working cooperatively than by being adversarial. Sometimes the right thing to do is to be adversarial, but most of the time the right path is working cooperatively together, understanding the other side's point of view, and trying to accommodate that and trying to seek out a way that meets both your needs and the other parties' needs."

- Tim Robertson

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

"What we have learned and what is very important is that we can make a difference, and that we have made a difference. We work with the shippers and Alyeska and the Coast Guard and a whole bunch of other groups, and I think we've all learned to appreciate each other better and understand each other's roles."

- Stan Stephens

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

"In a perfect world I would find people in government and industry more receptive to citizen oversight. Oversight is never fun if you're the person who is being overseen because you're always having to explain things. In a perfect world, people would say, this is really good to have. The RCAC was not meant to be another hurdle in the regulatory process, it was meant to be a player in the regulatory process, as a third party dispassionate citizen, and as a way for citizens to have some more expertise and a keeper of the flame."

- Mead Treadwell

Treadwell represented the City of Cordova on the council's board of directors from August 1989 to December 1990.

"One of the things I would hope is that the RCAC continues to live up to a very high standard of organizational integrity and ethics. Three rules are to stay organized, stay active, and stay informed when you are responding to disasters and crises. I've never forgotten that from my experience with RCAC and the communities of Cordova and Prince William Sound. We did try to build into the council and into the law, that staying active and informed and working hard can make positive change happen."

- Scott Sterling

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

"A lesson learned is that it's better to have the stakeholders involved before a disaster happens so that you at least have a bit of a trust level established. Today there are regular drills. We know the people involved and the level of trust has grown. If something calamitous happens, we'll know who to pick up the phone and call."

- Marilyn Leland

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

Part four of four

In January, we heard about efforts to form the council. In May, we read about the emotional turbulence of the first few years and how members learned to channel that emotion into a professional, effective organization. July covered the positives and negatives of the way the council was organized. Finally, we hear the lessons learned about the value of citizen oversight in our region.

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

"I would say another lesson is you should never have a time and a place where you have a potential disaster where the responders—both the state and federal governments and the industry people—don't know the people in the communities. This is one where frequent exercises, the interface that the RCAC provides, the work of the fishing communities and so forth is vitally important."

- Mead Treadwell

"We are oil dependent and we will never change and because of that we accept the inherent risks of providing that fuel to our society. We know we cannot clean up a spill. We know that we have to prevent a spill. We know that you have to have some oversight to a degree to prevent complacency and downsizing. And we've learned it's possible for a place like Prince William Sound to offer stakeholder interest and expertise with industry interest and expertise and have a system that runs fairly smoothly."

- Mark Hutton

Hutton served as liaison between Alyeska and the council during and after the formation of the council.

"That it's absolutely necessary to have citizens involved, providing oversight for large-scale industrial projects that have the potential for affecting the environment and peoples' lives. We need to have these councils established before we have catastrophes rather than after, and not just for catastrophic situations but for everyday operational concerns as well. Citizens, industry, and government need to talk to each other in a structured way, on a regular basis. Government and industry need active, independent, and credible citizen engagement."

- Rick Steiner

Steiner was a marine conservation professor in Cordova in 1989. He was promoting the idea of a citizens' council before the spill, and continues to advocate for citizen oversight of extraction industries worldwide.

"Finally, a lesson learned is, you always have to be careful that even a watchdog group doesn't become complacent and bureaucratic. You have to keep telling the story of why RCAC exists and why citizen oversight is an important asset to maintain checks and balances."

- Mead Treadwell

Study results: Columbia glacier icebergs will be smaller but more numerous

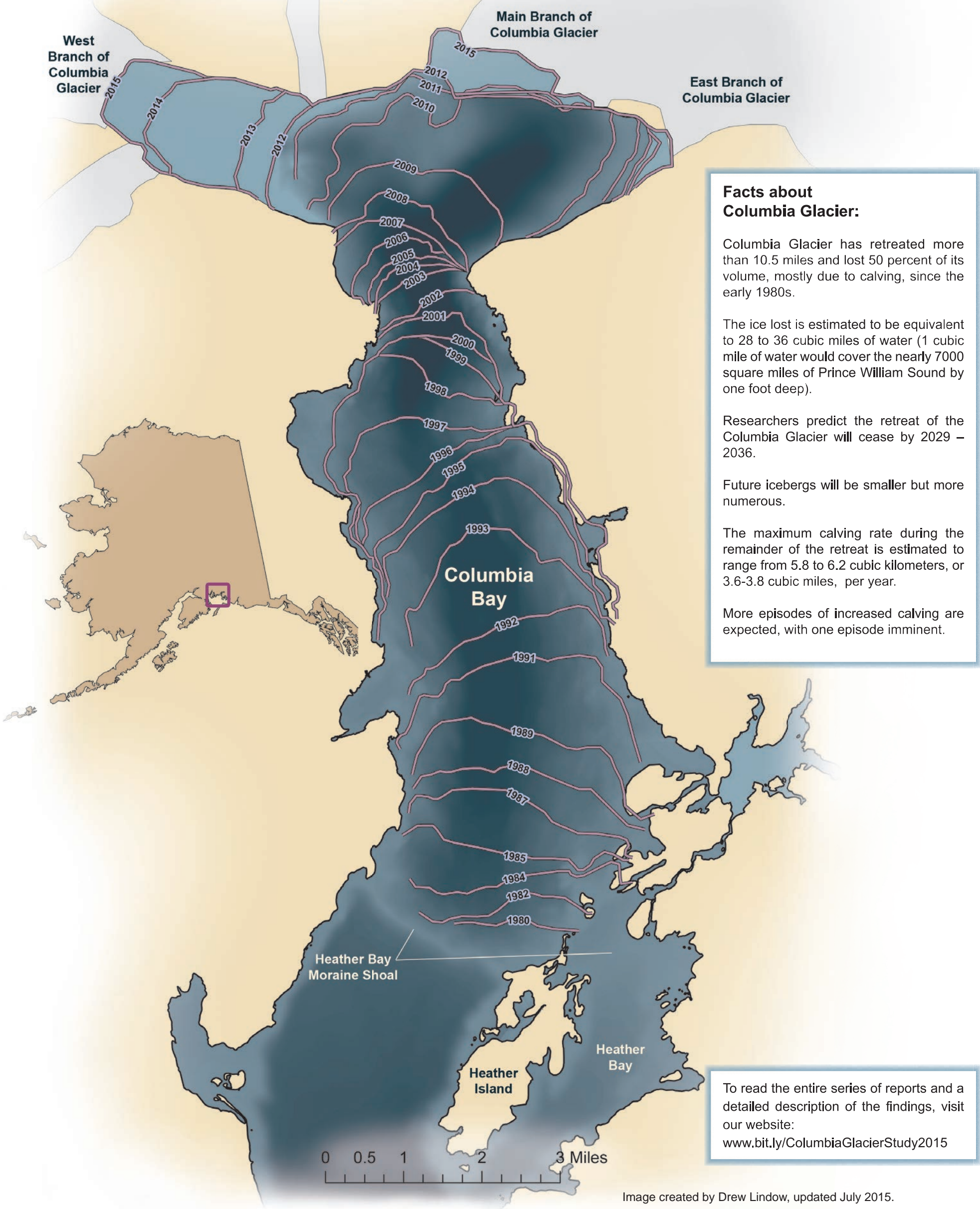
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This means that, in the future, a larger fraction of icebergs may be able to escape over the moraine. However, their study of the sea floor at the moraine shoal indicates that the shoal has

not eroded over the course of the retreat. The researchers are confident that the shoal will continue to block the passage of large icebergs out of the fjord and into Columbia Bay. Whether the smaller but more numerous icebergs will increase or decrease the risk to the safe trans-

portation of oil through Prince William Sound depends in part on what size classes of icebergs are viewed as posing the greatest hazard to ship traffic moving in and out of Port Valdez.

Columbia Glacier retreat, 1980-2015



Engaging students: First-hand stories convey emotional impact of spill

Continued from page 1

takes youth from the Copper River Basin on a hands-on exploration of their region. During a 10-day trip to various Copper River communities and Prince William Sound they learn about the ecology, culture, economy, and history of the region from individuals representing a wide range of organizations.

This year, Morse added a study of the Exxon Valdez disaster through oral history. Morse had the students listen to recordings from the Exxon Valdez Project Jukebox, the partnership between the council and the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and read excerpts from “The Spill,” the council’s book. From her volunteer work on the council’s Information and Education Committee Morse was familiar with both projects, which documented and preserved stories from local citizens who experienced the Exxon Valdez spill from a variety of viewpoints.

Each student listened, watched, or read the story of someone sharing their first-hand experiences of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, then designed a flag to represent the person’s story based on their understanding and feelings related to the person’s experiences.

Morse said that integrating



The expeditioners visited Valdez and met with council staffer Jeremy Robida (7th from left) to learn about the council and improvements in safe oil transportation since 1989. Photo courtesy of the Copper River Watershed Project.

oral history into this year’s lesson dramatically changed how youth connected with the content and increased what they learned.

“I do confess it was hard as an outdoor educator to encourage my students to ‘plug in’ and put on ear buds,” Morse said. “However I felt they were more interested in participating because they like to be plugged in.”

“The opportunity to hear the first-hand stories while traveling through Prince William Sound engaged students in learning about the oil spill in a very personal way,” Morse said. “Describing the story in

a drawing forced students to listen, which reinforced the emotions, and caused the students to retain more knowledge about the event and its aftermath,” added Morse.

“Hearing the sadness in the people’s voices really made me think more of it,” said one of the students.

Towards the end of the week, the group learned about the

improvements in oil transportation within Prince William Sound and downstream communities since the oil spill. Jeremy Robida, council staff member, met with the youth to talk about the changes in oil spill prevention and response and how local fishermen are now trained every year by Alyeska’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System to help respond to an oil spill.



At left, an expeditioner writes a journal entry. Above is an artwork inspired by the Project Jukebox interview with Patience Andersen Faulkner, council board representative for the Cordova District Fishermen United. Faulkner worked as a legal technician with the litigation team for the 1989 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill lawsuit, and helped the council create the Peer Listener Training Program. The program helps communities deal with the long-term mental health and emotional problems stemming from technological disasters like the Exxon spill. Photos courtesy of the Copper River Watershed Project.

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.pwsrccac.org

The tentative board meeting schedule for the coming year is:
January 21 and 22, 2016 in Anchorage
May 5 and 6, 2016 in Valdez
September 15 and 16, 2016 in Cordova

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THE OBSERVER is published in January, May, July 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@pwsrccac.org

Redefining the Sound: Educator’s experiences inspire her to encourage environmental stewardship in students

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tures. When an Alaska Geographic course was advertised to educate teachers on the culture, communities, history, and geography of the area via kayak camping, I jumped at the opportunity to learn more about this intriguing landscape of dichotomies that, in my mind, was Prince William Sound.

Day one, hour one, minute one in Prince William Sound, I was in love with the land and seascape. I began redefining the Sound into a place of resplendent waters and mountains. Instructors Tim Lydon from the U.S. Forest Service and Betsi Oliver from Alaska Geographic shared their knowledge and passion for this unique part of Alaska and kayaking its waters. Discussions focused on experiential education and place-based education; Prince William Sound is ideal for both of these approaches to education. Not one of the eight educators, myself included, left the area without considering how to connect our students to the beauty of Prince William Sound and foster a sense of stewardship.

Even though Kodiak is some distance away from the Sound and it took me until my third decade to visit the area, these two places are bound together through culture and history: The Alutiiq culture calls both Kodiak and Prince William Sound “home,” and the Exxon Valdez oil spill demonstrated that Kodiak is simply downstream from the Sound.

25 years’ service: Staffer’s experiences valuable resource for council

Continued from page 1

the early, formative days,” Banta said. “The energy was electric. There was a sense of urgency to make the council work, and get the organization’s structure up and running.”

Prior to joining the council, Banta witnessed the oil spill first hand as a Cordova fisherman and helped with the spill response, rescuing oiled wildlife.

Banta has been with the council for 25 years this October. He now works mostly with the council’s Scientific Advisory Committee and manages the council’s environmental monitoring projects.

“Good science is vital to the council’s ability to produce the best advice to Alyeska, shippers and regulators,” he says. “We are a pretty cheap insurance policy that counters the reality of constant pressure to reduce and cut costs.”

“We’ve got one of the best oil

My takeaway from my week is to identify how I can link this place to my Kodiak Island students, how I can help students perceive its relativity to Kodiak so that they’re not waiting until their third decade to visit the turquoise waters and glacier-scoured peaks. To protect Prince William Sound from another devastating spill, and in effect all areas downstream, it is essential our students connect to the land as stewards. We need economic prosperity, but we also need healthy land and seas for sustainable economies, especially for our fishing towns. As a middle school English teacher, I am looking forward to refocusing my instruction and inviting students to engage with our local environment and culture through reading and writing. I look forward to fostering stewardship in coastal Alaska to keep tragedies like Exxon Valdez oil spill from being part of other childhoods. Places like Prince William Sound should be known for their beauty and significance, not for a tragedy caused by humans.

Since 2013 the council has co-sponsored an Alaska Geographic and Chugach National Forest-led teacher expedition in Prince William Sound. Participating Alaska teachers travel by sea kayak focused on place-based learning. Along with nature study, the history of Exxon Valdez oil spill is one of the primary themes of the course, with excerpts from “The Spill” read each night. Teachers develop lessons for their students based on their experience in the Sound.

spill prevention and response systems in the world in Prince William Sound, and it’s because citizens are involved in the day to day planning and operational efforts. We aren’t just there sporadically for a plan review every five years, which allows for meaningful, productive input and continuous improvement.”

“Joe is such an amazing resource for the council and for the region,” says Mark Swanson, the executive director of the council. “Joe’s personal history with the Exxon oil spill cleanup and the spill’s social and economic effects, the fishing industry, and with so much of the work and scientific research of the council brings credibility, knowledge, and passion that is uniquely powerful as citizens work to better understand and improve oil spill prevention and response.”

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 advisory committees:

Terminal Operations & Environmental Monitoring:

The Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring 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 Committee monitors port and tanker operations in Prince William Sound. The committee identifies and recommends improvements in the vessel traffic navigation systems and monitors the vessel escort system.

Members:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Chair: Amanda Bauer, Valdez* | Orson Smith, Seward* |
| Vice-chair: Pat Duffy, Valdez* | Jeremy Talbott, Valdez |
| Cliff Chambers, Seward | |
| Pete Heddell, Whittier | |

Scientific Advisory:

The Scientific Advisory Committee 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 | Roger Green, Hope |
| Vice-chair: Paula Martin, Soldotna | Dorothy M. Moore, Valdez* |
| Sarah Allan, Anchorage | Debasmita Misra, Fairbanks |
| Wayne Donaldson, Kodiak* | Mark Udevitz, Anchorage |

Oil Spill Prevention and Response:

The Oil Spill Prevention and Response 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: Cathy Hart, Anchorage | Ruth E. Knight, Valdez |
| Vice-chair: Linda Robinson, Homer | Andrea Korbe, Whittier |
| Trent Dodson, Kodiak | Kate Morse, Cordova |
| Jane Eisemann, Kodiak | |
| Patience Andersen Faulkner, Cordova* | |

*council director

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

Community Corner

Passing the torch through story

By Lisa Matlock
Outreach Coordinator

Many of the council’s volunteers and staff experienced 1989’s Exxon Valdez oil spill firsthand. Memories of the smell, the terrible sights and sounds, and the social and environmental impacts on communities drive our volunteers to keep such a thing from happening again.

For today’s youth, who will someday join the board to represent communities impacted by that spill, the need to be vigilant and resist complacency can seem vague and somewhat disconnected to their daily reality.

A recent focus of the council on oral history of the oil spill and our creation as an organization, is helping fill this gap.

History of the spill and the council

Oral histories of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, gathered through written interviews and audio and video recordings, summarize many different perspectives on the spill and its aftermath. These are available to the public in different formats.

The first of these, “The Spill: Personal Stories from the Exxon Valdez Disaster,” co-edited by former staff member Stan Jones, was released to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the oil spill in 2009. In 2014, for the 25th anniversary, audio recordings of the interviews conducted during research for “The Spill”, as well as some new video interviews, were archived as part of the University of Alaska Fairbanks’ Project Jukebox, an online repository of oral histories about Alaska. The council partnered with the university and the Alaska Library Association to archive and share these stories of those who experienced the oil spill firsthand.

Most recently, oral history interviews of the founding members of the council have been released in a booklet called “Stories of a citizen’s council: Personal reflections of the early years of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’

Advisory Council.” The booklet is a collection of stories about the formation and early development of the council, and the hopes and intentions of some who were closely involved with early days of the council.

Why are we documenting this history?

These oral histories are helping us train and educate new staff, volunteers, and citizens all over the Exxon Valdez oil spill region, as part of the council’s efforts to involve youth in our mission.

One such effort, Alaska Geographic’s sea kayaking expeditions, used “The Spill” during activities to get teachers and youth thinking about what the spill did while they were immersed in Prince William Sound (read more on page 2).

College classes are using “The Spill” in field courses as part of the official syllabi to learn about effects of oil spills on the environment and communities.

Project Jukebox is being used by youth involved with the Copper River Watershed Project’s stewardship program (read more on page 1).

Audio oral history is also part of a “West Side Stories” project at the Baranov Museum in Kodiak. An environmental journalism intern is transcribing resident’s stories, gathered this summer, about the effects of the Exxon Valdez spill on the west side of Kodiak Island. This intern is also developing radio spots from these audio recordings.

The past informs the future

To move forward with our work, the council needs to know where we have been, before we can understand where we need to go. Oral history also helps us understand just how far we’ve come. Our shared history is an ever-present reminder of the need to stay vigilant. Complacency can set in unless the words of those who felt the damage firsthand are heard.



Matlock will appear on a future episode of Phillipe Cousteau’s Xploration Awesome Planet, talking about the council’s long term environmental monitoring in Prince William Sound. Photo courtesy of Steve Rotfeld Productions.



Rafael Bitanga, environmental intern for the Baranof Museum, transcribes Kodiak resident’s stories about the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Photo courtesy of the Baranof Museum.

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.*

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Vice Pres.: Thane Miller - Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp.
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