

THE OBSERVER

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A publication of the
PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND
REGIONAL CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

Study shows purpose-driven design can improve performance

When a ship is disabled at sea, time is of the essence. Taking a disabled ship in tow can be dangerous, especially in rough weather, because the tug must get close to connect a towline.

Challenging environment in Alaska

Hinchinbrook Entrance is a narrow waterway that connects Prince William Sound to the Gulf of Alaska. The weather and sailing conditions in the gulf can change rapidly and are often brutal.

Tankers carrying millions of gallons of oil regularly pass through the Entrance. Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System must have a tug stationed there when this occurs.

What is the right tug for this role?

The Council recently asked the experts at Glosten, a marine consulting firm, to help answer this question.

Glosten began by reviewing designs and technologies for existing tugs. They summarized the ideal tug design, describing the dimensions, power, propulsor (propeller) types, shape, ability to withstand rough seas, machinery, and towing gear, among other features and equipment.

Glosten then compiled a database of around 4,000 tugs in use around the world. Using the ideal summary as a guide, they narrowed the list to tugs:

- Built in 2005 or later
- Between 130 and 260 feet long
- Able to tow between 130 and 200 tons
- Capable of speeds of 18 miles per hour.
- Within a reasonable cost to design, build, and operate

Fewer than 400 tugs were left.

Tasks the tug must perform

Glosten then outlined the demands placed on the Hinchinbrook tug at each stage of response. Based on these demands, Glosten concluded a state-of-the-art design for the Hinchinbrook tug must provide exceptional performance in three categories. The ideal tug must be able to maintain these in a broad range of sea states:

- A high free-running speed
- A high degree of maneuverability and agility
- High bollard pull (towing ability) and towing efficiency

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Always ready to respond

Alaska requires a tug stationed in the vicinity of Hinchinbrook Entrance, the narrow waterway which connects Prince William Sound to the Gulf of Alaska. The tug remains on standby to assist or escort tankers through the entrance and out into the Gulf of Alaska.





Who is responsible for an oil spill in Prince William Sound?

According to law, whoever spills oil must clean it up. While sounding simple, it can be quite complicated.

First, you must figure out who is responsible, what they are responsible for, and whether Alaska or Federal law applies.

Cleaning up the mess

Anyone who moves or stores crude oil in Alaska must have an approved spill contingency plan. These plans describe in detail how they intend to:

- keep the substance contained,
- control the substance if it escapes containment, and
- clean it up if it is not contained or controlled.

The person or entity who creates the plan, referred to as the “plan holder,” is legally responsible for putting it into action. The plan holder must ensure a certain amount of clean up equipment and trained personnel are always nearby and ready to respond.

In Prince William Sound

If oil is spilled from either the Valdez Marine Terminal, or any tanker shipping oil from the terminal, Alyeska’s Ship Escort/Response Vessel System, or SERVS, responds immediately.

Spill from the terminal

The terminal is jointly owned by three companies: Hilcorp/Harvest Alaska, ConocoPhillips, and ExxonMobil. These companies jointly fund Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, who operates the pipeline and terminal, and SERVS. SERVS manages the cleanup of any spills from the terminal on behalf of the owners.



Spill from a tanker

If a tanker spills oil or fuel in Prince William Sound, SERVS manages the spill for the first three days. This allows time for the tanker’s owner company to get their incident management team on the scene.



At the end of the first three days, cleanup becomes the responsibility of the contingency plan holder. SERVS remains available to support the cleanup.

Paying for the cleanup and damages

The responsibility to clean up a spill is separate from financial liability. The liable party must pay for:

- cleanup activities
- financial damages to businesses or individuals
- injuries
- environmental restoration

Federal law places this liability on the owner or operator of the facility or vessel. Alaska’s law is similar; however, the state also holds the oil’s owner liable. These liabilities can vary and may be decided by a court or settlement agreement.

How much do they have to pay?

Alaska law and federal law differ slightly.

Alaska law does not limit the amount a liable party might have to pay for cleanup and damages. However, there is a limit on the amount they must plan to pay. That amount depends on how much oil they can move at once. This ability to pay can be proven in several ways. Insurance is the most common.

Federal law places limits on the amount the liable party might have to pay. This limit is based on the size of the tanker. However, the limit does not apply

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Alaska

Requires proof that the liable party can pay:



Tankers:
\$561.30
for each barrel of oil that their largest vessel can hold



Valdez Marine Terminal:
Just under \$98 million per incident



U.S.

Requires proof the liable party can pay **\$2,300** times the “gross tonnage,” or internal volume



Volunteer Spotlight: Patience Andersen Faulkner

A good neighbor reflects on the art of listening

Patience Andersen Faulkner creates beautiful beadwork, leatherwork, hand-knitted items, traditional drums, and baskets among other artistic endeavors.

But she is also a lifelong student of the art of conversation. Only a few minutes into a chat, and the listener feeling valued, respected, and entertained.

An Alaska Native elder born in Cordova, she grew up in northern Minnesota, raised by Scandinavians.

"They're feral, you know," she jokes. But she adds "that culture strongly valued family, social contacts, and community commitment."

She married a career soldier. They moved around a lot with their kids.

Everywhere they went, the "social butterfly," as she calls herself, embraced new cultures and made new friends.

"None of us had any money, but we sure as heck could help our neighbor if they needed



Patience was serving as president of the Board of Directors in 2009 when she made a trip to Washington, D.C., as part of the Council's Legislative Affairs Committee. She spoke with elected officials such as Senator Lisa Murkowski about issues of importance to the Council. Photo by Stan Jones.

something."

While giving the proverbial cup of sugar to a neighbor was important, she says that allowing others to help in return was important too.

"People were learning skills to be good adults," she recalls. "It was a two-way street, we needed each other for many reasons, but we also helped each other for many reasons."

Preserving knowledge of traditional culture and crafts

Patience's inquiring mind has led to an extensive knowledge of traditional crafts.

"I'm always curious about things," she says. As a child, her relative's hands were always busy knitting or crafting. Patience watched and learned.

"If it's not labor-intensive, I don't want to it."

When she moved back to Cordova in 1976, she was captivated by the traditional crafts of Native Alaskans.

"It took me a while to develop friendships and trust," she says. "Eventually people would show me some of the items that their grandmother had made." She wanted to know how things were made, but discovered that a lot of that knowledge had been lost.

She kept asking questions and researching, teaching herself. Now she loves sharing that knowledge.

"One of my favorite sports is teaching Native Alaskan art and culture. Other people have great ideas for color combinations, I show them some basic techniques and they just go wild with it. It's beautiful!"

She has a personal theory of teaching which she calls "show one, teach one." It grew out of her earlier life experiences.

"Whatever age you are, 4 to 94, I put each friend next to someone who has a little bit of experience." Even if it's something as basic as threading a needle, she encourages people to help each other learn.

"I grow crafters," she says. "I've grown quite a few."

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From the president and executive director:

Safeguarding our prevention and response system

By President Robert Archibald (City of Homer)
Executive Director Donna Schantz

It will surprise no one to learn the past year has been exceptionally challenging for the Council. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented changes and constant uncertainty. Safety precautions required us to look for new ways to monitor drills and adapt projects. While the Council has moved projects forward in our many areas of responsibility and recognizes new realities the pandemic presents, we remain concerned with what we view as a steady deterioration of federal and state oil spill prevention, response, oversight, and enforcement capabilities that continues in Prince William Sound.

However, we are pleased to report that, through it all, our staff, supported by our Board and committee members, have kept our work on track. Our dedicated volunteers have adapted to virtual meetings and remained engaged, again donating hundreds of hours to our mission of promoting the environmentally safe operation of the Valdez Marine Terminal and associated tankers.

Our prevention and response system is one of the best in the world, and we strive daily to protect and improve upon the safeguards in place. This system was developed through partnerships between the oil industry, federal and state

regulators, legislators, and citizen stakeholders: Alaskans working together to ensure an oil spill like the 1989 Exxon Valdez never happens again.

Effective oversight critical to prevent spills

For several years, the Council has witnessed declining federal and state budgets and staffing at the agencies responsible for overseeing operation of oil transportation systems in Alaska. Industry has similarly been implementing efforts to reduce costs, including staffing reductions, driven mostly by the low price of oil and lower throughput in the Trans Alaska Pipeline System. These rollbacks, along with the challenges and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, increase the risk of a spill.

This year, the Council encouraged the Alaska Legislature to ensure sustainable funding for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Spill Prevention and Response. Reduced revenues have resulted in a chronic and continuing shortfall. This directly threatens the department's ability to oversee the oil industry in Prince William Sound.

The Council is also concerned about the department's proposed changes to Alaska's regulations on contingency plans. We are dedicating resources to a thorough review and analysis.

In 1990, the U.S. Congress specifically identified complacency on the part of industry and government as a contributing factor to the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Just over thirty years later, the



Robert Archibald
President



Donna Schantz
Executive Director

Important: Public comment period open

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) is proposing changes to Alaska's oil spill regulations. The comment period began on November 1, 2021 and will end January 31, 2022.

Public input on these changes will be critical. The Council will be sharing information on this public comment period and future changes.

Stay up to date: pwsrca.org/regulatoryreform

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From Alyeska:

Alyeska wins award for conservation of natural resources from U.S. Fish and Wildlife

In July, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recognized Alyeska Pipeline Service Company with an Outstanding Partner Award for contributions made by Alyeska to the conservation of natural resources in the region. The award recognizes employees' recent work with USFWS to update and implement wildlife protection guidelines for oil spills, and their continuing commitment to protecting wildlife during all Alyeska activities.

"We are humbled and honored to be recognized with this environmental award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service", said Brigham McCown, Alyeska President. "Our people are innovative, collaborative, and at the top of their game. Environmental stewardship is a team effort and a responsibility we take very seriously."

Alyeska personnel Ken Wilson and Stacia Miller were part of a multi-stakeholder effort to revise the Wildlife Protection Guidelines for Oil Spill Response in Alaska, a guidance document for minimizing the

impacts of oil spill response activities on wildlife. Throughout the process, Ken and Stacia worked with the USFWS and other stakeholders to update the guidelines and make them more user-friendly for on-the-ground responders. Alyeska personnel tested the usability of draft tools, forms, and checklists during response exercises and trainings.

"For more than two years, Ken and Stacia helped draft the Wildlife Protection Guidelines, worked to gain support to incorporate new processes into Alyeska drills and spills, and provided honest feedback on those processes," said Bridget Crokus, Assistant Oil Spill Response Coordinator with USFWS Alaska Region. "The Wildlife Protection Guidelines would not be as useful as they are now without the enormous amount of effort Ken and Stacia. I cannot overstate the importance of their involvement."

- Submitted by Alyeska Corporate Communications

Who is responsible for an oil spill in Prince William Sound?

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if the incident is caused by gross negligence, willful misconduct, or violation of federal regulations.

What if the spiller can't pay?

If the worst happens and the spiller can't or doesn't take care of their responsibilities, there is help available.

- The Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund helps cover costs and damages. More about this fund at: www.tinyurl.com/OSLTF

- Alaska has a separate fund to help cover the state's costs. More about this fund at: www.tinyurl.com/AlaskaSpillFund

More details

At their May 2021 meeting, the Council's Board of Directors heard a detailed explanation about liabilities for a spill. Watch the presentation from attorney Breck Tostevin on the Council's YouTube channel:

www.tinyurl.com/RPspill

Upcoming Council meetings

The January 27 and 28, 2022 meeting of the Council's Board of Directors will be held online.

The Council's Board of Directors meets three times annually. Upcoming meetings:

- May 5 - 6, 2022 in Valdez
- September 15 -16, 2022 in Seward

Board meetings are open to the public and an opportunity for public comments is provided at the beginning of each meeting.

More information on our website: www.pwsrca.org





A journey through time: New Council report documents history of tanker contingency plan

Thousands of pages of documents. Countless meetings and workgroups. Over thirty years of oil spill drills and exercises.

That's what you'd previously have to dig through to truly understand the oil spill contingency plan for Prince William Sound's tankers.

Not anymore. A new report has now distilled that history down into one report. The Council partnered with experts at Nuka Research and attorney Breck Tostevin to comb through decades of letters, reports, and meeting notes. They were looking for details on how the plan, and the regulations that shaped the plan, developed.

What is the plan?

The Prince William Sound Tanker Oil Spill Prevention and Contingency Plan essentially describes how Alyeska and the tanker companies prevent oil from spilling, and how they will contain and clean up the oil if a spill happens.

State and federal laws and regulations determine what details are included in the plan. The industry writes the plans and government agencies decide whether the plan meets their requirements.

Documenting the changes over time

There have been numerous changes to the plan and its governing regulations over the years.

Changes are made on a regular basis through an extensive and complicated renewal process. A lot of work and thought goes into these updates. In a nutshell, every five years:

1. the industry proposes changes,
2. the government reviews the changes and solicits public comment,
3. the Council and stakeholders review and submit comments,
4. and the comments and changes are considered and worked out between the industry and the government.

The government approves the plan once it meets their requirements.

Details are written down in various documents. The researchers started with the first plan developed after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, documenting how the then-new state

requirements resulted in many changes, and tracking subsequent changes through 2020.

Their work shows that many Alaskans, including industry, government agencies, and citizens worked hard to tailor the plan and regulations so that it works for our unique state.

"An Alaska contingency plan is not a generic plan on how to respond to spills," note the researchers in the report.

How will this report help protect Prince William Sound?

Those who wrote, organized, reviewed, and approved the plans acquired an extensive knowledge of the contents of the plans. They knew why the plans and regulations were written a certain way because they were the ones who made the changes.

Years later, many have retired, but they left a trail of details in historical documents.

The report details how the plan has improved, describes contentious issues and how they were resolved, notes significant trends, and documents remaining issues. The report also documents changes to the regulations and how regulations

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From **1000s** of documents, researchers summarized **43** events that substantially changed contingency plans and **17** recurring issues

7 functions of an Alaska contingency plan

Under the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's regulations, these plans serve as:

1. An emergency plan
2. A detailed long-term plan
3. Proof that equipment and resources meet standards
4. An assessment of past incidents and how they could have been prevented
5. A description of prevention measures as required by Alaska regulations
6. Proof that the equipment and vessel technology is modern
7. A permit for the facility or tanker to operate

Prince William Sound is home to a variety of bird species in winter

Frigid Alaska winters can be a tough time and place for wildlife. Food is scarce, the climate can be extreme, and days are short. Many species of birds head south.

However, some hardier species, such as marbled murrelets, common murre, pelagic cormorants, black-legged kittiwakes, and glaucous-winged gulls tough it out over the winter.

Since 2007, Dr. Mary Anne Bishop, a research ecologist at the Prince William Sound Science Center, has surveyed the Sound in fall and winter to document these bird species. This work is done on behalf of Gulf Watch Alaska, an ecosystem monitoring program funded by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council. The Trustee Council documents the recovery of wildlife species after the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

The Council recently worked with Dr. Bishop and Anne Schaefer, the Center's avian research assistant, to expand the survey area. The Council needed to know if marine birds congregated in areas around the Valdez Marine Terminal and near the tanker lanes. If a spill were to occur, these are the most likely areas for oil to come ashore.

Quick protection if a spill happens

When creating oil spill contingency plans, it is important to know where critical habitats are located. Plans can be created ahead of time that will help responders act fast to protect these areas before they are damaged.

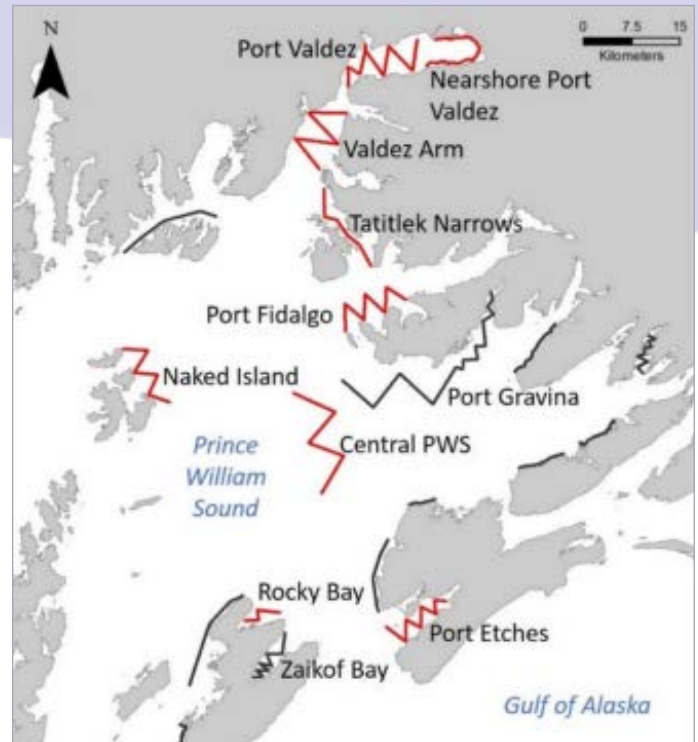
The researchers noted specific areas to safeguard including Port Etches and Zaikof Bay near Hinchinbrook Entrance, the head of Port Valdez between the Valdez container terminal and the Valdez Glacier stream, and in southeastern Port Fidalgo.

This was the first of three years proposed for this study. The report notes that it is difficult to draw conclusions from a single year, because composition and density of birds can vary during the overwintering, non-breeding season.

The results of the survey will be available through the Alaska Ocean Observing System.

More information is available in the full report:

www.tinyurl.com/PWSWinterBirds



Red lines indicate new survey areas. Black lines indicate areas previously surveyed.



Researchers from the Prince William Sound Science Center conducted the survey from their research vessel, the New Wave. Photo courtesy of Prince William Sound Science Center.



Committee volunteer recognized for achievements in conservation

Council volunteer Kate Morse recently received a Conservation Achievement Award from Alaska Conservation Foundation. These prestigious awards recognize individuals and organizations committed to protecting Alaska. The Council was proud to support Kate’s nomination for the Jerry S. Dixon Award for Excellence in Education, which rewards educators who integrate stewardship of Alaska’s natural environment.

Kate has been developing and implementing field-based exploration opportunities for K-12 youth in the Copper River watershed and Prince William Sound region for over 18 years, working initially for the Prince William Sound Science Center and, since 2008, for the Copper River Watershed Project (CRWP) where she is currently the Program Director.

Kate has volunteered with the Council’s Information and Education Committee for over 10 years. She has steered the Council towards increased and improved environmental education efforts, including the annual Youth Involvement project. Kate’s guidance continually helps improve our programs, clarifying best practices for working with education partners and calling for appropriate and effective evaluation metrics.

Directly leaning on Kate’s expertise and mentorship, the Council supports a paid youth internship in Cordova for a high school student to do citizen science monitoring of invasive species. Since 2014, Kate’s work to help recruit, train, and support local youth has been a key component for the success of this internship. The Council is now expanding this opportunity to other communities in our region, with our model being to first identify a local mentor who can be “like Kate.” We could not do this work without her volunteer efforts.

Kate also leads education projects with CRWP that the Council proudly supports. These projects help further our mission to engage citizens in promoting the environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers by engaging our region’s younger citizens.

- One such project, the Copper River Stewardship Program, has engaged our

region’s youth in a field course that explores the upper and lower Copper River watershed, including learning about the robust oil spill prevention and response system and impacts of oil in the marine ecosystem, and fosters a direct personal connection with the ecosystem for the teen participants.

- In addition, Kate and CRWP are working with the Council to develop a series of interactive lessons that teach students the value, challenges, and impact of citizen engagement on conservation issues. She piloted this program with students in Cordova and the Copper Valley in 2019.
- Recently, Kate adapted lessons from the Alaska Oil Spill Lesson Bank to teach to local sixth graders via Zoom, which included putting materials kits together to send home to each student and recruiting parents and partner educators to deliver the most effective science education possible for students learning from home.

Kate’s innovative approach to engaging youth in hands-on, locally-relevant, experiential learning exemplifies the best of environmental education.

The award was named for Jerry Dixon, a McAuliffe Fellow and former teacher of the gifted in Seward, Alaska. Congratulations Kate!



Betsi Oliver

Outreach
Coordinator



Kate Morse. Photo courtesy of Kate Morse.

Volunteer Spotlight: A good neighbor reflects on the art of listening

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She teaches 120-150 campers during Nuuciq Spirit Camp and around 40 students at Peksulineq Culture Week in Tatitlek. Both are held in Prince William Sound and celebrate the traditional culture of the Chugach region.

After a few years though, the Tatitlek program stopped asking her to teach.

“As it turns out, the people that were there instructing were ones I had taught a few years before, and they were now teaching.”

Growing listeners

One of the Council’s earliest and most successful projects stemmed from work she was doing after the Exxon Valdez oil spill. She worked as a legal aide, helping Cordovans navigate the claims process.

“I listened to people’s impacts, and they would also tell me how this devastated them emotionally.” She noticed that when the conversation was over, they would walk away feeling better, with a sense of self-worth.

“They weren’t cured or anything, they didn’t have any more money, but at least they knew that they had a tool within themselves from which to draw.”

Patience convinced the lawyers she worked for in that some sort of mental health program was badly needed in Cordova. They put her together with Dr. Steve Picou, a sociologist at the University of New Orleans.

Dr. Picou and his researchers worked with Patience and other Cordovans to develop the Peer Listening Program. The Council ended up

sponsoring the program as part of its guide for communities dealing with an oil spill, *Coping with Technological Disasters*.

The program trains local residents to provide peer support in disaster-impacted communities where formal mental health facilities may not be available. The program, updated through the years, has helped residents after hurricanes and oil spills around the nation and world.

Volunteering for the Council

Patience has been a member of the Council’s Board of Directors for the past 23 years, making her the longest-serving Council member. She represents the Cordova District Fishermen United. She currently serves on several committees: Information and Education, Long Range Planning, and Board Governance. She has served as president for several terms as well as other elected officer positions on the Executive Committee at various times. She hopes to inspire others to volunteer.

“I like to be a cheerleader.”

Patience says it’s important for the Council’s members to engage with the communities, to talk to other people, to listen to their concerns and solutions.

“That way we can become a better organization and maintain the longevity that we have to be there.”

Links

You can find more information about the Peer Listener program and the *Coping with Technological Disasters* Guidebook on the Council’s website:

www.tinyurl.com/CopingWithTechDisasters

Patience was interviewed in 2014 about her experience as a legal aid in Cordova after the Exxon Valdez oil spill. That interview is archived at Project Jukebox, the University of Alaska Fairbanks’ oral history archive:

www.tinyurl.com/PatienceEVOS



Left: Patience speaks to a group of Louisiana citizens who came to Alaska in 2010, for help dealing with the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Photo by Amanda Johnson.



Study shows purpose-driven design can improve performance

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After ranking the 400 according to all these features and abilities, they were down to the 17 top scoring tugs.

Finding the right balance

After balancing performance with costs, Glosten determined that the existing vessel most closely matching the needs for an ideal Hinchinbrook tug was the Luz de Mar: a tug operated by Spain's Maritime Safety and Rescue Society.

The creators of the Luz de Mar designed it for offshore ship rescue and response. This means the Luz de Mar is maneuverable and agile due to a powerful propulsion system, has adequate bollard pull, can aid a disabled tanker in a variety of ways, and is still reasonably fast.

How does the current tug compare?

Glosten studied the differences between the Luz de Mar and the current tug serving Hinchinbrook Entrance, the Ross Chouest.

Their study showed that a tug designed specifically for that role would improve safety and efficiency, improve response times, and reduce the chance of an oil spill.

Conclusion: Purpose-built tugs work better

The researchers noted that many believe the largest and most powerful tugs are ideal for rescue operations. In fact, the design of these larger vessels does not prioritize features most important to a successful emergency response.

They concluded that a tug designed with this purpose in mind offers significant advantages, especially when a rescue tug works close to shore.

More details

A recent issue of International Tug and Salvage has a more detailed article by Peter Soles of Glosten and Alan Sorum of the Council, available online at www.tinyurl.com/HinchinBrookTugBAT

Glosten's full report is available on our website at www.tinyurl.com/GlostenBAT

New Council report documents history of tanker contingency plan

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have been interpreted at different times.

"This project helped us understand how regulatory philosophies, requirements, oversight, and enforcement have changed over the years," said Linda Swiss, a Council staffer who was part of the team that developed the history.

Swiss has been managing contingency plan projects for over 12 years for the Council.

"We were in a unique position to do this project because we have one of the most extensive collections of historical documents that I know

about," Swiss added.

The researchers were able to find information on missing events not available anywhere else.

"It will be helpful for future planners and plan reviewers," Swiss noted.

"It is hoped this history will be a useful tool in understanding past work and the rationale behind certain commitments, and perhaps more importantly to help prevent any backsliding or diminishment of oil spill prevention and response capabilities for Prince William Sound and its downstream communities," Swiss said.

Safeguarding our prevention and response system

Continued from page 4

system is again threatened by complacency, compounded further by budgetary constraints and efforts to reduce costs.

What's the answer?

The Council and our mission are more important than ever. Our vigilance can prevent backsliding that could lead to another major oil spill. Such a disaster would be devastating for Alaskans, for

our livelihoods, for fish and wildlife, and for the marine and terrestrial environment. We raise these concerns so that sensible and effective actions can be taken. Those with the most to lose from oil pollution must have a voice in the decisions that put their livelihoods and communities at risk.

No matter what the future brings, the Council's staff and volunteers will continue to promote the highest level of oil spill prevention and response capabilities for our region.

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND REGIONAL CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

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

Who we are

The Council is an independent, nonprofit corporation formed after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill to minimize the environmental impacts of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System's terminal and tanker fleet.

The Council is a voice for the people, communities, and interest groups in the region oiled by the Exxon Valdez spill.

Those with 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's role

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 information and terminal facilities as state and federal regulatory agencies.

We combat the complacency that led to the 1989 spill by fostering partnerships among the oil industry, government, and local communities in addressing environmental concerns.

Board of Directors

The Council's 18 member entities are communities and interest groups affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill:

Alaska State Chamber of Commerce
Community of Chenega

Chugach Alaska Corporation • City of Cordova
City of Homer • City of Kodiak • City of Seldovia
City of Seward • City of Valdez • City of Whittier

Cordova District Fishermen United
Kenai Peninsula Borough • Kodiak Island Borough
Kodiak Village Mayors Association

Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition • Port Graham Corp.
Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp.
Community of Tatitlek



Advisory Committees

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

These committees work with staff on projects, study and deliberate current oil transportation issues, and advise the Council's Board of Directors.

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

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

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.

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.

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.

Information and Education: The Information and Education Committee supports the Council's mission by fostering public awareness, responsibility, and participation in the Council's activities through information and education.

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