



**Regional Citizens' Advisory Council** / "Citizens promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers."

In Anchorage: 3709 Spenard Road / Suite 100 / Anchorage, Alaska 99503 / (907) 277-7222 / FAX (907) 277-4523  
In Valdez: P.O. Box 3089 / 130 South Meals / Suite 202 / Valdez, Alaska 99686 / (907) 834-5000 / FAX (907) 835-5926

**MEMBERS**

January 12, 2018

Alaska State Chamber of Commerce

Chugach Alaska Corporation

City of Cordova

City of Homer

City of Kodiak

City of Seldovia

City of Seward

City of Valdez

City of Whittier

Community of Chenega Bay

Community of Tatitlek

Cordova District Fishermen United

Kenai Peninsula Borough

Kodiak Island Borough

Kodiak Village Mayors Association

Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition

Port Graham Corporation

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation

Commander, 17<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District (DPI)  
Sector Juneau Port Safety/Marine Inspector  
Attn: LT McPhillips, Room 753  
P.O. Box 25517  
Juneau, AK 99802

**SUBJECT:** Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council  
Recertification Application for January - December 2017

Dear LT McPhillips:

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (PWSRCAC or the Council) hereby applies for recertification as the alternative voluntary advisory group for Prince William Sound, per Sec. 5002 (o) of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

This application is submitted under the guidelines in the U.S. Coast Guard's September 16, 2002, Federal Register notice which established a streamlined recertification process for two years out of every three. The notice stated that a streamlined application need only "describe any substantive changes to the information provided at the last triennial recertification." The year covered by this application falls under the guidelines for the streamlined process.

Substantive changes for 2017 are summarized below.

### **Board Representation and Involvement in the Region**

Board membership continues to remain strong with all 19 seats filled. This past year, meetings and receptions were held in Kenai, Valdez, Whittier, and Larsen Bay, as well as other presentations and outreach in Seward, Kodiak, Cordova, and Homer. Board meetings were held in Anchorage, Valdez, and Whittier. Announcements for meetings and receptions were provided beforehand. In addition, new citizen volunteers have been added to our technical committees.

### **Partnerships with Stakeholders and Affiliates**

#### ***Marine Services Transition***

With the upcoming change of marine services contractor for Alyeska Pipeline Service Company in 2018, from Crowley Marine Services to Edison Chouest Offshore (ECO), the Council is working diligently to review information and materials related to this transition and provide input on the process. This transition represents the most significant change in the oil spill prevention and response system since it was created after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill.

To better coordinate with industry, regulators, and other stakeholders during the transition, Council staff participate as a member of Alyeska/SERVS's Marine Services Transition Participant Team, along with representatives from the Trans Alaska Pipeline System shippers, Crowley, ECO, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), and U.S. Coast Guard. We also participate as a member of ADEC's Marine Services Transition Project Workgroup, along with the same members as Alyeska/SERVS's Participant Team, with the addition of the Southwest Alaska Pilots Association. The Participant Team has been meeting on a monthly basis, while the newly formed Project Workgroup has been meeting weekly. The Council is committed to working with Alyeska, ECO, regulators, and other involved stakeholders to ensure that the level of oil spill prevention and response remains strong.

#### *Community Spill Response Workshops*

PWSRCAC presented its Community Spill Response workshop in Seldovia this past year, which included participants from the nearby Alaska Native villages of Nanwalek and Port Graham. This workshop, designed to bring together local stakeholders, city officials, and other key community members, provides information to participants on how they may fit into a response. Participants learn about the Incident Command System, how they can obtain information about an event, and how to interact with the Unified Command and other decision makers. These workshops help community representatives better understand the response process in order to better represent their communities. With this eighth workshop, the Council has now held one in every one of our member communities.

#### *Marine Firefighting Symposium*

In May of 2017, PWSRCAC co-hosted its ninth Marine Firefighting Symposium for land-based firefighters in Homer, Alaska with the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council. This three-day conference provides the best information available concerning marine firefighting for land-based firefighters. Participants were offered a chance to qualify for certification through the State of Alaska. Industry sponsors included City of Homer, Cook Inlet Tug & Barge, Conoco Phillips Polar Tankers, Eagle Enterprises Safety Solutions, Edison Chouest Offshore, and T&T Salvage.

#### *Weather Data, Weather Gap Analysis and Forecast Models*

These projects study wind, water currents and other environmental factors near the Valdez Marine Terminal (Terminal), in Prince William Sound, and the Gulf of Alaska as these factors may affect the ability to prevent, respond to, contain, and clean up an oil spill. The Council continues to support operations at weather stations at Cape St. Elias and Port Etches. Currently the Council is working with the Prince William Sound Science Center to install a weather buoy near Naked Island in Prince William Sound.

#### **Toward More Effective Communications**

*Regular Meetings with Alyeska Senior Managers and Marine Safety Unit (MSU) Valdez*  
Over this past year, Council staff has continued a series of bi-weekly meetings with senior leaders from Alyeska and Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System (SERVS). Council staff also coordinate with the Commander of the local MSU in Valdez, strives to attend monthly breakfasts, and participates on the Valdez Marine Safety Committee. Former Captain of the Port Valdez CDR Lally and current CDR Franklin regularly attend Council Board meetings, while other MSU Valdez representatives regularly attend Council technical committee meetings. The intent and the success of these regular meetings has been to review substantive issues of

mutual concern, share ongoing projects, research and priorities, explore opportunities for alignment and cooperation, and encourage open communications.

#### *Strengthening Ties with Citizens' Councils*

The Council continues to strengthen our working relationship with Cook Inlet RCAC, noted by the Coast Guard in 2015, including regular meetings between the Executive Directors, joint community presentations, and attendance at volunteer and community events. Working toward the goal of collaboration and trust between the citizens' councils is a priority for PWSRCAC, and efforts are expected to continue moving in this direction.

#### *Collaboration with Partners*

With regard to the Council's relationships with other regulators and industry, Council staff continue to meet on a regular basis with ADEC, BLM and other PWSRCAC ex-officio members. Additionally, the Council continues to participate on the quarterly Valdez Marine Terminal Coordination Workgroup attended by Alyeska, ADEC, Bureau of Land Management, the Coast Guard, and EPA. This workgroup has met since 2003 and is tasked with providing an open forum for communicating on the terminal contingency plan with a goal of continuous improvement to the plan.

We recognize that positive relationships and communications are critical components to achieving our mission. The Council Board and staff remain committed to strengthening and continuing to build relationships with our stakeholders, industry, and regulatory partners.

### **Dispersants**

#### *Identification of Avoidance Areas in the Preauthorized Dispersants Zone*

The Council used expert technical support this year to identify dispersant use avoidance areas from the preauthorized dispersants zone of the Alaska Regional Response Team's Dispersant Use Plan for Alaska, such as sensitive spawning, high productivity, or seasonal congregation areas. The proposed preauthorization zone extends from 24 nautical miles offshore out to 200 nautical miles offshore.

Comments were provided to the Alaska Regional Response Team in January and December 2017.

### **Oil Spill Prevention**

#### *Potential Places of Refuge*

Preplanning potential places of refuge (PPOR) provides communities, regulators, and industry with a chance to consider local knowledge and conditions prior to a vessel incident. An accurate PPOR matrix provides the U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port an additional tool for use in the decision-making process associated with placing a distressed vessel in a sheltered location. Gathering information from stakeholders on potential sites in advance of an incident is always a preferred planning approach. The Council commissioned an examination of four PPORs located in the Sound, using the AVTEC Maritime Training Center full bridge ship simulator. Results of this analysis were provided to industry and regulators, including a presentation by Council staff on the findings at a Prince William Sound Subarea Committee meeting in Cordova. The Council is looking at evaluating additional sites in the future.

## **Monitoring Terminal Operations and Maintenance**

### *Air Quality Permit Renewal*

In 2017, the Council participated in the public review process for the Valdez Marine Terminal's air quality operating permit, which is issued by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, by analyzing the draft permit as well as other supporting air quality documentation and submitting comments regarding how the draft permit could be improved. This permit details all the requirements which limit air pollution from the many sources of stationary emissions at the facility. Overall, the Council found that the terms of the draft permit should not increase the potential or actual environmental impacts of the Valdez Marine Terminal on the local airshed.

### *Crude Oil Piping Inspections*

Beginning in 2016 and continuing in 2017, Alyeska has been using new technology (tethered robotic crawler tools) to inspect segments of crude oil piping at the Valdez Marine Terminal that were previously inaccessible and unable to be inspected. The Council advocated for Alyeska to perform such inspections and has been tracking the project through regular communications with Alyeska. Inspections in 2016 and 2017 found one small area of concern, and subsequent protective coating was applied as a preventative measure. No significant repairs were needed to continue safe operation. These inspections show how well these pipes have been maintained and operated since 1977.

## **Combating Invasive Species**

The Council approved two reports analyzing federal and state ballast water management policy as it concerns crude oil tankers engaged in coastwise trade to Alaska and the status of international and domestic regulations on installation and use of ballast water management systems. The Council used this information to inform staff, volunteers, stakeholders, and legislative representatives on the status of ballast water regulation, as the regulatory process is under scrutiny and changes are currently proposed at the federal legislative level. The Council is actively monitoring Congressional action on the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act to determine what impacts the Act may have on ballast water exchange and treatment in Alaska.

## **Preparing to Respond to Oil Spills**

### *Drills and Exercises*

PWSRCAC continues to monitor, evaluate and participate in exercises and training events each year for the Prince William Sound tankers and the Terminal. Not only do we observe and evaluate, but we are also part of the team that helps in drill design and planning. Staff participated in approximately 19 different exercise and training related field events in 2017.

### *Oil Spill Recovery Optimization Analysis*

The Council commissioned a response capacity analysis to illustrate the maximum potential oil recovery along the Prince William Sound shipping route and document how winds, waves, water temperature, or daylight/darkness impact recovery estimates. After conducting a workshop to obtain input from industry, and state and federal agencies, the study was amended to provide a response optimization analysis of individual recovery systems, oil recovery strike teams, and task forces within the overall response system. The potential options were analyzed to increase oil recovery by optimizing both the open-water and nearshore on-water recovery systems in Prince William Sound.

### *Port Valdez Circulation Study*

The Council partnered with the Prince William Sound Science Center in a multi-year effort to study how water circulates in Port Valdez. Field work finished this past spring. Buoys were set adrift around the port at different water depths, carrying instruments that gathered data about temperature, salinity, and location to determine the surface and subsurface circulation patterns. Data was gathered in late winter, summer, and fall to understand how circulation changes with the seasons. The final report will increase understanding of how surface oil would move in the event of a spill, and help determine the potential fate of dispersed oil.

### *Efforts Around the Reauthorization of the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund (OSLTF)*

The Council passed a resolution this year in support of the reauthorization of the OSLTF excise tax. Council staff and volunteers also worked with legislative advisors in Washington, D.C., to provide information to potentially expand the use of the OSLTF for prevention activities, and establish upper and lower fund balance limits that trigger automatic suspension and reinstatement of the tax to ensure long term sustainability of the fund.

### **Valdez Marine Terminal and Prince William Sound Tanker Contingency Plans**

The Council continues to participate in reviewing the contingency plans for the Valdez Marine Terminal and oil tankers in Prince William Sound. In the last year, the Council reviewed proposed amendments to the terminal plan and submitted comments covering preparedness, oil spill scenarios, response training, and the marine services transition. The approval process for such changes can take a significant amount of time and the Council carefully tracks and participates in this process.

Regarding the contingency plan for the Prince William Sound tankers, the Council has provided feedback on the marine services transition amendment that is currently underway. Careful analysis of the changes to the prevention and response system in the Sound has been a priority for the Council, and the Council has provided expert technical input on the transition.

### **Sharing information on our work**

Council staff and volunteers visit communities in our region, attend group member functions, give presentations, coordinate special events, and encourage citizen involvement in the Council's work throughout the year.

### *Youth Involvement Program*

Under this project, the Council partners with educational organizations to share topics related to our mission with students from our region. This year, opportunities included marine science camps in Kodiak, Akhiok, and Old Harbor, marine technology activities for youth in Kachemak Bay and at the Alaska Tsunami Bowl in Seward, salmon education programs in Valdez, Exxon Valdez oil spill history outreach at the Alaska Forum on the Environment, and several summer expeditions for youth and teachers in Prince William Sound. The Council continues to actively share activities from the Alaska Oil Spill Curriculum with youth and teachers from our region as well. PWSRCAC continues its youth internship program, with a high school student monitoring for aquatic invasive species in Cordova.

*Fishing Vessel Program Outreach Tour*

PWSRCAC, in conjunction with Alyeska/SERVS staff, shared the fishing vessel program's annual oil spill training with local citizens from Cordova. PWSRCAC chartered a passenger vessel out of Valdez which took over 70 local youth and residents to learn about SERVS' oil spill training for local fishermen and mariners. This project is in its second year and will be supported in other communities within PWSRCAC's region in the future due to its great success.

**In Conclusion**

We have kept this application brief in accordance with this year's streamlined recertification process. This required the omission of many other worthwhile endeavors by our Council in our ongoing efforts to maximize the safety of Terminal and tanker operations in Prince William Sound. We would be happy to provide additional details on any of the Council's activities. All reports accepted by the Council's Board of Directors are posted on our website. Enclosed is our 2016-2017 Annual Report which highlights and expands on some of the work mentioned in this letter.

Sincerely,



Donna Schantz  
Executive Director

Enclosure: PWSRCAC's 2016-2017 Annual Report

Cc: Scott Hicks, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.