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Council to investigate vapor control safety allegations

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council will conduct its own review of warnings by the group Oilwatch Alaska that problems in Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.'s new vapor control-system could result in a catastrophic explosion at the Valdez tanker terminal.

The citizens' council board voted for the safety review at its May quarterly meeting in Valdez, but with some reluctance. Some board members said it was hard to justify the expense — up to \$50,000 for contractors to handle the review — because the allegations were vague.

"Most of us probably don't believe there is a problem," said council president Stan Stephens of Valdez. "If there's a possibility, we need to act, and, if that's the case, we need to act as quick as we can."

The council's Valdez office is organizing a four-day meeting on the subject for June 24-27. The plan, said Project Manager Joe Bridgman, is to convene the

council contractors with government and Alyeska representatives at the tanker terminal. They will review previous safety studies of the system rather than attempting a from-scratch safety inspection and analysis of their own.

The council's team leader for the review is Bud Sly, a Pennsylvania expert on fire protection and the safe management of industrial processes.

Dr. Bob White, an expert on fire and explosion prevention, will also participate. White, who is with the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, Texas, has published several papers on vapor-control safety.

California-based Sierra Research, the council's long-time contractor on vapor-control issues, will be involved. So will Babet Engineering, a Pasadena, Texas, firm that handled safety certification of Alyeska's vapor-control system for the U.S. Coast Guard.

The system collects oily vapors forced out of tanker holds as oil

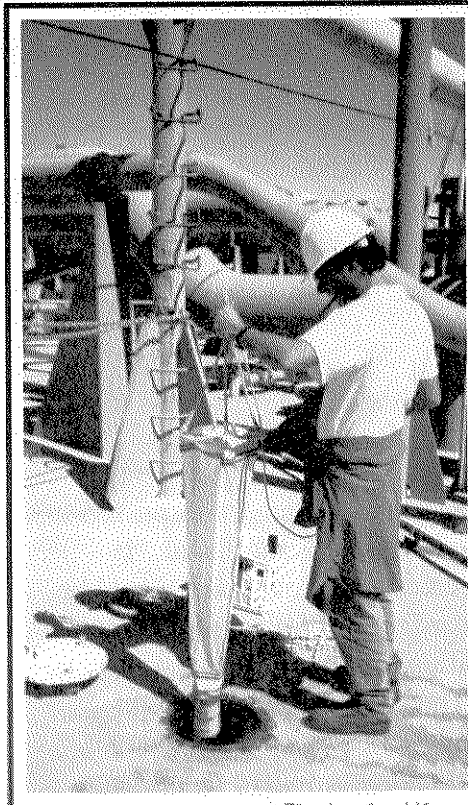


Photo: Joel Kopp
 Testing for aliens. See story, p. 7.

is pumped in. The vapors are carried ashore to the terminal, where they are burned to produce electricity, pumped into the voids in Alyeska's crude storage tanks, or incinerated.

"The fundamental danger in any vapor recovery system is, there's a flame on one end and a tanker full of explosive gas at the other end," Bridgman said. "We'll put all these
 See Vapor, page 6

Citizens' council is at work outside Prince William Sound, too

By Leann Ferry
 Community Liaison

The citizens' council has made it a priority to maintain strong relationships with its member organizations and increase its presence in communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill, as required by the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990. This is the focus of our Community Outreach Program — and of our "Community Corner" column, debuting in this issue.

Kodiak Island

In December 1997, Executive Director John Devens and I attended the annual Kodiak Island Mayors Conference. We talked with some of the mayors about how the citizens' council works to represent Kodiak communities and about how we might do that better.

Alicia Reft, President of Karluk IRA Tribal Council, said she had seen the Observer before, but didn't read it because

she didn't realize the citizens' council is active on Kodiak Island. Thanks to this useful

Community Corner



Leann Ferry

comment, we are considering new ways to use the Observer to publicize the fact that our work goes beyond Prince William Sound, taking in Lower Cook Inlet and Kodiak Island as well.

One small example: all of the citizens' council member communities will now be listed on the front page of the Observer.

The mayors expressed concern about inadequacies in Hazardous Waste Operator (HAZWOPER) training and tracking in their communities. Community members must have this training before assisting in oil spill

response operations. We have been discussing this issue for some time with Alyeska Pipeline Service Company and oil shipping industry representatives. The Kodiak Island Borough is also looking into the issue. We will continue our efforts to coordinate with both industry and the borough on it.

The mayors also said they want more environmental education in the communities around Kodiak Island. The citizens' council is also concerned, and is seeking grant money for annual oil spill education in the communities affected by the Exxon
 See Community Corner, back page

People

Chenega Bay's Evanoffs: Working together for the citizens' council

Think of Larry and Gail Evanoff as the citizens' council couple. She's been involved since 1990, the year after the council was formed. He first got involved about six years ago.

This year, as they celebrate their 29th wedding anniversary, Gail is a volunteer member of the council's Oil Spill Prevention/Response Committee.

Larry represents Chenega Bay Corp. and the Chenega Bay IRA Council on the board of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council.

"My main interest was prevention," Larry Evanoff said. "It seemed to me my voice would be heard most if I was in an organization like RCAC."

The Evanoffs and their four children — two grown and two still at home — live in Chenega Bay, a village of about 90 people on Evans Island at the southwest corner of Prince William Sound.

The Chenega community has been the victim of two of the greatest disasters in Alaska history, one natural and one man-made.

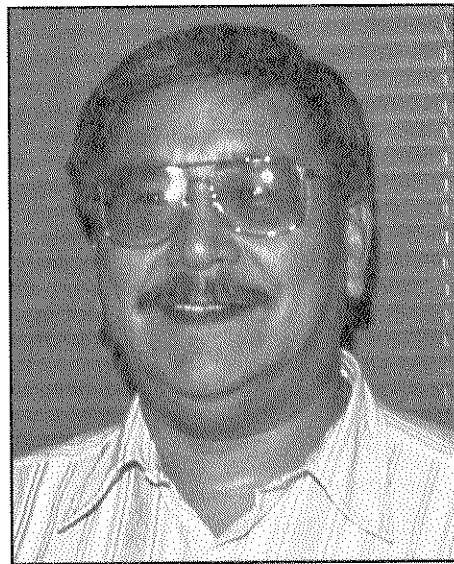
In 1964, when it was located on Chenega Island, the village then known as Chenega was wiped out by sea waves from the Good Friday earthquake and more than half the residents perished. Larry Evanoff's parents were among them.

In the 1980s, the community was reestablished as Chenega Bay

about 15 miles south on Evans Island. In 1989, the area was oiled in the Exxon Valdez spill.

The Evanoffs were living in Nome in March 1989, but returned to Chenega Bay two months later, when the cleanup effort was in full swing.

"It was just lots and lots of new faces all up and down the streets, and boats and helicopters and planes all over the place," Gail



Larry Evanoff

said. "It was very chaotic."

Larry, 49, was born into the old village of Chenega. Besides his work with the citizens' council, he serves on two other boards and does work for the Chenega Bay Corporation.

Gail, 48, was born in the northwest Alaska mining village of Candle, near Nome. Besides serving on the citizens' council committee, she is president of the IRA, or tribal, council for

Chenega Bay. She's also a board member of the Cordova-based Oil Spill Recovery Institute.

Both say they occasionally find it hard to balance the time demands of their council roles with family and other duties they have in Chenega Bay. But both think oil transportation through Prince William Sound is safer because of the work of the citizens' council.

"We do have the agencies that



Gail Evanoff

listen now," Larry said. "The organization has done some very wonderful things for us and for the whole Prince William Sound area."

Enough boom is stockpiled in the Chenega area to fence off Sawmill Bay and protect the nearby Armin Koernig Salmon Hatchery, and villagers have been trained to put it in place if there's another spill.

"Our main response here would

be to protect the hatchery," Larry said. "We can literally boom off the whole bay."

The Evanoffs, like other residents of Chenega Bay, think more work is needed to restore the area to pre-spill conditions. Even after cleanup efforts last summer at Sleepy Bay and other sites on Latouche Island, the Evanoffs say there's still lots of oil on local beaches.

"You pass a lot of oil in the crevices between rocks and boulders," Gail said. "You turn them over and it stinks like the oil hit yesterday."

The cleanup last year was managed by the Anchorage-based Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council. Spokesman Joe Hunt told the Observer the group knows there's still oil in the Chenega area, but doesn't expect to make further efforts to clean it up. Last year's cleanup, Hunt said, cost \$2.1 million, but only reached about one-half mile of shoreline.

"Further cleanup would provide too limited success at too great a cost," Hunt said. "It just wouldn't be an efficient use of restoration funds."

That's a disappointment for Gail Evanoff.

"Science has yet to tell me that the flushing action of the tides we have out here is taking care of the problem and taking it away," she said. "The volume of oil out here in my estimation is too large."

Comings and goings

Vince Mitchell of Valdez has left the **Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems Committee**. **Tex Edwards** of Anchorage joined it after completing his term as council president in March. **Jim Beckham** moved from Cordova to Seward, but will stay on the committee.

Jim Levine, a contract manager with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in Anchorage, left the **Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring Committee** in March after seven years of service.

Since last fall, the **Oil Spill Prevention/Response Committee** has lost two members: **Lee**

Majors and **Wayne Coleman**. Majors resigned to devote more time to his job, while Coleman wanted to focus on his duties on the council's board of directors and executive committee. **Tom Copeland** joined the committee after his appointment to the board in May.

David Hite has resigned from the **Scientific Advisory Committee**.

Joe Bridgman returned to work on Apr. 20 at the Valdez office of the citizens' council after a five-month leave of absence. **Alexis Finn** worked Bridgman's project manager position while he was gone.

Alexander Kotlarov has replaced Tom Sweeney as

maritime project manager in Valdez.

Kotlarov, who started work in November 1997, is a lifelong Alaskan from Ketchikan. He

holds a master's degree in marine policy and a master's license for 100-ton vessels.

Stan Jones, a veteran Alaska journalist, started work in December 1997 as public information manager for the citizens' council.

Jones, who was born in Anchorage, came to RCAC from the Anchorage Daily News, where he had worked since 1988. Earlier he worked for the Fairbanks Daily



Jones and Kotlarov

News-Miner and public radio station KOTZ-AM in Kotzebue. He won several national awards during his reporting career, some of them for his coverage of the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Note: Observer articles are written by public information manager Stan Jones, except where another author is identified.

Response and planning

Council remains cautious on dispersants for spills in Sound, Gulf

Chemical dispersants still should not be used on oil spills in Prince William Sound or the Gulf of Alaska until mechanical methods — such as skimming — have been carefully evaluated and ruled out, the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council decided at its May quarterly meeting in Valdez.

The vote came after nearly two years of study of dispersants by council members, staffers, contractors and committee members. The study was intended to determine whether there was enough new information on dispersants since 1993 — when the council last voted on their use — to justify a new position.

Then as now, the council voted to oppose dispersant use unless mechanical recovery won't work.

Dispersants are chemicals that break oil into tiny droplets that disperse throughout the water column rather than floating on top in a slick. As the question is sometimes put, is dilution the solution to pollution?

Dispersants have both advantages and disadvantages, accord-

ing to a position paper developed for the council.

The advantages:

- Dispersants keep oil from piling up on beaches and shorelines
- They reduce the hazard to seabirds
- They speed up the breakdown of spilled oil
- They reduce the long-term harm to some kinds of habitat.

The disadvantages:

- In some areas, such as protected bays and inlets, dispersed oil may be more dangerous to some organisms than untreated oil
- The ecological risks of dispersants and their effects on the water-column ecosystem are not well understood
- Their effectiveness is uncertain.

Dispersants were tested on a small scale for use in the Exxon Valdez spill of 1989, but the results were inconclusive and they were never cleared for widespread application.

While the citizens' council's basic position — that mechanical recovery should come first —

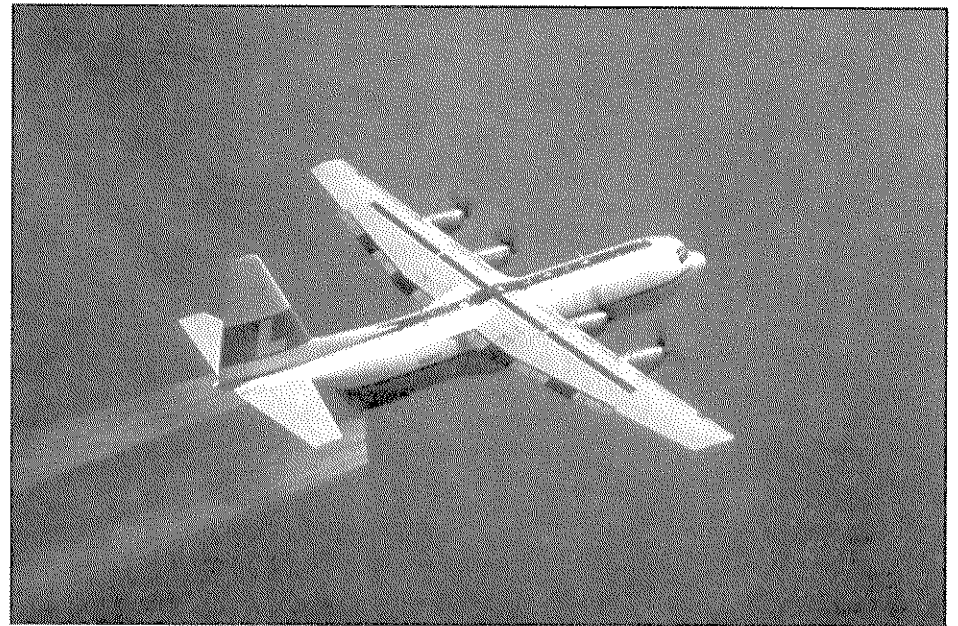


Photo: Courtesy Alyeska

A Lynden Air Cargo Hercules sprays water in a June 1997 dispersants drill near Bligh Reef.

didn't change substantially at the May meeting, the council did make several recommendations about the official state-federal guidelines for using dispersants. Among other things, the new position calls for defining the criteria used to determine if mechanical recovery is effective in a particular case.

The council also called for research into several lingering questions about dispersants. Some

examples:

- Field experiments to see if dispersants work in conditions found in Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska
- Laboratory experiments to test dispersant use on North Slope crude
- Developing a dispersant formula specifically for use on North Slope crude
- Documenting the long-term effects of dispersants in sea water.

Legislative session: It wasn't as bad as it might have been

By Doug Mertz
Legislative Monitor

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council managed to dodge some dangerous bullets in the regular legislative session that wrapped up May 12. The council's efforts contributed significantly to the positive outcome on a number of these measures.

The worst bills — such as measures that could have eliminated state air quality regulation for the Valdez marine terminal and repealed Alaska's coastal management program — failed to become law.

The few bills of concern that passed this year were changed or watered down so as not to present significant problems for the council.

The weak Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation budget will be a problem for enforcement and coordination. We do not expect any significant developments over the interim, as the Legislature will be busy with reelection efforts.

The following bills passed the

Legislature and have been or are likely to be signed by Gov. Tony Knowles:

- HB 51 (Water Quality/Safe Drinking Water). Near the end of the session the troublesome provisions of the original bill, which would have weakened the state's water quality standards, were deleted and replaced by provisions the Governor wanted to comply with the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

- HB 264 (negotiated regulation making). This bill, which permits departments to use committees of stakeholders to draft regulation changes, still has some problems, but the worst of the provisions were changed at the urging of the citizens' council. The end result is probably better than the current situation, in which regulation negotiation committees are used with no statutory constraints.

The following bills passed one or both houses of the Legislature, but didn't become law for various reasons:

- SB 299 (air quality

exemptions). This bill passed the Legislature but was vetoed by Knowles, and his veto was not overridden. This was probably the worst bill of the session from the citizens' council's standpoint. It would have exempted from air quality regulations "mobile engines"

and associated sources of emissions, and was so broadly drafted that it could have exempted vessels, electrical generators, and even the marine terminal at Valdez. EPA had promised a federal takeover of air quality regulations if it

See *Legislative*, page 6

Citizens' council produces anniversary display for Seward and Anchorage

"Prevention and Response" is the theme of a citizens' council display appearing at the Seward SeaLife Center, which opened May 2.

The display is part of a larger exhibit, called "Legacy of an Oil Spill — 10 Years After the Exxon Valdez," being mounted by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council.

In early 1999, the exhibit will move to Anchorage for the Trustee Council's symposium on the 10th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez spill. The event is scheduled for March 23-27 at the Egan Civic and Convention Center.

The display by the Prince Will-

iam Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council discusses improvements to oil spill prevention and response capabilities since 1989, concluding with the cautionary note that continued vigilance is required to prevent a relapse into the complacency that made the Exxon Valdez spill possible.

In addition, the exhibit features photographs of tankers passing through Prince William Sound, a fishing boat deploying protective boom during a drill at the Wally Noerenberg Hatchery on Esther Island, and a computerized navigation chart on a tanker escort vessel.

Prevention & response

Risk assessment review finds pros, cons

The National Research Council found some good things to say when it reviewed an 18-month study of the risk of crude oil spills in Prince William Sound, but overall was quite critical of the \$2 million project.

The Prince William Sound Risk Assessment, released in December 1996, was a joint effort of the citizens' council, U.S. Coast Guard, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. and shippers of North Slope crude.

The research council's review, released in April 1998, identified several strengths in the risk assessment, such as the use of probabilistic methods to model risks, thorough data gathering, the attempt to involve outside experts, and the involvement of various stakeholders in the process.

But the research council criticized the risk assessment for its lack of an overarching framework for the analysis, the lack of a clear description of how work was done and results were reached, the fact that data used in the analysis was proprietary and not available for review, the treatment of human and organizational error, and the

appearance that conclusions were precise and logical when they were not.

The risk assessment was "an ambitious effort" and "an important step forward," the research council's Marine Board wrote in its executive summary of the review. But the methodological limitations meant the risk assessment was "less an independent analysis of risk than a mutually agreed upon description of issues and recommendations for mitigating risk," the Marine Board concluded.

The risk assessment has led to several operational changes in Prince William Sound, primarily the introduction of more and stronger tugs to escort laden oil tankers.

"The real importance of the risk assessment was the process and the results," said Stan Stephens, president of the citizens' council. "The relationship among the council, the shippers, and government agencies was greatly improved, and many steps have been taken to make the transportation of oil through Prince William Sound safer."

Council helps Kodiak with spill plan

Thanks in part to support from the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, a detailed plan for responding to oil spills in the Kodiak area will take effect this summer.

The Kodiak Subarea Contingency Plan includes several provisions not found in other Alaska subarea plans. For example, it specifies response strategies for environmentally sensitive areas, says how to coordinate cleanup volunteers, and catalogs cities, communities, canneries and logging camps on Kodiak that might be used as command posts or staging areas in the event of a spill.

And the plan provides for a local seat — to be filled by the Kodiak Island Borough — on the Unified Command, which manages the response to a spill. The command normally seats only the oil spiller, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

The plan is the result of a year-long workgroup process led by a citizens' council contractor, in coordination with the Kodiak Island Borough. Local citizens also participated, as did officials of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Coast Guard, the two agencies in charge of the plan.

Citizens' council reviews pipeline plan

The citizens' council has hired contractors to review contingency plans for oil spills from the trans-Alaska pipeline into the Lowe and Copper river drainages. Comments are expected to be completed soon and submitted to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

The council estimates some 170 miles of pipeline lie in the Lowe and Copper drainages. A spill into either of the rivers could reach Prince William Sound.

Grant money is being used because Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. — source of most of the council's budget — objected to use of the funds it provides under contract to the council on work not directly related to the Valdez marine terminal and tankers. While the council has not agreed with Alyeska's interpretation of the contract, the council sought grants because the deadline of June 23 for commenting on the pipeline plan did not allow time to settle the question.

Alyeska's tanker vapor control in full operation

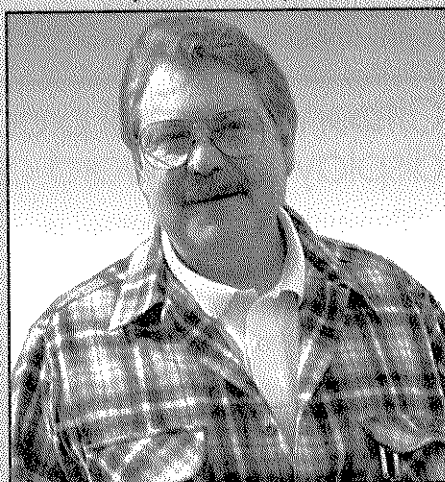
By Rex Brown
Terminal Advisor

Alyeska Pipeline's Marine Terminal Tanker Vapor Control System on Berths 4 and 5 went officially into full operation on March 19, 1998. Bob Malone, Alyeska President and CEO, along with Bill Newbold, Valdez Business Unit Senior Vice President, and Al Ewing, Deputy Commissioner for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, were in Valdez the week before the official start date to recognize the efforts that made this project a reality. The \$100 million system is designed to capture vapors during tanker loading.

Malone thanked the employees and contractors for a job well done. "The safety on this project is the best we have ever seen. Thank you for a tremendous job," Malone said. He also acknowledged those partners, such as the citizens of Valdez, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, the

Environmental Protection Agency, the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, and the United States Coast Guard, for

Alyeska Report



Rex Brown

joining Alyeska in making tanker vapor recovery a reality.

Recent allegations regarding the safety of the system have been raised, and Alyeska has investigated the concerns. Based on these reviews and the Coast Guard certification process, we believe the system is safe to operate. (See related article.)

Demonstrating its safety and reliability over the past few months, the system has performed vapor collection on over 125 vessel loadings across the two controlled berths. While Alyeska is currently averaging well below the legal limit permitted for uncontrolled loading, the close monitoring of system performance continues in support of assessing the need for additional controls on a third berth.

In other news the Smithsonian Institution of American History in Washington D.C. paid tribute to Alyeska with their exhibit "Oil from the Arctic, Building the Trans-Alaska Pipeline." During the opening reception on October 22, 1997 more than 500 guests were on hand for the unveiling of the display which featured a 21 foot piece of pipe along with other memorabilia and artifacts from construction days. The exhibit now returns to Alaska and will be placed in a permanent home at the Anchorage Museum in the fall.

This spring Alyeska was the proud

recipient of the Governor's Safety Award. During the March 1998 Governor's Safety Conference in Anchorage, Alyeska was recognized for safe work practices. In addition to safety, Alyeska continues to strive toward excellence in environmental protection practices. During 1997, more than 462,138,700 barrels of oil were loaded on 605 tankers with less than 5 gallons spilled. Thanks to the Oil Spill Prevention Crews, which celebrated seven years with no lost time accidents on December 5, 1997, the spilled oil was contained and quickly recovered.

Alyeska continues its journey on the path to operational excellence in all areas and to seek opportunities for collaboration with stakeholders such as the citizens' council, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, the United States Coast Guard, the Environmental Protection Agency and the citizens of the State of Alaska.

Council

Stan Stephens to head Citizens' Advisory Council

Valdez resident Stan Stephens was elected president of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council at the March annual meeting in Anchorage. He will serve as president until next year's annual meeting.

Stephens is president and operator of Valdez-based Stan Stephens Cruises. He has been involved with the citizens' council since 1990 and now is the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association's representative to the group. He was council president from 1993-1995.

Stephens said the council will delegate authority and responsibility to Executive Director John Devens and his staff.

"We'll do a little bit of oversight but, basically, we're giving John Devens his head," Stephens said.

"There's probably no individual who better exemplifies the core values of the council than Stan," Devens said. "I look forward to working with him to make oil transportation safer and to promote worldwide the cause of involving citizens in decisions that affect their social and natural environments."

Stephens' predecessor in the president's post is Tex Edwards, who represented the City of Homer on the council. Edwards has since resigned as Homer's representative, but will serve as a volunteer member of the council's Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems Committee.

The council also elected the rest of its executive committee at the Anchorage meeting:

- Vice president: Bill Lindow, representing the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp.;
- Treasurer: Bill Walker, representing the City of Valdez;
- Secretary: Marilyn Heddell, representing the City of Whittier;
- At-large: Wayne Coleman, representing the Kodiak Island Borough, and Blake Johnson, representing the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

And the council re-seated several directors whose two-year terms were expiring:

- Coleman, Heddell and Walker
- Charles Christiansen, representing the Kodiak Village Mayors Association
- Tom Jensen, representing the

Alaska State Chamber of Commerce

- Margy Johnson, representing the City of Cordova
- Michelle Hahn O'Leary, representing Cordova District Fishermen United.

Cordovan Kelley Weaverling, representing the Oil Spill Regional Environmental Coalition, was also re-seated at the March meeting, but resigned soon after. At the May meeting in Valdez, the board seated Tom Copeland, also of Cordova, as Weaverling's replacement.

Weaverling, owner of Orca Books and Sound Co. in Cordova, joined the board in 1994.

"Four years is a long time to be a volunteer," Weaverling said. "I'm kind of looking forward to playing in my garden, looking at birds and dealing with my little bookstore."

His days as a council volunteer aren't entirely over, however. He will continue as a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

"You can't keep a dog away from the hydrant, I guess," Weaverling said.

The council's next meeting is September 14-15 in Seward.

Council rejects move proposal

The citizens' council board at its May meeting turned down a proposal to move Executive Director John Devens and five staffers to Valdez.

Meeting in Valdez, the council voted 10-7 against the proposal put forward by council member Bill Walker, who represents the city of Valdez.

If approved, the plan would have left five staffers in Anchorage and 11 in Valdez. Present staffing is five in Valdez and 11 in Anchorage.

The margin of three votes is the same as in 1995, when the council rejected a move proposal. In 1992, a move proposal failed by a tie vote.

Spill gear listed online

Did you know nearly 1,000 miles of containment boom are stockpiled in the United States? That's just one statistic in "U.S. Oil Spill Response Equipment at a Glance," a Coast Guard report on the Internet. The information can be downloaded at www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/nmc/genpub.htm.

Citizen oversight more critical than ever as bottom lines tighten

By Stan Stephens
Council President

The relationship between Alyeska Pipeline Service Company and the citizens' council has been very good as far as openness and attempts to improve communications. It has not been without problems on both sides, but real attempts at open, honest communication have been made.

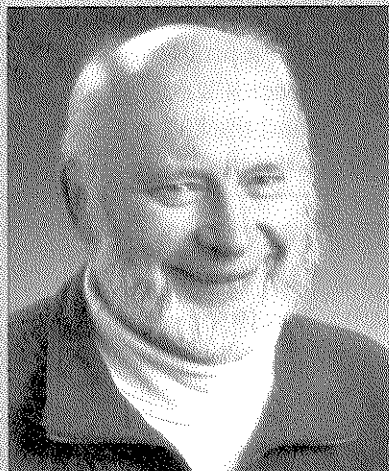
This doesn't mean there isn't still a ways to go on both sides as this experiment in citizen oversight continues.

Now more than ever citizen oversight is the only oversight of the delivery system that is totally free of political influence. We are very lucky to have a Joint Pipeline Office, with state and federal regulators jointly overseeing Alyeska. They are hard-working individuals trying to do a difficult job. There's no way, no matter how dedicated the people from these agencies are, that they can be free of influence from elected

and administrative officials in state and federal government.

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation must work not only under a continuous increase in political pressure but also under the threat of reduced funds.

President's Report



Stan Stephens

Citizen oversight becomes more and more important as bottom lines get tighter and political pressure from industry on state and federal legislators increases. We are only advisors to industry

but we can be strong by being right and factual.

There are a lot of items being fine-tuned by industry which we are keeping an eye on.

One is the Sentinel System and how it is going to look in the future.

The Protector type tugs are finally going to be put into service in Prince William Sound.

More testing has to be done with the Gulf Service to determine if it can meet the rescue tug requirements.

As Alyeska strengthens the prevention part of oil transportation on the water, they are also redefining the role of response.

We still feel we need a vapor recovery system on Berth 3 at the Alyeska Marine Terminal, so we can adequately cover the future needs of the delivery system. Alyeska should be congratulated on their excellent record so far in the use of Berths 4 and 5. I am personally impressed by how they

have been able to make this schedule work. The terminal personnel and the shippers have proved to date that they can make this system comply with regulations.

We will now be looking at the Lowe and Copper rivers drainage areas using separate grant funds, but still moving slowly so that we are working with Alyeska concerns.

Many other issues are still on our plate, like the caged mussel study, non-indigenous species program, human factors, social issues, and others. The staff and board of the council are very busy trying to look out for citizens by working with industry. Citizen concerns will always come first.

Regional Citizens' Advisory Councils do not worry about bottom lines or political influence. We are independent, working under a protocol and contract with Alyeska. Independence and freedom from influence are most important to our success.

Air

Alyeska, regulators, will wait and see on third-berth vapor controls

With the March 19 startup of vapor controls on two tanker loading berths at Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.'s Valdez terminal, one remaining question is whether controls will be needed on a third berth to keep the company in compliance with federal regulations.

A study conducted for the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council suggests that ever-increasing estimates of future North Slope production could mean the two-berth system will be unable to cope with all the oil coming down the pipeline from Prudhoe Bay as early as next year.

As a result, the citizens' council over the past year has repeatedly called for controls on a third berth. Alyeska and its air-quality regulators — the federal Environmental Protection Agency and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation — have said only that they are studying the matter and intend to keep vapor emissions within federal limits.

The two-berth system was designed and built under federal regulations adopted in 1995. Those regulations require Alyeska to capture most — but not all — vapors forced out as North Slope crude is pumped into the cargo holds of oil tankers at the Valdez terminal.

Alyeska pumps the vapors into oil storage tanks at the terminal, uses them to generate power, or

incinerates them.

Alyeska is allowed to load some oil without vapor controls, with the permissible amount declining each year. This year, for example, Alyeska can legally load an average of 275,000 barrels a day — about one-fifth of total pipeline flow — without using vapor controls. By 2001, uncontrolled loading is to average no more than 39,000 barrels a day.

The controls are needed because some components of hydrocarbon vapors — such as benzene — can make people sick.

Technical analyses by Alyeska to support the 1995 regulations concluded a two-berth system could handle the anticipated future load. At the time, the state of Alaska was projecting North Slope production would fall to 1.1 million barrels a day by 2001.

Since then, however, oil-industry efforts on the North Slope — such as ARCO Alaska Inc.'s "No Decline after '99" campaign — have led to swelling estimates of future production. The state's fall 1997 estimate called for 1.3 million barrels a day in 2001. That's 200,000 barrels a day more than was projected in the 1994 forecast.

These rising production estimates make it "unlikely that Alyeska will be able to comply with the uncontrolled throughput limits . . . in the years 1999 through 2004," according to the

1997 study that Calif.-based Sierra Research conducted for the citizens' council.

The consultants estimated that, with vapor controls at only two berths, Alyeska would average 240,000 barrels a day of uncontrolled loading in the year 2001. That's more than six times the 39,000 barrel-a-day limit for that year.

The citizens' council first called for more vapor controls in May of last year, when the board voted unanimously to recommend that Alyeska expand the system to a third berth "without delay."

Bill Newbold, Alyeska senior vice president, wrote the council in August that Alyeska was studying the question and would expand the system "if our analysis concludes that an additional controlled berth is required." Newbold said the company intended to complete the analysis by last October 1.

Alyeska now hopes to have the analysis done by mid-summer, Newbold said as this article was being prepared.

Early this year, the citizens' council sent letters about its vapor-control concerns to the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

Because of the long lead time required to build another vapor-control system, the work

shouldn't wait, then-council president Tex Edwards argued to regulators.

"If Alyeska does not begin the process for installing controls on the third berth until the allowances are exceeded, significant uncontrolled emissions will occur during the two peak years of the five-year forecast," Edwards wrote EPA in January.

"With all sources of information showing a trend of increased production . . . RCAC is alarmed that Alyeska has not initiated installation of additional vapor controls on behalf of the health of this region's citizens," Edwards wrote Commissioner of Environmental Conservation Michele Brown in February.

EPA wrote back to say that air-quality regulation was mainly up to Brown's department, but that EPA was studying the issue and intended "to ensure full compliance with the . . . regulations."

Brown wrote in late March that she, too, was committed to "strict enforcement" of the regulations, that Alyeska appeared to be in compliance and that the company had committed itself to staying in compliance.

"We believe the . . . rule should be given a chance to work and that Alyeska be given a chance to demonstrate compliance with the agreement before any considerations of any additional controls," Brown wrote.

Vapor - continued from page 1
guys in a room for a few days and hope that, by the end of that time, they can characterize the risk of a catastrophic accident, which means a fire or explosion on board a tanker."

The allegations first surfaced in late April, when Jim Sykes, Oilwatch executive director, wrote Robert Armstrong, assistant secretary of the U.S. Interior Department, to express "serious concerns" about the vapor recovery system and request an independent investigation.

Sykes' April 27 letter said Oilwatch had received "disturbing reports" of internal fires in the vapor control system, inferior oxygen sensors used to detect explosive conditions, malfunctions in the guillotine valves used to seal off the system in emergencies, and design changes made without the required level of

review.

Sykes didn't identify the source of his information, though he later told the Anchorage Daily News it came from confidential sources inside Alyeska.

On May 11, long-time Alyeska critic Chuck Hamel weighed in, writing Armstrong warning of electrical and other problems in the system. Like Sykes, Hamel was vague about where the information came from, citing only "concerned sources."

On May 22, Armstrong turned down the request for an investigation, saying he was confident state and federal oversight was sufficient "to ensure the health and safety of Alyeska workers and the citizens of Valdez."

Sykes told the Observer he still believes a government investigation is needed, but "wouldn't be the one to sit in judgment" on whether the vapor control system

should be shut down until an investigation is done.

"Our bottom line is, we want to make sure this system is safe," Sykes said. "If everybody thinks it's safe and it's not, it may be even more of a problem than if people suspect it's not safe."

Alyeska and the Coast Guard both reviewed their work on the

system after the safety allegations surfaced and concluded it is sound, according to representatives of the organizations.

"We feel the system is safe," said Lieutenant Commander Steve Hudson, executive officer at the Coast Guard's Marine Safety Office in Valdez. "Otherwise, we would rescind our certification."

Legislative wrapup, continued from page 3

became law. The legislative majority barely slowed it down long enough to look at it, heard all the criticism, and passed it anyway.

• HB 28 (ACMP). The bill to repeal or drastically alter the Alaska Coastal Management Program had strong support as well as strong opposition. Eventually the opposition slowed it down enough that it failed to make it to a floor vote in the House and never did reach

the Senate.

The citizens' council procurement bill — SB 320 — did not pass either house. It would have streamlined the process of contracting to perform research for state agencies. It would have applied to the regional citizens' advisory councils for Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet, and to the Oil Spill Recovery Institute in Cordova, but never found enough support for a hearing.

Water

Tankers bring alien species, but invasion risk needs more study

Hundreds of millions of plankton from faraway places are routinely flushed into Prince William Sound as oil tankers discharge ballast water to take on North Slope crude, according to a study by the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center.

The flood of microscopic tourists means Prince William Sound could — like water bodies elsewhere in the world — be invaded by new species that might threaten the Sound's indigenous inhabitants, which include salmon and other commercially valuable fish.

"Prince William Sound is at some risk of invasion by non-indigenous species that arrive in segregated ballast water of oil tankers from domestic ports," said the final report by principal investigators Gregory Ruiz and Anson Hines. The study was commissioned by the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council and conducted in cooperation with oil shipping companies and government agencies.

Non-indigenous species have invaded many other ports around the world, sometimes causing environmental and economic problems in their new homes. Well known examples include the introduction of the zebra mussel, a fresh-water species, in the Great Lakes and the Asian clam in San Francisco Bay.

But the one-year pilot study, which ended in December, didn't examine whether any of the hitchhikers have actually taken up residence in the Sound. That's the subject of a two-year follow-up study that will wrap up in 1999.

"The purpose was to establish what everyone was theorizing," said Joel Kopp, the citizens' council project manager for the study. "We do have an amazing abundance of organisms coming into Prince William Sound."

Sixteen tankers checked

In the pilot study, the Smithsonian researchers sampled ballast water from 16 tankers arriving at the Valdez Marine Terminal between May 22 and June 5, 1997. The late-spring time period was chosen, Kopp said, because that is when plankton are most plentiful along the U.S. West Coast, where most of the tankers in the study took on ballast water.

Tankers load ballast water to add weight when they're not carrying oil. Otherwise, they would ride too high in the water for safe operation.

Segregated ballast water is clean sea water carried in tanks reserved for that purpose. Other ballast water is carried in oil tanks, and is treated by a system at the Valdez terminal before being discharged into the Sound.

The Smithsonian researchers found that the average tanker flushed about 244 million plankton into Port Valdez each time it emptied its segregated ballast tanks during the May-June survey period.

The researchers concluded the billions of plankton arriving during the study included at least four species new to the Sound. All four were tiny crustaceans called copepods.

But determining if even more new species showed up was difficult, for several reasons. For one, the information on what species already live in the Sound is scanty, so it's hard to be sure a previously unrecorded species is new.

For another, many of the plankton were larvae that couldn't be identified before they matured. The pilot study didn't include incubating larvae to maturity.

Non-segregated ballast — water carried in oil tanks — contained very little life as it came off the ship, only one organism in each 38 gallons of ballast.

The most troublesome alien-species invasions elsewhere have involved not plankton-sized creatures, but animals big enough to see with the naked eye, such as the zebra mussel plaguing the Great Lakes.

But Kopp says many of these larger creatures are sufficiently tiny in the larval stage to arrive in ballast water as plankton.

Fourteen of the 16 tankers in the study came to Valdez from domestic ports, such as Long Beach, San Francisco Bay and Puget Sound. Of the other two, one was from Hawaii and one was from Korea.

At-sea ballast exchange may reduce invasion risk

The study also examined one proposed method of reducing the import of alien species to places

like Prince William Sound: having tankers flush and refill their segregated ballast tanks at sea.

In theory, that could bring two benefits.

First, mid-ocean water contains fewer plankton than the nutrient-rich water near shore, so a ship discharging mid-ocean ballast at Valdez shouldn't bring as many organisms as if it were flushing ballast collected from a West Coast harbor like San Francisco Bay, where many tankers start the return trip to Valdez.

Second, the near-shore environment is so different from the mid-ocean environment that mid-ocean species aren't likely to colonize coastal waters such as Prince William Sound, even if introduced in considerable numbers.

Three vessels had exchanged some or all of their ballast water en route as part of the study. The researchers found this reduced the count of coastal organisms by up to 90 percent.

"This management strategy," the study authors wrote, "may be effective at reducing the transfer of non-indigenous species by this class of vessels."

As expected, exchanging ballast also increased the count of mid-ocean organisms, in some cases by a factor of 100.

Besides testing ballast tanks, the pilot study also reviewed and analyzed existing knowledge of non-indigenous species invading Prince William Sound.

Follow-up study to go farther

The follow-up study takes up where the pilot study left off, with plans to sample ballast water from 75 more tankers by mid-1999.

It also goes into areas the pilot study didn't, particularly the question of how receptive the Prince William Sound environment is to the newcomers. Researchers will use water from the Sound to incubate larvae from the ballast to see what species can survive and grow.

And they will check selected areas of Prince William Sound to see what non-indigenous species have set up permanent housekeeping.

They will also seek a better picture of which species are native to the Sound by testing earlier samples from the Sound stored at

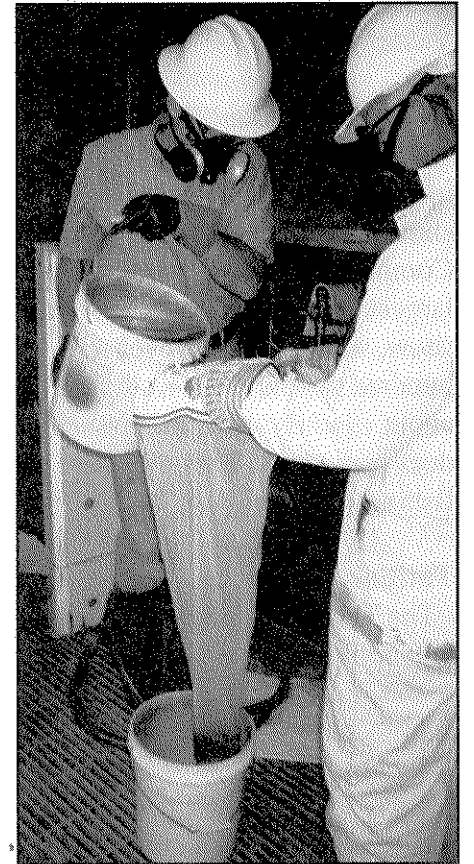


Photo: Joel Kopp

Consultants John Chapman (left) and Tuck Hines (right) check for plankton in oily ballast water at the Alyeska terminal.

the University of Alaska museum in Fairbanks.

The pilot study, which cost about \$60,000, was conducted by the Smithsonian center under contract to the citizens' council, with financial support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Coast Guard.

The study also had help from Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. and the owners of the tankers in the Valdez trade, according to Gary Sonnevil, project manager for the Fish and Wildlife Service. The owners allowed the researchers aboard for samples and in the case of Exxon's SeaRiver Maritime, Inc. voluntarily conducted ballast-water exchanges at sea.

"We had just tremendous cooperation from all the shippers," Sonnevil said.

The follow-up study, budgeted at about \$600,000, is also being conducted by the Smithsonian center. Most of that money will come from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Sea Grant College and the citizens' council. Several organizations, including Alyeska, are providing in-kind support.

Cover: Consultant Gregory Ruiz samples plankton from the ARCO Spirit to study whether alien marine species are reaching Prince William Sound.

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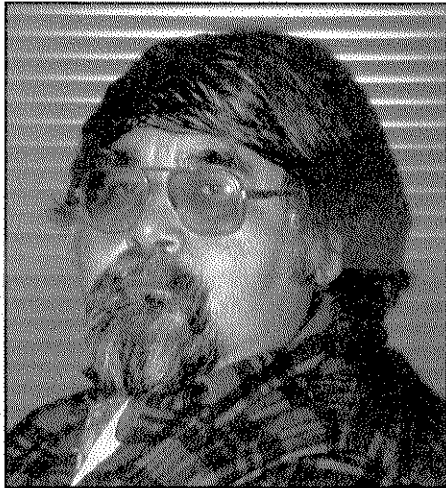
Valdez spill.

ComFish Alaska '98, Kodiak

We took our information booth to the ComFish Alaska '98 trade show in Kodiak March 27-29. Commercial fishing is one of our largest constituent groups. At the show, we talked with over a hundred people from Kodiak about what the citizens' council does and why it is important to fishing.

Tatitlek

The Tatitlek Village IRA Council appointed a new representative to the RCAC Board of Directors. John Allen was seated on the Board on December 3, 1997. John is a former President of the Tatitlek Corporation and has fished and operated a tender in



John Allen

Prince William Sound and related waters.

His task on the Board of Directors is to represent the Native Village of Tatitlek on a wide range of issues related to the safe transportation of Trans-Alaska Pipeline System oil, including oil spill response and prevention, scientific studies in Prince William Sound, Lower Cook Inlet and Kodiak Island, and mental health impacts from oil spills.

Executive Director John Devens and I made a trip to Tatitlek in May during the community's

fourth annual Cultural Heritage Week. Students from Tatitlek, Whittier, Valdez, Chenega, Port Graham, and Cordova spent a week in the village learning wood carving, skin sewing, dancing and other traditional skills.

Homer

On March 14, we took our information booth to the 1998 SeaFair Trade Show — the marine trades and services exposition for Homer. This trade show allowed us to talk with about 75 people in Homer about what the citizens' council does and why it is important to the Homer community.

Seward

Executive Director John Devens and I traveled to Seward on April 21 to discuss the work of the citizens' council with Bob Satin, Mayor of Seward and Kim Sundberg, Executive Director of the Seward SeaLife Center. We toured the Seward SeaLife Center and the Institute of Marine Science and spent some time with our volunteer board and committee members who live in Seward.

Kenai Peninsula

On April 24, we took our information booth to the 1998 Kenai Peninsula Sports Recreation & Trade Show in Soldotna. We talked with 170 people about the work of the citizens' council. In addition, we added 20 new names to our newsletter mailing list.

Other Information

If you know of an organization or audience interested in a presentation about the citizens' council or if you can provide feedback from your community, please let Community Corner know. You can contact me by phone at (907) 277-7222 or (800) 478-7221, or email at ferry@pobox.alaska.net.

Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

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

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

Copies of most documents are available to the public free of charge. A handling fee will be charged for large documents and requests of more than 10 documents. Call 800-478-7221 to order.

Drill Monitoring 1997 Annual Report. C/605.98.1

Final Report: Long Term Environmental Monitoring Data Analysis of Hydrocarbons in Intertidal Mussels and Marine Sediments.

C/611.98.1

1996-97 Annual Long Term Environmental Monitoring Report.

C/608.97.1

Ballast Water Treatment Facility January 1997 spill incident data report.

C/608.97.1

Final Report: Community based Nearshore Strike Teams. C/612.97.1C