



PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

REGIONAL CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

September 2024
 Status Report
 As of August 8, 2024

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill – 35th Anniversary

Project Manager Amanda Johnson, Outreach Coordinator Maia Draper-Reich, and Director of Communications Brooke Taylor coordinated efforts (online, in print, and in-person) to honor the 35th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. No official project was funded; however, staff used the opportunity to showcase the Council's mission in a variety of ways. A summary of these activities was shared at a recent IEC meeting, and is available online here: <https://tinyurl.com/EVOSupdate35th>. Note that list was current as of late February. Please contact Amanda Johnson for a final list.

3100 – Public Information Program

Objectives: Inform members of the general public, member entities, and agency and industry partners of PWSRCAC projects. Support legal requirements for ongoing updates to the public.

Accomplishments since last report: Staff continues to inform the general public and others about PWSRCAC's projects and mission through publications and online presence.

3110 – Oral History

Objectives: To update the PWSRCAC logo and other small corrections in The Spill book and place an order of 1,000 print copies for outreach uses.

Accomplishments since last report: An order of 1,000 copies of The Spill book was received in May 2024. The book was produced under this project in 2008/2009. The order includes small updates to the book including our new logo. We are also in the process of creating an eBook version created.

We consistently provide these books to partners, educators, and the public at no cost and prior to this order had less than ~150 copies left from our previous order in 2016. This order was completed and paid for as expected before the end of FY2024.

3200 – The Observer

The Observer: The Council's newsletter, "The Observer," is produced three times per year in both print and email format. Individual articles are posted to the Council's website. The article archive is available here: www.tinyurl.com/ObserverArchive.

The March special edition highlighted the changes in the spill prevention and response system in Prince William Sound since 1989, including improvements and remaining concerns: <https://tinyurl.com/EVOS-35YearsLater>

Summer 2024 edition: <https://www.pwsrcac.org/document/the-observer-summer-2024/>

Full Observer archive: www.tinyurl.com/ObserverArchive

3300 – Annual Report

Objectives: Prepare and publish PWSRCAC’s Annual Report each year to:

1. Inform the general public, member entities, and agency and industry partners of PWSRCAC projects and activities; and
2. Support legal requirements for ongoing updates to the public.

Accomplishments since last report: A new contract with the annual report graphic designer is in place. Initial coordination with the graphic designer and drafting of content with Council staff for the 2023-2024 annual report has begun.

3410 – Fishing Vessel Program Community Outreach

Objectives: For bringing the realities of oil spill response tactics, equipment, and planning to life for citizens within the Exxon Valdez oil spill region communities, the fishing vessel community outreach program is a perfect venue. Each fall and spring SERVS holds its contracted fishing vessel program training in the following communities: Cordova, Valdez, Whittier, Seward, Homer, and Kodiak. The on-water portion of the training, viewed by the public during this outreach tour in partnership with Alyeska/SERVS, shows real-time capabilities of oil spill prevention and response equipment and tactics. This project contracts a local tour boat that will allow interested students, members of the public, and media to observe and learn about oil spill prevention and response.

Accomplishments since last report: Planning is underway to host the FY2025 educational tour in Whittier on Monday, September 30th in alignment with the fall SERVS fishing vessel program training dates.

Additionally, during FY2025, staff and IEC will work to develop an alternative format for this outreach in Kodiak as there is not an appropriate passenger vessel option to host the tour in the typical way in that community.

3500 – Community Outreach Program

Objectives: Increase awareness of PWSRCAC and increase communications with member organizations and communities in the Exxon Valdez oil spill region.

Accomplishments since last report:

- **April 30** – Youth Involvement PWS College 2nd Annual Environmental Sciences Symposium, Valdez, AK
 - PWS College students shared about their independent research projects in a poster session including short talks and fielding questions.
- **May 1** – Youth Involvement Bligh Reef Expedition, Valdez, AK
 - High school and college students from Valdez and Glennallen participated in a marine science educational boat tour including oil spill topics.
 - PWSRCAC staff and volunteers, as well as local industry partners, attended and participated by instructing learning stations and co-learning with the students. The project was led by IEC member Kate Morse via contractor Copper River Watershed Project.
- **May 10** – Peksulineq Festival, Tatitlek Cultural Heritage Week, Tatitlek, AK
 - Council staff Sadie Blancaflor and Nelli Vanderburg attended the annual *Peksulineq* festival which celebrates the culture of the Chugach Region with youth and adults

participating from all over Prince William Sound and the state. [Peksulineq](#) (a name which signifies new beginnings) was started in 1993 in order to help teach Native youth traditional cultural practices, including beading, drum making, dancing, woodworking, and more. It culminates in a banquet festival that includes traditional dishes, a dance demonstration, and an auction.

- Crowley Alaska Tankers included us on their chartered Stan Stephens vessel which transports attendees from Valdez.
- **May 13-16** - International Oil Spill Conference (IOSC), New Orleans, LA
 - The Council hosted an exhibitor booth with Cook Inlet RCAC interacting with attendees from around the world and across the U.S.
 - SAC Chair Dr. Davin Holen and staff member Dr. Danielle Verna did a presentation titled "Building Collaborative Social Science Research Models to Understand the Social, Cultural, and Economic Impacts of Spills," which garnered thoughtful questions from audience members about the Council and our social science projects.
 - PWSRCAC attendance at IOSC also included OSPR member Matt Melton, SAC member Dr. Sarah Allan (via her NOAA role), and staff members Roy Robertson, Jeremy Robida, and Maia Draper-Reich.
- **May 13-14** – Prince William Sound Natural History Symposium, Whittier, AK
 - Dr. Morgan Bender presented on behalf of the Council about our Long-Term Environmental Monitoring project and the 30 year data set.
 - Videos of all presentations are available on the [PWSSF website](#).
 - Staff member Jaina Willahan traveled to host the Council's booth.
 - The Council paid a small sponsorship as we have previously and Maia is on the planning committee for this event.
- **May 29** – Valdez Guides Training, Valdez, AK
 - Staff member Jeremy Robida, Nelli Vanderburg, and other Valdez-based staff hosted the Council's annual training event to share with employees in the Valdez tourism industry about the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the Council, the VMT, the tanker ships, and local response assets.
- **June 3 or 4** – Alaska Geographic Kenai Fjords National Park Teacher Course Orientation, Seward, AK
 - Staff member Maia Draper-Reich presented online on EVOS, PWSRCAC, and our resources for teachers, as well as gave out copies of The Spill book and other Council publications (sent down ahead of time).
- **June 5** - Alaska Geographic PWS Teacher Course Orientation, Anchorage, AK
 - Maia presented on EVOS, PWSRCAC, and our resources for teachers, as well as gave out copies of The Spill book and other Council publications.
- **June 9** – Copper River Nouveau, Cordova, AK
 - Staff members Donna Schantz, Joe Lally, Brooke Taylor, and Linda Swiss attended the annual gala event on behalf of the Council.
 - While in Cordova, staff connected with former Board member Patience Anderson Faulkner and toured the new PWS Science Center facility.
- **July 17** – Presentation to T3 students at PWS College, Valdez, AK

- Maia presented online about EVOS, the terminal and tankers, and PWSRCAC, then staff member Danielle Vera spoke in person about the Council's science and environmental monitoring projects and conducted marine science field activities with the students in the Valdez harbor.
- **July 19-20** – Salmon Jam, Cordova, AK
 - Maia traveled to host a PWSRCAC booth and facilitate an educational activity for families and youth with help from Board member Robert Beedle, IEC member/Salmon Jam organizer Kate Morse, and Cordova invasive species intern Samaya Faber.

3530 – Youth Involvement

Objectives: Select proposals for youth activities, in collaboration with partner agencies and organizations throughout the Exxon Valdez oil spill region. Coordinate activities to facilitate hands-on learning about topics related to the Council's mission. Where appropriate and feasible, participate in mission-relevant youth activities.

Accomplishments since last report: The Information and Education Committee accepted four proposals on the latest RFP for programs taking place during the 2024/2025 school year. These projects are in the contracting process with work beginning in September and concluding in June 2025. Five projects are underway for the 2024 summer and will conclude by September 30, 2024:

- Alaska Geographic – *Prince William Sound Teacher Course* for \$5,000
- Alaska Geographic – *Blackstone Bay Marine Stewardship Youth Expedition* for \$5,000
- Copper River Watershed Project – *2024 Bligh Reef Expedition* for \$4,999
- Kenai Mountains – Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area - *Expanding Access to Equitable Outdoor Youth Education* for \$2,500
- Wrangell Center for Science and Environment – *Roots to Branches: Copper River Stewardship Program* for \$4,999

3600 – Public Communications Program

Objectives: This program disseminates information and increases awareness through the Observer newsletter and the Council's online presence. This program helps publicize information generated from the Council's technical committee projects. Project results and information are disseminated in a format that is easily understood by the general public.

Accomplishments since last report: Project Manager Amanda Johnson attended two virtual WordPress conferences, [DeCode 2024](#) in March (coordinated by the Council's new website host, WP Engine) and [WordSesh](#). Session topics included best practices for WordPress and related topics.

3610 – Web Best Available Technology

Objectives: This project helps ensure the Council's websites and web presence using the best and most up-to-date technology available by funding new features, repairs, and upgrades to the Council's websites. This includes regular maintenance and technical upgrades as well as upgrades to such aspects as user experience and branding.

Website data: Website usage for www.pwsrcac.org is tracked through Google Analytics for information such as numbers of visitors, location of visitors, how visitors found the site, which pages are visited

most often, how much time is spent on particular pages, whether visitors were engaged enough to visit more than one page and much more. Contact project manager Amanda Johnson for access to data reports.

3810 – Illustrated Prevention & Response System Outreach

Objectives: Work with artist and author Tom Crestodina to develop artwork for a book and other materials showcasing the oil spill prevention and response system in Prince William Sound.

1. Educate stakeholders and the general public about the importance of spill prevention and response, why the PWS prevention/response system is one of the best in the world, and how it can be kept that way.
2. Create new work partnerships with industry and regulators, similar to how groups collaborate during the fishing vessel training community outreach tours.

Accomplishments since last report: Crestodina provided draft materials, as far as he was able to develop them, before he departed for the fishing season (as was planned between him and Council staff). While not a complete rough draft, the materials include most of the illustrations and draft text. Staff is now working to have the project team and industry review the draft materials, to provide feedback to Crestodina in the fall, when he returns from fishing.

5000 – Terminal Operations Program

Objectives: The goal of the Terminal Operations and Environmental Monitoring (TOEM) Program is to prevent hazardous liquid spills and minimize the actual and potential environmental impacts associated with the operation and maintenance of the Valdez Marine Terminal.

Accomplishments since last report:

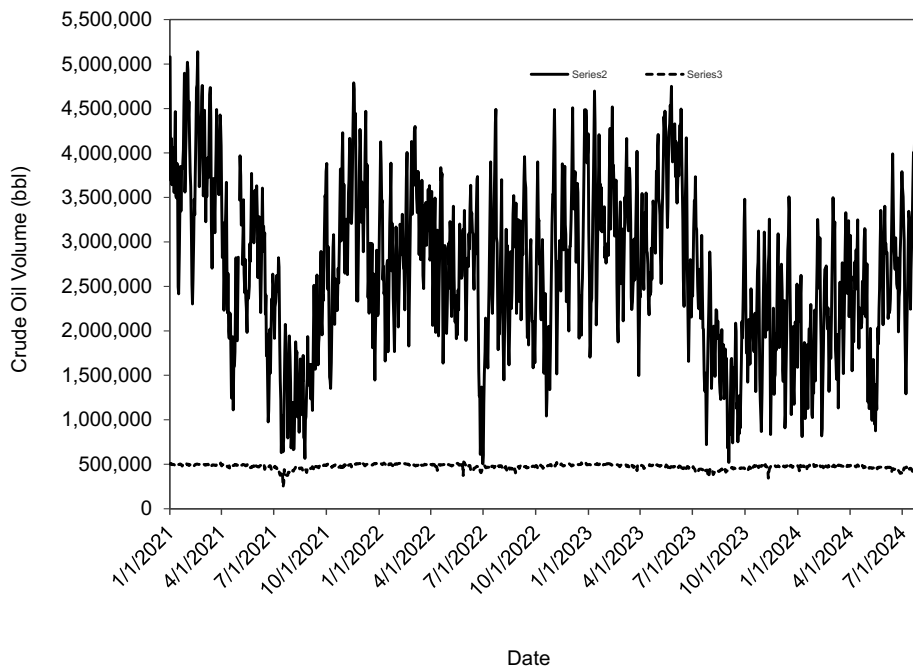
Tank Bottom Processing Fire: On August 30, 2023, Alyeska notified the Council about a fire at the VMT in an active dike cell, which was related to tank bottom processing. Over the past year, PWSRCAC has transmitted three formal letters to obtain additional information on the fire and better understand who has regulatory oversight over this process. The letters were sent to the State Fire Marshal's Office (letter dated May 7, 2023), Alyeska (letter dated February 29, 2024), and the Joint Pipeline Office (July 2024). Limited information was provided by the Fire Marshal's Office. None of the requested documentation has not been provided by Alyeska. A response was received from the Department of Natural Resources on July 11, 2024 that noted the agency has requested information from Alyeska in order to answer the question about who has regulatory oversight over the tank bottom processing process. PWSRCAC staff received an update from DNR reporting that meetings have been held with their agency, BLM, and the State Fire Marshal's Office to answer some of the questions posed in the letter we sent to the JPO in July. DNR reported that both BLM and the Fire Marshal's Office have requested documents from Alyeska that have not been received yet..

Outstanding Alyeska responses to Council Recommendations and Information Requests: The Council is waiting for responses from Alyeska regarding multiple information requests and recommendations related to a number of TOEM projects. The requested information is needed to make progress on current TOEM projects that are being delayed without the information.

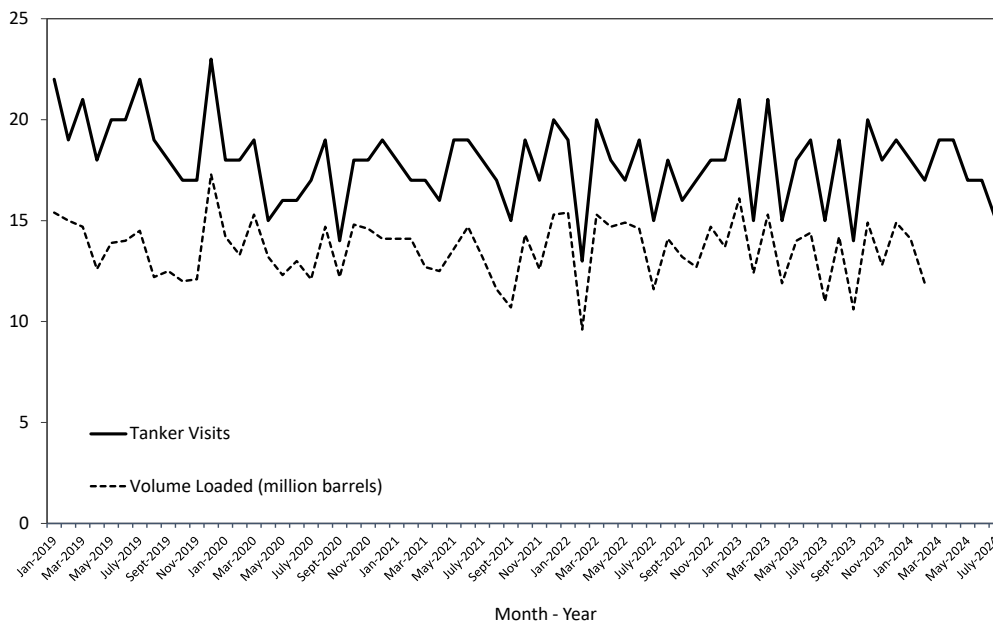
Attachments: Graphs depicting a variety of data related to the operation and environmental impacts of the Valdez Marine Terminal.

Daily Oil Inventory at the Valdez Marine Terminal and Trans-Alaska Pipeline Throughput

(Source: Alaska Department of Revenue - Tax Division, <http://tax.alaska.gov/programs/oil/production.aspx>)

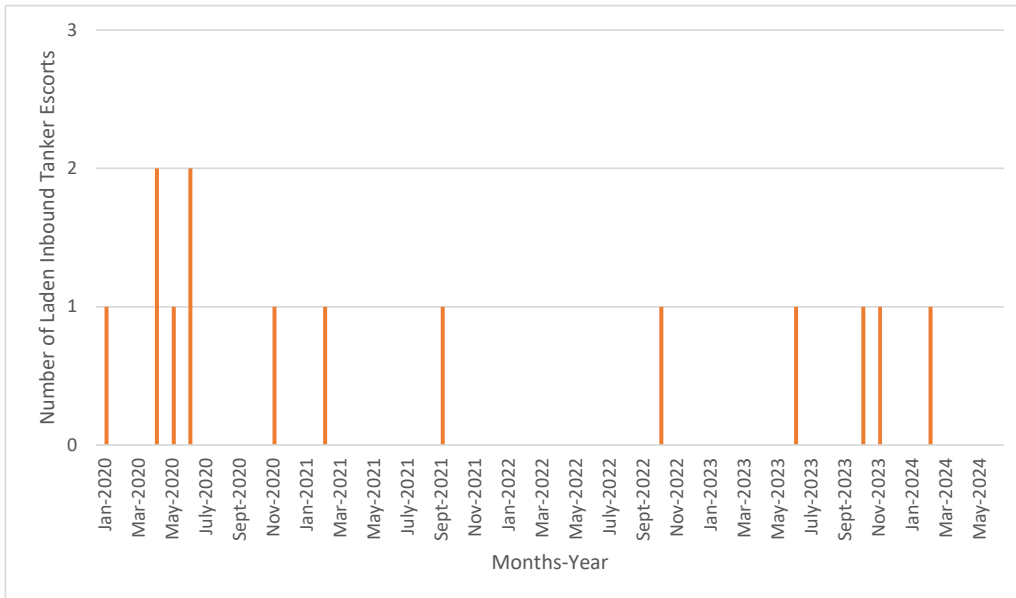


Number of tanker visits and crude oil volume loaded onto ships from VMT
 (Source: Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. Partitioned by VMT vessel arrival date).



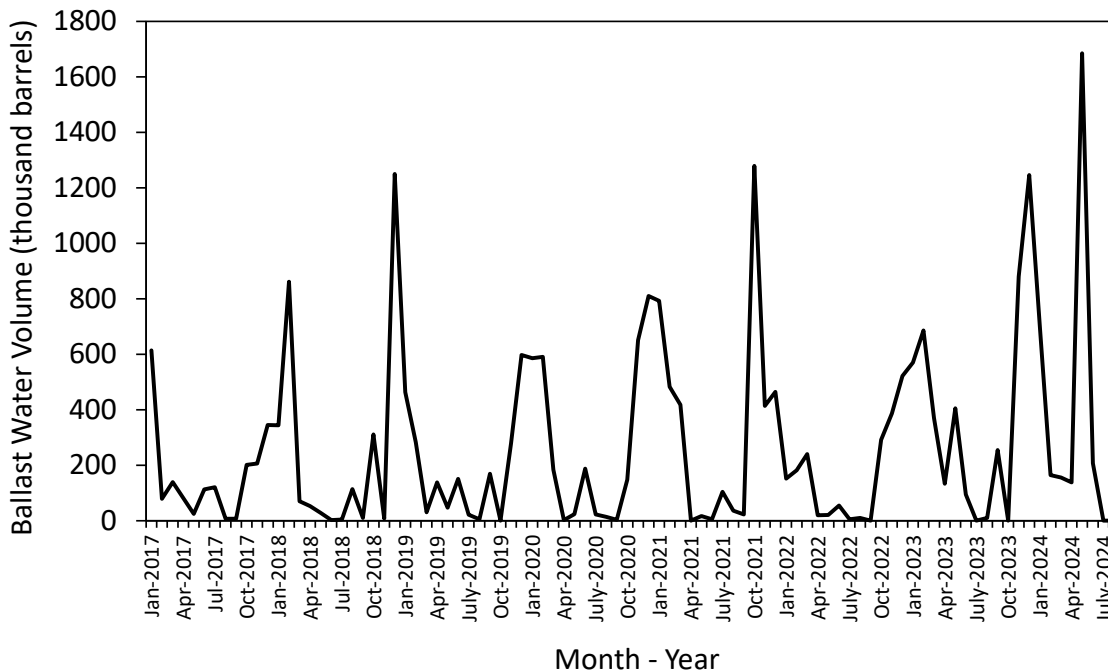
Inbound laden tanker escorts to VMT

(Source: Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. Partitioned by VMT vessel arrival date)



Monthly ballast water deliveries to Ballast Water Treatment Facility from tanker ships

(Source: Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. Partitioned by VMT vessel arrival date.)



5051 – Water Quality Review of VMT

Objectives: This project entails a review of 2018-2023 water quality data. The goal of this project is to ensure the terms of the Valdez Marine Terminal's water quality permit minimize the environmental impact of wastewater effluent discharged from the facility.

Accomplishments since last report: The Valdez Marine Terminal's Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (APDES) Permit was submitted to ADEC on May 31, 2024. Dr. Morgan Bender with Fjord & Fish Sciences has been selected as a contractor to review and provide public comment for the permit, and she is in the process of reviewing the draft permit. PWSRCAC is currently waiting for ADEC's Water Quality Division to publish the APDES permit for the VMT and open the public comment period.

5053 – Addressing Risks and Safety Culture at Alyeska's VMT

Objectives: This project will provide a retainer to Billie Garde to provide support to assist the Council in tracking and implementing recommendations identified in the Council-sponsored report, "Assessment of Risks and Safety Culture at Alyeska's Valdez Marine Terminal."

Accomplishments since last report: The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is working on the review of the federal and state oversight of TAPS and the Valdez Marine Terminal, and staff has been communicating with Billie Garde in preparation for the GAO interview on August 6. The GAO interviewed PWSRCAC Board members, committee volunteers, and current and former staff. Billie is also assisting staff on Process Safety Management information, Alaska Occupational Safety and Health (AKOSH) investigation, human factors in safety management, and developing a protocol on how to handle information received from employees.

5057 – Air Quality Review of VMT

Objectives: This project ensures that Alyeska is mitigating and reducing sources of air pollution at the VMT which may pose adverse environmental and health impacts on residents of Valdez. The goal of this project is to provide actionable, clear, and specific recommendations to advance efforts to reduce sources of air pollution at the VMT.

Accomplishments since last report: PWSRCAC tasked contractor Dr. Ron Sahu to calculate emissions estimates from the tank vent damage incident in February/March 2024, and provided information received from public records requests dated July 27, 2023, and August 31, 2023. Dr. Sahu's work is ongoing.

5081 – Crude Oil Tanks 7 and 2, and Ballast Water Tank 94 Maintenance Review

Objectives: This project would entail performing a technical review of the maintenance of crude oil storage Tank 7 and ballast water storage Tank 94 at the Valdez Marine Terminal. Both Tank 7 and Tank 94 underwent comprehensive internal inspections in 2021. The last time Tank 7 underwent a similar internal inspection was in 2008, and Tank 94's last internal inspection occurred in 2012. The 2021 internal inspections of both tanks will result in a large amount of new information pertaining to the past, current, and future maintenance of each storage tank. Additionally, since their last internal inspections were completed back in 2008 and 2012, Alyeska has gathered and maintained other information, such as cathodic protection system testing records and external inspection results pertinent to the maintenance of Tanks 7 and 94. The new information generated from the 2021 internal inspections and the other, older information must all be considered to continue to safely maintain each

of these tanks. This project is necessary to ensure that Alyeska is using industry best practices and considering all the pertinent information in the decisions they make to safely maintain both tanks, now and in the future.

Accomplishments since last report: On July 10, 2024, the TOEM Committee reviewed draft reports of Tanks 7 & 94 and Tank 2 Out-of-Service Inspections, prepared by Taku Engineering, and recommended the Board accept them as final. The TOEM Committee noted particular concern with the significant inconsistencies in tank corrosion rates between the regulatorily-required API 653 inspection reports and Alyeska's internally prepared engineering reports. The PWSRCAC Executive Committee reviewed the reports on July 18, 2024, and voted to accept them as final and distribute to regulatory agencies and Alyeska.

A contract for Storage Tank Maintenance review of Ballast Water Tank 93 has been drafted and Taku Engineering, LLC will be tasked with reviewing documentation related to the Ballast Water Tank 93 Out-of-Service Inspection Report.

5595 - Review of VMT Cathodic Protection System Testing Protocols

Objectives: This project funds a review of cathodic protection system testing protocols at the Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT). The goal of this project is to ensure cathodic protection data is being collected in a manner consistent with the Association for Materials Protection and Performance (AMPP) protocols to have an accurate assessment of current cathodic protection levels of steel structures at the VMT.

Accomplishments since last report: A Request for Proposals is currently being drafted for this project, and an appropriate contractor will be selected and tasked with reviewing Alyeska's Cathodic Protection System Protocols and implementation.

5591 - Crude Oil Piping Maintenance Review

Objectives: This project involves a technical review of the internal inspections of crude oil piping that occurred at the Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT) from 2016 through 2018, and a follow-on inspection of the buried crude oil relief piping that occurred in 2022. The goal of this project is to ensure that the crude oil piping at the VMT is maintained using industry best practices, such that the risks of a spill are minimized.

Accomplishments since last report: Information for this project was requested from Alyeska in June 2023 but has not been provided. Progress on this project has been delayed until receipt of this information.

5640 - Alaska North Slope Crude Oil Properties

Objectives: This project entails analyzing the physical and chemical properties of Alaska North Slope (ANS) crude oil and interpreting how those properties would impact the effectiveness of oil spill response measures including mechanical recovery, in-situ burning, and dispersants. A crude oil sample will be obtained then sent to a laboratory for physical and chemical analysis. That data will be reviewed by a spill response subject matter expert to interpret how the oil's chemical and physical properties would influence various spill response techniques.

Accomplishments since last report: On April 16, 2024, the Prince William Sound Response Planning Group shipped an ANS crude sample to Dr. Robert Faragher of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to perform an analysis of the current properties of ANS crude oil. ECCC has agreed to perform this testing free of charge to PWSRCAC. Some testing has already taken place, but the completion of testing and resulting report is expected 6 to 9 months from the date that they received the sample.

6000 – Oil Spill Response Program

Objectives: Through this program, PWSRCAC develops positions and recommendations on oil spill response technologies; reviews state and federal contingency plans (c-plans) and plan-related issues; promotes compliance, enforcement, and funding of existing environmental regulations; and promotes the incorporation of local knowledge of sensitive areas into contingency planning.

Accomplishments since the last report:

Alaska Regional Response Team (ARRT): General information on the ARRT can be found [HERE](#), and meeting summaries and presentations can be found [HERE](#). The next ARRT meeting is scheduled for September 12 in Anchorage.

The Regional Stakeholder Committee (RSC) Task Force completed their work on the job aids for members of the RSC and the RSC Liaison Officer.

PWSRCAC has offered to participate in the Cultural Resources Committee of the ARRT. This committee will be working on updates to the “Alaska Implementation Guidelines” for the 1997 National Programmatic Agreement.

Prince William Sound Area Contingency Plan (PWS ACP): The next PWS Area Committee meeting is scheduled for October 8 in Cordova, followed by a meeting of the Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) workgroup on October 9.

6510 – Contingency Plan Review

Objectives: The purpose of this project is to monitor, review, and comment on state and federal contingency plans (c-plans) for the Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT) and the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) tankers that transit Prince William Sound. Reviewing c-plans is a major task for PWSRCAC as outlined in both the PWSRCAC/Alyeska contract and OPA 90.

The Prince William Sound Tanker Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (PWS Tanker C-Plan) and associated vessel response plans for Alaska Tanker Company, Andeavor (subsidiary of Marathon Petroleum), Crowley Alaska Tankers, Hilcorp North Slope, and Polar Tankers, was renewed on January 31, 2022, and will expire in 2027. Alyeska Pipeline Service Company (Alyeska) Valdez Marine Terminal Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (VMT C-Plan) was renewed on November 15, 2019, and will expire in 2024.

Accomplishments since last report:

PWS Tanker C-Plan:

The major amendment submitted in September 2023 on the PWS Tanker C-Plan was approved by ADEC on June 21, 2024. The Basis of Decision document can be viewed [HERE](#). This major amendment covered replacement of the Mineral Creek barge with OSRB-5 that is used for lightering and nearshore response

storage. The amendment also aligns the plan with the contingency plan regulations that were changed in early 2023.

VMT C-Plan:

VMT C-Plan Renewal: The five-year renewal of the VMT C-Plan is currently under public review. The following is the timeline for this review:

Oct 2023	Alyeska submits application for five-year renewal of the VMT C-Plan
Dec 2023	PWSRCAC submits comments and requests for additional information
March 2024	ADEC issues first round of requests for additional information (RFAs)
April 2024	Alyeska responds to ADEC's first round of RFAs
July 2024	ADEC issues second round of RFAs
Aug 2024	Responses to second round of RFAs due
Nov 2024	Expiration of VMT C-Plan

PWSRCAC's comments and suggested requests for additional information on the five-year renewal of the VMT C-Plan submitted on December 15, 2023 are available [HERE](#). ADEC issued 84 RFAs to Alyeska in March 2024, and Alyeska responded in April 2024. ADEC's first round of RFAs and Alyeska's responses are available [HERE](#). Alyeska's redlines that correspond to the responses can be viewed [HERE](#).

Secondary Containment: In satisfaction of ADEC's Condition of Approval 2A dated May 11, 2022 for the VMT C-Plan (see below), Alyeska submitted a letter dated September 25, 2023 and method selected to evaluate the secondary containment liner in the East Tank Farm at the VMT. Alyeska's letter and memo are available [HERE](#).

Alyeska plans to conduct a pilot study in the West Tank Farm using Geoelectric Leak Location (GELL) to evaluate buried portions of the liner. This pilot test is scheduled for the week of July 23, 2024. Dr. Joe Scalia, a subcontractor to Dr. Craig Benson, will be attending the pilot test along with PWSRCAC staff and regulators.

6512 - Maintaining the Secondary Containment Systems at the VMT

Objectives: This project entails promoting methods Alyeska could use to verify the integrity of the secondary containment systems at the Valdez Marine Terminal's (VMT) East Tank Farm, otherwise known as the catalytically blown asphalt (CBA) liner. The goal of this project is to ensure that the buried CBA liner at the VMT will hold spilled oil long enough to be cleaned up prior to ground or surface water contamination.

Accomplishments since last report: Council contractor Dr. Joe Scalia visited the Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT) from July 22 – 26, 2024 to observe Alyeska Contractor WSP's pilot testing of the secondary containment liner in West Tank Farm. Two methods were utilized: electrical leak location (ELL) and electrical resistivity tomography (ERT). WSP is in the process of writing a report on their findings and the viability of ELL/ERT for testing of the secondary containment liner in the East Tank Farm, which will be reviewed by Dr. Scalia when made available.

6530 - Weather Data / Sea Currents Project

Objectives: This project studies wind, water current, and other environmental factors near the Valdez Marine Terminal, in Prince William Sound, and in the Gulf of Alaska. Weather conditions affect the safe

navigation of vessels and aids the ability to prevent, respond to, contain, and clean up an oil spill. Accurate weather data for the region supports research and decision making in areas like oil spill response, traffic management, vessel performance specification, and contingency planning.

Accomplishments since last report: The weather station at Cape St Elias is showing its age. Replacement components have been ordered and are on-site in Cordova. A purchase order has been issued for the PWSSC to assemble the weather station. The Council's two weather stations at Cape St Elias and Nuchek are operating normally and the camera at Nuchek is working correctly.

The weather station at Kokinhenik Bar on the Copper River Delta has been installed. There will be a site visit to the station sometime this year to tighten anchor bolts, readjust guy wires and troubleshoot the power system.

6531 – Port Valdez Weather Buoys

Objectives: This project originally assembled and deployed, and continues to maintain, two buoys which measure ocean currents and common weather parameters in Port Valdez. The first buoy is installed near Jackson Point [61.0910°N 146.3811°W] in the vicinity of the Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT). The second buoy is installed at the Valdez Duck Flats [61.1201°N | 146.2914°W]. The Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) partners with the Council to facilitate this project.

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 requires the Council to study wind and water currents and other environmental factors in the vicinity of the terminal facilities which may affect the ability to prevent, respond to, contain, and clean up an oil spill.

The Council's Board of Directors has long advocated that robust weather monitoring systems be installed in the vicinity of the VMT. This includes proposals to install ultrasonic anemometers at the loading berths and a weather station at the VMT. On January 22, 2016, the Council's Board passed a resolution expressly requesting a weather station be employed at the terminal.

Weather is a significant factor in the management of safe crude oil transportation through Prince William Sound. Some of these concerns include marine safety, tanker escort operations, oil spill contingency planning, containment boom design, and safe loading of oil tankers.

Accomplishments since last report: The Board and Alyeska have agreed to continue the project for the next two years. Funds for the new anchoring system for the VMT buoy were donated by AOOS. Rob Campbell (PWSSC) and Alan Sorum recently serviced the VMT and Duck Flats buoys, including minor repairs to the hull of the VMT buoy. Both buoys were redeployed on August 6th, 2024. The VMT buoy is in place and operating normally for the first time since it broke free from its anchoring system in January 2024.

6536 – Port Valdez Weather Buoy Data Analysis

Objectives: In 2019, PWSRCAC was able to install two weather buoys in Port Valdez, one in the vicinity of the Valdez Marine Terminal and the other near the Valdez Duck Flats. The buoys are expected to collect weather data for at least five years. This series of projects will take the data collected in each of the five years and perform an analysis to determine any weather trends throughout the year and seasonally. The analysis includes current and wind direction and speed information, wave direction and heights, and other pertinent information that can be obtained from the weather data.

Accomplishments since last report: Dr. Rob Campbell of the PWSSC has conducted an analysis of the year 2023 Port Valdez weather buoy data and that report has been reviewed by the project team. Dr. Campbell provided a presentation on the report and his findings at the July 24 OSPR meeting.

6540 - Copper River Delta and Flats Geographic Response Strategy Workgroup

Objectives: This project would fund a workgroup process and workshop day, to build ten new GRSs and/or update past GRS work in the Copper River Delta and Flats (CRDF) vicinity. The contractor will coordinate with PWS Area Committee leadership, local stakeholders, trustee agencies, and the regulatory community to ultimately deliver ten GIS-based GRSs, and provide these to ADEC for incorporation into the GRS database. GRS work done circa 1999 in this area was some of the first GRS work done in Alaska, and this material needs to be updated and/or new sites identified. Project funding would allow for this work to take place and ideally a site visit to selected sites.

Accomplishments since last report: Project Manager Robida has been discussing the project with ADEC and USCG area committee leadership to make sure that the scope of work and timing is understood. There is excitement about the project. A contract has yet to be signed, but staff anticipates that a contract should be in place in mid-September.

GRS work being completed by the Arctic and Western Alaska (AWA) Area Committee is also being tracked. The AWA is leading the statewide effort to digitize existing GRSs and work through how updates, post deployment, or site visits are incorporated. This project represents the next evolutionary step of building and incorporating new GRSs.

6560 - Peer Listener Training

Objectives: Update the Council's Peer Listener program, which was created and implemented shortly after the Exxon Valdez oil spill to promote community resiliency through a peer-to-peer support network. The update will include assessing the current program, reviewing similar programs nationwide, and revising the Peer Listener Training manual and delivery methods according to contemporary best practices.

Accomplishments since last report: The Peer Listener Project Team held a Phase 3 kick-off meeting to discuss plans and budget options for distributing the manual.

6575 - Comparison of Windy Application and Seal Rocks Buoy Wind/Wave Data

Objectives: The National Data Buoy Center hosts a weather buoy at Seal Rocks (46061) that is used to determine closure limits for laden tankers outbound from the Valdez Marine Terminal through Hinchinbrook Entrance. Closure occurs when wind speed exceeds 45 knots (sustained) or waves exceed 15 feet in height. Buoy 46061 has become inoperable several times in recent history and repairs have taken an inordinate amount of time to accomplish. In the past, during extended period of inoperability, the SERVS' Hinchinbrook Tug was required to make weather observations in the vicinity of Seal Rocks when the 46061 buoy was inoperable in order for the Coast Guard to make Hinchinbrook Entrance open/closure decisions. That is no longer the case.

This project proposes to do a comparison of data from the Windy mobile application (Windy), specific to wind and wave predictions, to data generated by Buoy 46061. The project would then evaluate which

forecast model used by Windy most closely matches historic data provided by Buoy 46061 and provide recommendations on the use and efficacy of the Windy application for this purpose.

Accomplishments since last report: Project Manager John Guthrie is working with the OSPR Committee and other staff to form a Project Team and develop a Request for Proposal for the project.

7000 – Oil Spill Response Operations Program

Objective: This program encompasses monitoring and reporting on the activities related to the operational readiness of the oil spill response personnel, equipment, and organization of the TAPS shipping industry. The program also encompasses monitoring actual oil spill incidents within our region and evaluation of overall response readiness. Additionally, the program includes the planning and implementation of PWSRCAC's Incident Response Plan.

Accomplishments since last report: The **Regional Stakeholder Committee Task Force** work has been completed. The last task force meeting was held on April 16 and the group worked through the remaining edits to the two job aids, and consensus was reached on the finished products. The draft Liaison and RSC member job aids then moved forward to the ARRT Tri Chairs (USCG, ADEC, EPA), and it was reported by EPA that the Tri Chairs were satisfied with the work. The different State On-Scene Coordinators are now reviewing these documents. This material will see public review over the fall under the Arctic and Western AK Area Contingency Plan review. Marathon Petroleum will be initiating the RSC process in conjunction with the October shippers' exercise, and plan to use of the job aids developed by the RSC Task Force.

Several PWSRCAC staff and volunteers attended the **International Oil Spill Conference** in mid-May. The conference demonstration/exhibit floor and the presentations were easily accessible by the participants. Robida reported that there were a lot of high quality, valuable presentations that spurred potential project ideas for the coming fiscal year that he planned to discuss with the OSPR Committee at the upcoming Long Range Planning meeting.

The new-build **Allison Creek barge** is in service as of June 5. There was a demonstration exercise on May 14 for this piece of equipment, but unfortunately, PWSRCAC staff were at the International Oil Spill Conference in New Orleans and could not attend. There will be other training and exercises on this new equipment in the future, and staff is interested in seeing this equipment. With the addition of the new Allison Creek, the capability to offload mini barges was gained and is a positive change that adds flexibility to a response.

Robida was involved with several **outreach efforts** since the Board last met. Robida, along with staff members Sadie Blancaflor and Danielle Verna, spoke to local Valdez guides about the EVOS event and how that's shaped the modern prevention and response system, PWSRCAC science and social science work, and the basics of VMT operations. This event was well attended and there was good discussion amongst the group. Robida also attended a Sea Grant training that former staff member Leigh Lubin conducted in Valdez. Lubin, alongside a fellow Sea Grant affiliate, spoke about how to speak to and deliver cultural history of the area. How do you, as a guide, create stories and interactions for clients, that acknowledge and pull people into the cultural history of a given area? This was the first time this material was delivered, and Robida thought it was an interesting topic and workshop.

The PWSRCAC sponsored **Tsunami Workshop** event was held in Valdez on June 3 and 4. The first day was comprised of various lectures and panel discussions ranging from modeling these hazards and forecasting them, to the damage and destruction caused after the fact. Day two was a boat tour out to

Columbia glacier where different hazards were observed and discussed along the way, and the group worked through some “what if” scenarios while on the water.

Spring **fishing vessels training** finished in early May. Robertson attended training in Homer and Robida in Valdez. As usual, summer sees an uptick in drill and exercise activity, and staff is covered events as schedules allowed. There’s been a lot of activity related to the Valdez Duck Flats and Solomon Gulch Hatchery sensitive area protection GRSs. For example, multiple U/J open water deployments, and a recent wildlife exercise took place this summer. Planning is already underway for fall FV training in Whittier and Cordova; Robertson will cover Cordova, and Robida, Whittier. The PWSRCAC-sponsored Fishing Vessel Program Community Outreach boat tour is anticipated to take place in conjunction with the Whittier training event on Monday, September 30.

7520 – Preparedness Monitoring

Objectives: PWSRCAC's Drill Monitoring Program falls under a broader program called Oil Spill Response Operations. Objectives for the Drill Monitoring Program are to promote oil spill response operational readiness within the EVOS region by observing, monitoring, and reporting on oil spill prevention and response drills, exercises, and training; to provide citizens, regulatory agencies, and responders (Alyeska and the shippers) with independent observations and recommendations to improve preparedness; and provide citizen oversight. Tasks to be completed include:

- Monitor and report on regular oil spill drills and training exercises at the VMT and throughout the Exxon Valdez oil spill region to citizens, the Board, industry, and regulatory agencies
- Provide quarterly recommendations to the PWSRCAC Board of Directors
- Keep PWSRCAC's standing committees (OSPR, TOEM, POVTS, IEC, and SAC) informed
- Produce an annual report on effectiveness and progress of the regularly monitored drills and exercises
- Continue developing and implementing staff training for drill monitoring

Recent Exercises

VMT Drainage 58 Deployment – July 12, 2024

Alyeska deployed the containment and oil recovery tactic at Drainage 58, which is the site of the VMT’s worst case scenario. The site was boomed and the barge OSRB-1 was stationed by Berth 1 to deploy its two Crucial 100-disc skimmers into the containment area.

Valdez Duck Flats SAP Training – June 26-27 and July 17-18, 2024

SERVS has conducted a series of sensitive area protection (SAP) training for the Valdez Duck Flats for the TCC crews.

Tug Contender U/J Deployment – June 14, 2024

The tug Contender crew conducted their annual U/J skimmer and boom deployment in Port Valdez on June 14.

Tug Champion U/J Deployment – May 31, 2024

The tug Champion crew conducted their annual U/J skimmer and boom deployment in Port Valdez on May 31.

Valdez Marine Terminal Annual Incident Management Team Exercise – May 8, 2024

Alyeska held their annual Incident Management Team (IMT) and field deployment exercise on May 8. The scenario was a spin-off of an actual incident where the secondary containment for the loading arms overflowed.

Polar Enterprise Emergency Towing Exercise – April 27, 2024

SERVS and Polar Tankers conducted an emergency towing exercise in Prince William Sound south of the precautionary area with tanker Polar Enterprise and the tugs Contender, Courageous, and Challenger on April 27.

OSRB-4 Port Valdez Open Water Deployment – April 22, 2024

SERVS conducted an open water operational readiness exercise in Port Valdez on April 22 as part of the annual Valdez fishing vessel training.

Polar Adventure Emergency Towing Exercise – February 27, 2024

SERVS and Polar Tankers conducted an emergency towing exercise in Prince William Sound south of the precautionary area with tanker Polar Adventure and the tugs Contender and Challenger on February 27.

Upcoming Drills and Exercises

Marathon Annual Shipper's Exercise – October 15-17, 2024

8000 – Maritime Operations Program

Objectives: This program reviews port organization, operations, incidents, and the adequacy and maintenance of the Coast Guard Vessel Traffic System, and coordinates with the Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems (POVTS) Committee. Major program components include participation with the Valdez Marine Safety Committee (VMSC), monitoring changes to the tanker escort system, reviewing Best Available Technology documents for the tanker escort system and the Vessel Emergency Response Plan (VERP), participating in monthly SERVS/PWSRCAC and ADEC/PWSRCAC communication meetings, and supporting maintenance for the NOAA weather stations.

Accomplishments since last report: Working with the previous project manager, the transition into this position is complete. Alan Sorum remains available for support as needed.

Working with AOOS, we received an additional grant that paid for the VMT weather buoy anchoring system. Project Manager John Guthrie will continue to work with the OSPR Committee on weather-related projects.

8025 – Vessel Operator Tsunami Hazards Guidance Workshop

Objectives: The goal of this project is to convene a 2-day workshop, with participants representing a diversity of vessel operators, emergency management, and the scientific study of tsunami impacts. Work products generated by the event will include preliminary guidance for vessel operators facing the threat of a tsunami and a list of research topics that could improve future guidance. The proposed guidance will be designed to be applicable in Prince William Sound and similar areas that have complex steep shorelines, and which face the potential of landslide-generated tsunamis.

Accomplishments since last report: The project is complete, and the contractor has finished a summary of proceedings. Going forward, information developed in the workshop could be forwarded to appropriate entities and future projects considered.

8250 - Assessing Non-Indigenous Species Biofouling on Vessel Arrivals

Objectives: Two main mechanisms of non-indigenous species (NIS) introduction via commercial ship traffic are the intake and release of ballast water and biofouling on a vessel's submerged surface areas. This project will characterize the risk from NIS biofouling on vessel arrivals using vessel gross tonnage (GT) as a function of wetted surface area (WSA). Gross tonnage is a nonlinear measure of a ship's overall internal volume. Wetted area is the area of the watercraft's hull which is immersed in water. Each arrival within this temporal and spatial analysis will be analyzed for a vessel arrival profile to consider additional variables that affect the potential likelihood of NIS introduction for a given arrival. Additionally, this project proposal builds from the Master of Science in Environmental Science thesis project for a graduate student at Alaska Pacific University (APU) under the supervision of the Fisheries, Aquatic Sciences, and Technology (FAST) Lab, and advised by Dr. Danielle Verna, PWSRCAC's Environmental Monitoring Project Manager.

Accomplishments since last report: The Project Manager has contacted the project proposer and a purchase order will be set up at the end of August so the proposer can begin the work.

8520 - Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts

Objectives: Seeking to identify and address various causes of miscommunication, the proposed project will provide a comprehensive perspective by collecting information on the linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic needs and practices of native and non-native English-speaking mariners in Prince William Sound. The proposed project would entail the first two of four phases.

Accomplishments since last report: The Board accepted the contractor's Phase One white paper at its special meeting being held on March 27, 2024. Dr. Ziegler plans to seek professional publication of this white paper. Therefore, she requests the Council not release the paper publicly until it has been peer reviewed and accepted or rejected for publication.

We are anticipating the completion of the contract's Phase Two report at the end of August. Since this is not in time for the September Board meeting, the report will be approved at a later date. Dr. Ziegler will present the findings of Phase One and Two of the project at the Board's September meeting.

9000 - Environmental Monitoring Program

Objectives: Coordinate projects developed and overseen by the Scientific Advisory Committee and obtain scientific knowledge and technical information about issues related to the actual and potential environmental impacts of the Valdez Marine Terminal and associated crude oil tankers. The notable tasks to be accomplished under this program are as follows:

- Project manager to attend at least one technical scientific conference
- Plan and complete budgeted environmental monitoring and scientific research projects
- Conduct PWSRCAC Science Night

Accomplishments since last report: Projects managed under this program continue to be planned and executed successfully. Planning is underway for Science Night 2024, to be held December 6th in Anchorage.

9110 – Monitoring Spatial Variability of Marine Birds During Winter in PWS Tanker Escort Zone

Objectives: Provide up to date information on winter marine bird density and distribution throughout the Prince William Sound tanker transit zone, including under-surveyed areas such as the open waters and adjacent bays in and around Port Valdez, Valdez Arm, Tatitlek Narrows, Port Fidalgo, and Port Etches. The notable tasks to be accomplished under this project are as follows:

- Perform winter bird surveys in Prince William Sound for three consecutive years
- Analyze data obtained during winter bird surveys and report the results of the analysis
- Make winter bird survey maps readily available for use by spill response managers

Accomplishments since last report: Contractors from the Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) carried out a hotspot analysis using 14 years of data collected during winter bird surveys in Prince William Sound, including Council funded surveys in and around the tanker lanes. The final report will be presented to the Board at this meeting.

In addition, funding and a contract has been approved for the PWSSC to conduct additional surveys in fall and early winter 2024 in and around the tanker lanes.

9510 – Long-Term Environmental Monitoring Project

Objectives: Comprehensively monitor the actual and potential environmental impacts related to the Valdez Marine Terminal and associated crude oil tankers and provide the Council with information about the presence and effects of hydrocarbons generated by the terminal facility and associated tankers. Here are the notable tasks to be accomplished under this project:

- Obtain environmental samples in Port Valdez: marine sediments, mussels, and passive sampling devices
- Analyze environmental samples
- Interpret and report results of sample analysis
- Present analytical findings to the PWSRCAC Board of Directors
- Maintain Environmental Monitoring Project plan

Accomplishments since last report: Samples were successfully collected this field season at sites in Port Valdez (adjacent to the Valdez Marine Terminal, Gold Creek, and Valdez small boat harbor) and sites on the northern Gulf of Alaska coast (Aialik Bay, Windy Bay, and Shuyak Harbor). Blue mussels were collected at all sampling sites, while sediments and passive sampling devices were collected in Port Valdez only. Data analysis and interpretation will occur this fall once results from sample analyses have been received from laboratories.

9520 – Marine Invasive Species

Objectives: Understand and minimize the environmental impacts of invasive species potentially arriving in the PWSRCAC region from tanker ballast water and hull fouling. Here are the notable tasks to be accomplished under this project:

- Obtain plankton samples in Port Valdez at three sites: the small boat harbor, Valdez Container Terminal, and Valdez Marine Terminal
- Perform metagenetic analysis on plankton samples to identify variability in the plankton community between locations and through time, and identify any nonindigenous species
- Interpret and report results of plankton metagenetic analysis
- Conduct monitoring of invasive crab and tunicate species in Valdez, Cordova, and Kodiak

Accomplishments since last report: Contractors from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center completed the analysis and draft report following the broadscale survey in summer 2024, and presented this information to SAC. The final report will be presented to the Board at this meeting.

9521 – Marine Invasive Species Internship

Objectives: Support local students to monitor for invasive species potentially arriving in the PWSRCAC region from tanker ballast water and biofouling. Target species include European green crab and tunicates in the communities of Valdez, Cordova, and Kodiak.

Accomplishments since last report: Student interns have been identified and onboarded in the communities of Cordova, Valdez, and Kodiak for 2024. They have each begun monitoring for invasive green crab in their communities.

9700 – Social Science Workshop

Objectives: The goal of this project is to host a workshop with community members from our region to identify social science data needs and projects that fit within the PWSRCAC mission and could be supported by SAC. The workshop will be a 1–2 day event held in a spill-affected community. Representatives from spill-affected communities will gather for a facilitated event to share ideas, needs, and desires related to social science questions that affect the region and identify clear project ideas that are forward looking and benefit the region.

Accomplishments since last report: We are actively discussing options for holding this meeting in late winter or spring 2025, possibly in collaboration with other entities working in the region, such as the Chugach Regional Resources Commission and Alaska Sea Grant.