

*Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill  
Restoration Project Annual Report

Community Involvement Project

Restoration Project 98052A  
Annual Report

This report has been prepared for peer review as part of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council restoration program for the purpose of assessing project progress. Peer review comments has not been addressed in this annual report.

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April 1999

## Community Involvement Project

### Restoration Project 98052A Annual Report

**Study History:** This project was initiated in 1995 after a drive from spill area communities, primarily Alaska Native, to become more involved in the restoration process. The cultural tie to subsistence, not only as the dependence on injured resources from the oil spill, but as the building blocks to the Alutiiq culture, motivated spill area residents to become involved in the activities that will assist in the recovery of subsistence resources. It was designed to provide information to communities regarding data and scientific research performed by the Trustee Council science program, facilitate a direct line of communication between spill area residents and the Trustee Council and its staff, and promote the inclusion of community-based projects, as well as community involvement in science projects throughout the life of the restoration effort.

**Abstract:** The *Exxon Valdez* oil spill caused severe disruption in the lives of those who live within the oil spill region. Consequently, the contamination and devastation has caused the residents of these communities to be concerned over the safety of wild food sources and the integrity of the environment affected by the oil spill. The majority of the scientific work conducted with Trustee Council funds is done with agencies in state and federal government, often centered in Anchorage, Juneau, or Fairbanks. The need for this project stems from concern by residents of spill-affected communities that their involvement was not adequately taken into consideration and that the information collected by scientists throughout the spill area was not reaching the communities. In an effort to enhance communication between the Trustee Council and the communities and to increase involvement in the process, a community facilitator has been hired through subcontracts between Chugach Regional Resources Commission (CRRC) and the village councils in the following communities: Chenega Bay, Tatitlek, Valdez, Cordova, Port Graham, Nanwalek, Seldovia, Kodiak, Seward, and Chignik Lake. Furthermore, a spill area wide community involvement coordinator has been hired by CRRC to facilitate the communication between the communities, Trustee Council, and principal investigators.

**Key Words:** Alaska Peninsula, Chugach Regional Resources Commission (CRRC), community facilitators, community involvement, community involvement coordinator, Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak Island, lower Cook Inlet, Prince William Sound, traditional ecological knowledge, traditional knowledge.

**Project Data:** (will be addressed in the final report)

**Citation:**

Brown-Schwalenberg, P.K., H. S. Short, and R. A. Miraglia. 1999. Community involvement project, *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Restoration Project Annual Report (Restoration Project 98052A), Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Habitat and Restoration Division, Anchorage, Alaska.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The *Exxon Valdez* oil spill caused severe disruption to the lives of many people living in the spill impact area. The spill also caused residents of the area to be concerned about the safety of their wild food sources and the integrity of the surrounding natural environment. While scientific studies aimed at restoring the resources and services damaged by the oil spill occurred throughout the spill area, most of the researchers worked for agencies or institutions based outside the spill area itself. Residents of the spill area felt that they were not adequately involved in the restoration process, either through regular communication with the researchers and the Trustee Council, or through participation in restoration activities, including the use of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) of the region. This project intended to involve Native communities through a network of community facilitators throughout the region and a spill area wide community involvement coordinator in the Anchorage Trustee Council office.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To increase the involvement of Spill area communities in the restoration efforts of the Trustee Council.
2. To improve the communication of findings and results of restoration efforts to spill area residents, including village and city councils, other community groups, and the appropriate regional organizations in a format that is meaningful and easy to read and understand.

## **METHODS**

The Chugach Regional Resources Commission through a cooperative agreement with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game coordinated this project. CRRC contracted with tribal councils in ten communities within the spill area, including Tatitlek, Cordova, Chenega Bay, Valdez, Port Graham, Nanwalek, Seldovia, Ouzinkie, Chignik Lake, and Seward, to provide a community facilitator to work on the project. CRRC also hired Hugh Short to serve as the spill area wide community involvement coordinator for the project.

Community facilitators were responsible to provide a monthly report to the community involvement coordinator identifying community issues or concerns, ideas for restoration projects, or any other news regarding the restoration effort; assist the community involvement coordinator with increasing community involvement in the restoration effort through local resource inventories and other outreach efforts; work with the community involvement coordinator to coordinate community meetings as well as community visits by principal investigators; disseminate twice-monthly updates to community members

and organization, including the local government; and attend the Restoration Workshop in January 1998.

The community involvement coordinator was responsible for the following tasks: produce a bi-monthly newsletter for communities regarding restoration efforts; update local resource inventories; coordinate the participation of community facilitators in the Restoration Workshop and other meetings; work with TEK specialist and community facilitators to develop community involvement and traditional knowledge components in restoration projects; organize community meetings; participate in the Restoration Workforce meetings; provide a community report to the Public Advisory Group; attend all Trustee Council meetings and report outcomes to communities; collaborate with the science coordinator and communication specialist to disseminate research results; provide technical assistance to communities on projects; provide input to the Restoration Update newsletter; and prepare quarterly project status reports for the Restoration office staff.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game provided technical assistance to communities as well through the involvement of Division of Subsistence staff, primarily Rita Miraglia.

## **RESULTS**

### Technical Assistance

The community involvement coordinator and Division of Subsistence staff assisted spill area communities with the submission of several project proposals for the Trustee Council FY99 workplan and the Department of Community and Regional Affairs administered criminal settlement fund.

Trustee Council related submission for FY99 included the Lower Cook Inlet Waste Management Plan, Port Graham Youth Subsistence Equipment, Lower Cook Inlet Youth Area Watch, Chenega Bay Subsistence Building, O'Brien Creek Restoration, Spot Shrimp Population Assessment, Port Graham Hatchery and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Most of these community-based projects were funded in FY99 by the Trustee Council, are in line to be funded in FY00 by the Trustee Council, or funded through the DCRA criminal settlement fund.

Community Involvement project staff additionally assisted communities with the submission of criminal settlement projects. These projects included the Port Graham Floating Skiff Dock, Port Graham Temporary Incubation Facility, Nanwalek Sockeye Salmon Rearing Net Pens, Chignik Lake Archaeological Display Equipment, and the Tatitlek Commercial Smokery. Each of these projects has been funded with exception for the Tatitlek Commercial Smokery.

### Increased Community Involvement/Information Transfer

The community involvement coordinator and community facilitators accomplished numerous tasks regarding increasing community involvement and disseminating data and

research results to communities. The following are some examples of continued efforts to involve and inform communities in the restoration process.

Hugh Short, community involvement coordinator, traveled to most of the communities involved in the project. Short traveled to these communities to accomplish many of the objectives set out in the detailed project description. During the FY98, Short travel to the following communities at least once, and several more than once: Valdez, Tatitlek, Chignik Lake, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Bay, Seldovia, Port Graham, Nanwalek, Chenega Bay, Ouzinkie, Old Harbor, Akhiok, Karluk, Larsen Bay, Port Lions, Kodiak, and Cordova. During these community visits, community facilitators were instrumental in performing liaison duties to ensure that meetings were scheduled, the key decision-makers were available to meet with, and accommodations were set. Visits pertained to topics such as the Restoration Reserve, Subsistence Service Assessment project, archaeological repository project, criminal settlement proposals, civil settlement proposals, Lower Cook Inlet Waste Management Plan, traditional knowledge workshops and training, scientific data transfer meetings, and other numerous issues regarding the restoration program.

It is very difficult to measure the level of community involvement, comparing it to past years and determining if there has been an increase or decrease. The purpose of this project is to provide meaningful involvement to community residents that live in the region, be it through providing research information, opportunities to receive funding for community projects, or various other avenues of involvement. I would like to describe each participating community's successes in FY98 through the community involvement project.

#### *Valdez*

The Valdez Native Tribe is the contracting Native organization that provides facilitating services to Chugach Regional Resources Commission and the Trustee Council. Charles Hughey has served as the community facilitator in this community since the beginning of FY98. Valdez is dissimilar to many of the other involved communities in the project because of its size, composition of a majority of non-Natives, and composition of various different Alaska Native groups living in the community. Athabascans, Alutiiqs, Eyaks, and Tlingits make up the population of Native groups and membership in the Valdez Native Tribe.

Charles Hughey has made it a priority to not only keep the Tribe informed and involved in the restoration process, but has reached out to the City of Valdez, commercial fisherman, and various other organizations within the community. Over the course of FY98, the Valdez Native Tribe, City of Valdez, Valdez Historical Society, and the Prince William Sound Economic Development Council worked cooperatively on a proposal for Archaeological Repository and Display Facility Request of Proposals released by the Department of Natural Resources in January 1998. Charles Hughey was the lead facilitator in bringing all the parties together to work on the proposal. Even though the collaboration was not successful in receiving the project, I have heard from various

people in Valdez that the cooperation that took place during that process was unprecedented for the community of Valdez.

In addition to the above, the Valdez Native Tribe, primarily through Charles Hughey, submitted and eventually received funding for a population assessment of spot shrimp in the Prince William Sound. This specie has traditionally been a strongly used subsistence resource. The local Tribe is very concerned about the decline in population from pre-spill and post-spill numbers. Valdez Native Tribe has partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to collaborate on the research.

### *Tatitlek*

Gary Kompkoff, President of the Tatitlek I.R.A. Council, has served as the community facilitator since the initiation of /052A. He has been very involved since the restoration process began and continues to involve his tribal council and community to the extent that benefits the injured resources and will allow for the perpetuation of the traditional way of life.

Numerous activities took place in FY98 in Tatitlek through the Community Involvement Project and Traditional Ecological Knowledge project. In October 1997, TEK specialist Henry Huntington, community involvement coordinator Hugh Short, and Dan Rosenberg, principal investigator for 98263, travel to Tatitlek to hold an informational workshop with local duck hunters. Dan Rosenberg and the local hunters discussed their perspectives on harlequin ducks, in particular, how traditional knowledge of the local hunters could be incorporated into the research that Rosenberg was implementing. This initial meeting has created a partnership between Rosenberg and Tatitlek, resulting in local hunters assisting on the project in FY99 and FY00 through assistant positions.

In addition, Tatitlek is involved in 98127, Tatitlek Coho Salmon Release; 98210, Youth Area Watch; 98052B, Traditional Ecological Knowledge; 98131, Clam Restoration; and 98274, Herring/Nearshore Video. Tatitlek has been very involved in the criminal settlement projects as well.

### *Cordova*

The community of Cordova is facilitated through the Eyak Traditional Council. Bob Henrichs, President of the council, has served as the community facilitator since the inclusion of Cordova in the project in FY 96. Cordova is a predominantly non-Native community and has a large population of commercial fisherman. Bob Henrichs, a commercial fisherman, has been very successful in outreach to this group, and representing both the Native and commercial fish perspectives to the Trustee Council.

The Eyak Council held a Youth/Elders Conference (98286) in August 1998 at the local junior/senior high school. The conference brought together community residents from all over the spill area with Trustee Council researchers. The researchers were drawn from projects that focused primarily on subsistence harvested species, such as harbor seals, herring, and sea ducks. The purpose was twofold: to inform and educate spill area residents on the status of injured species; and to take the first steps with many projects on

incorporating traditional knowledge with the western scientific projects that the Trustees fund. This conference was touted as very successful by researchers and community residents who attended.

#### *Chenega Bay*

Chenega Bay, arguably the village hardest hit by the 1989 spill, is a community of approximately fifty residents. Gail Evanoff served as the community facilitator for half of the year, until March, and Pete Kompkoff served in the position for the remainder of the fiscal year. Chenega Bay has been involved throughout the process, primarily with subsistence and oil removal projects. In FY98, Chenega Bay was very active in continued involvement in the restoration process through their integral input in 98256B, Solf Lake Stocking; 98244, Harbor Seal Biosampling; 98210, Youth Area Watch; and 98052B, Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

In September 1998, an informational workshop was held in Chenega Bay with Hugh Short, Henry Huntington and the below PIs. The workshop included Rosenberg plus three PIs from the Nearshore Vertebrate Predators project complex (98025-NVP), Gail Blundell (river otters), Jim Bodkin (sea otters), and Tom Dean (clams). This workshop was received favorably in the community. There continues to be interest in further informational workshops in Chenega Bay.

#### *Seward*

The Qutekcak Native Tribe is contracted to provide facilitation duties for the community of Seward. Seward is a large community, primarily made up of non-Natives. The community facilitator for FY98 was Edgar Blatchford. He served on the Seward City Council as well and kept the city informed on restoration issues.

Mr. Blatchford primarily worked with the community involvement coordinator on the Clam Restoration Project, 98131. This project was responsible for the implementation of a shellfish hatchery in Seward with the cooperation of the City of Seward and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

The community facilitator and council worked closely with the regional Native non-profit, Chugachmiut, to prepare a proposal for the archaeological repository RFP. Qutekcak has been very involved, directly and indirectly through the CIP, in the repository process.

TEK specialist Henry Huntington assisted Jody Seitz in her research on local and traditional knowledge of juvenile herring and feed fish in Prince William Sound and the lower Kenai Peninsula (97320T). Huntington traveled to Cordova (July 1998) and Seward (September 1998) to assist Seitz with data review and analysis. Edgar Blatchford assisted by organizing local experts on herring to meet with Jody Seitz and Huntington.

#### *Seldovia*

The Seldovia Native Tribe is the organization responsible to provide facilitation services. Lillian Elvsaaas has served as the Seldovia community facilitator since their inclusion in

the program in FY96. Seldovia is involved in the restoration process primarily through three projects. They include 98052B, Traditional Ecological Knowledge; 98244, Harbor Seal Biosampling; and 98286, Eyak Youth/Elders Conference. Lillian has provided information to the City of Seldovia, the SOS Response Team, and school children in Seldovia regarding the oil spill restoration process. She is active in her tribal council and provides them with updates on subsistence and other services, as well as the status of injured resources in the spill area.

In FY98, Ms. Elvsaas took the initiative and proposed to include Seldovia, Nanwalek and Port Graham in the Youth Area Watch project (98210). There was a strong desire by the local principal, teachers, parents, and youth to be involved in the exciting and innovative project. Ms. Elvsaas was successful including the three communities in FY99.

#### *Port Graham*

Port Graham is involved in the project through the Port Graham Village Council. Walter Meganack, Jr. has served as the community facilitator for the village since the inception in FY95. The involvement of Port Graham community residents has increased much since the project began. In FY98, Port Graham was involved in 98052B, Traditional Ecological Knowledge; 98131, Clam Restoration; 98225, Port Graham Pinks; 98244, Harbor Seal Biosampling; and 98263, Port Graham Streams. Mr. Meganack was very involved in the funding and implementation of all of the above projects that involve Port Graham. In addition to civil settlement projects, Port Graham has three additional criminal settlement projects funded through the Department of Community and Regional Affairs.

Bryan Mac Lean was hired on contract to provide training assistance to the community. This workshop led by Mac Lean was held in Port Graham in January 1998. The timing was unfortunate because the village hatchery had burned down the week before. Nonetheless, community participation was strong and included Nancy Yeaton from Nanwalek who made the daily commute. The workshop was successful in addressing several of the underlying issues affecting the progress not only of the TEK project, but also of interactions with most EVOS-related activities.

#### *Nanwalek*

Nanwalek is involved in the project through the Nanwalek I.R.A. Council. Nancy Yeaton has served as the community facilitator for the village since FY95. Ms. Yeaton, in addition to her community facilitator duties, is the village natural resource specialist. In both of these capacities, she handles much of the issues regarding the oil spill and natural resources for the village. Nanwalek is involved in the restoration process through the criminal and civil settlements. The civil projects include 98052B, TEK; 98131, Clam Restoration; and 98244, Harbor Seal Biosampling. In addition, they operate a sockeye salmon enhancement project funded through the criminal settlement funds.

Nanwalek was very involved in the implementation and coordination of the Eyak Youth/Elders Conference as well. The tribal council and community members attended the conference in Cordova and were very supportive.

### *Ouzinkie*

Ouzinkie became the facilitating contractor for Kodiak Island in March 1998. The Kodiak Tribal Council was the initial contractor, but due to communication failures and incomplete task completion, the contract was terminated. Paul Panamarioff, President of the Ouzinkie Tribal Council, serves as the community facilitator for all seven communities on the island. He keeps in contact with all of the councils when issues regarding the restoration effort need to be addressed. Paul was instrumental in coordinating and scheduling the Restoration Reserve meetings held on Kodiak Island in March/April 1998. These meetings were held in Akhiok, Karluk, Larsen Bay, Port Lions, Kodiak, and Ouzinkie. A meeting was attempted in Old Harbor, but cancelled due to inclement weather.

Mr. Panamarioff has been a strong advocate for the implementation of an internship program for high school students in underrepresented communities of the CIP. Much of his outreach in FY98 was to coordinate with the school district and island tribal councils to ensure the funding and implementation for FY99. He continues to keep in contact with his community and the others regarding oil spill issues.

### *Chignik Lake*

The community of Chignik Lake is involved through the Chignik Lake Village Council. Virginia Aleck has served as their community facilitator since FY96. Ms. Aleck is responsible to facilitate with the additional communities of Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Bay, Perryville, and Ivanoff Bay on the Alaska Peninsula. Most of the projects that have taken place in this region have occurred through funding from the criminal settlement; although in FY98 these communities were involved with 98247, Kametook River; 98286, Eyak Youth/Elders; and 98052B, TEK. In 1997, each of the communities, absent Chignik Bay, received funding from the criminal settlement to build subsistence buildings and create subsistence revitalization and education programs. In 1999, Chignik Lake applied to receive funding for archaeological equipment for the subsistence building to educate youth and adults on their past, as well as bring the artifacts "home."

Because of the sheer distance, the Alaska Peninsula is a challenge to involve to the extent of other communities in the spill area. Virginia Aleck has remained a strong voice and smooth facilitator and strives to include all the Peninsula communities in the restoration process. This was evident in April 1998, when Stan Senner, Trustee Council science coordinator, Hugh Short, and Pauline Allen traveled to the Peninsula to hold Restoration Reserve meetings. Virginia assisted in the coordination of the meetings, as well as communicating what exactly we would be discussing to the tribal councils beforehand.

### Community Facilitator Meetings/Retreats

A retreat was held at the Rocky Bay Cabins, owned by the Port Graham Corporation, in June 1998. This retreat gave project staff an opportunity to discuss restoration issues of importance. This included the Restoration Reserve, FY99 projects, the future of the TEK project, goals for the CIP, research and science results, and strategies to involve communities more in the restoration process. Outcomes of the retreat included the

passage of TEK protocols from all involved communities, goals for the CIP in FY99, and information and education for facilitators to take back to their communities.

In October 1997, Hugh Short organized a community facilitator meeting in Anchorage at the Restoration Office. All facilitators attended and many topics and presentation were given. Molly McCammon presented information regarding Restoration Reserve options, Veronica Christman, Trustee Council staff, discussed the status of the Archaeological Repository project, and Hugh Short and Henry Huntington discussed upcoming TEK and CIP events. Facilitators were given the opportunity to relay their concerns and community issues directly to Molly McCammon.

#### Restoration Workshop/Community – Scientist Informational Workshop

All facilitators attended the Restoration Workshop in January 1998. Their involvement is vital in this workshop as it provides an opportunity for each of the community representatives an opportunity to get updated on injured resources, provide their perspective, and talk with researchers. The atmosphere of the symposium is not susceptible to an interaction of community residents and researchers and many residents have complained that the information presented is too technical and in-depth.

In an effort to make more of the information palatable to community residents, a meeting was held the day before the workshop was to begin. At this workshop, five researchers presented their findings to date in a way that was more intimate and conducive to questions and interactions. Many others besides the facilitators attended. This meeting was generally seen as a step in the right direction.

## CONCLUSION

This project is making true strides of involving communities in the restoration process. The facilitators and community involvement coordinator have provided the Trustee Council and staff with recommendations and direction in how to involve the communities to benefit all parties involved. Hugh Short has continued to send out bi-monthly reports to communities, submit articles regarding community involvement in the Restoration Update newsletter, attend all Trustee Council meetings and Restoration Workforce meetings, and perform all duties that are required of the position. He has been able to facilitate a partnership between the Trustee Council and staff and communities.

Community facilitators have continued to perform tasks that are asked of them, including monthly reports, facilitation of community visits, disseminating information and relaying information to and from the communities and the Trustee Council, and developing avenues and projects to become more involved in the restoration process. In cooperation with the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Project, the Community Involvement Project has benefited all parties involved and will continue to advance the mission of the Trustee Council.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of people who have supported this project and its activities. In particular, several individuals who have given a great deal of time and energy to support our efforts.

Virginia Aleck, Edgar Blatchford, Lillian Elvsaas, Gail Evanoff, Bob Henrichs, Charles Hughey, Don Kompkoff, Gary Kompkoff, Walter Meganack, Jr., Margaret Roberts, Nancy Yeaton, Dan Rosenberg, Jim Fall, Stan Senner, Joe Hunt, Martha Vlasoff, Molly McCammon, Sandra Schubert, Veronica Christman, Eric Myers, Chugach Regional Resources Commission Board of Directors, and Henry Huntington.