

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill
Restoration Project Final Report

NOAA Harbor Protection Program
Project Management

Restoration Project 12120112
Final Report

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March 2017

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Study History: In 2011, NOAA Restoration Center was selected to work with local communities affected by the *Exxon Valdez Oil Spill* to come up with Restoration Projects that were supported by the communities and would improve water quality and benefit habitats and species affected by the *Exxon Valdez Oil Spill*. After working with these communities, proposals were submitted to the *EVOS Trustee Council* for review and ranking. Following this process, 2 projects were selected; one by the Native Village of Eyak and one by the Copper River Watershed Project. Both projects were located in Cordova, Alaska. The NOAA Restoration Center occupied the project management role for these projects.

Abstract: The NOAA Restoration Center served as the Project Manager in the implementation of 2 projects in Cordova, Alaska. The projects under this management were Mitigating Storm Water Run-off in Cordova through Snow Management Analysis, by The Copper River Watershed Partnership Project 13120112-C and Cordova Harbor Water Quality Improvement Project, by The Native Village of Eyak Project 13120112-A

Key Words: Cordova, storm water runoff, water quality, harbor, best management practices

Project Data: The data under this project will come under the individual projects: Mitigating Storm Water Run-off in Cordova through Snow Management Analysis, by The Copper River Watershed Partnership Project 13120112-C and Cordova Harbor Water Quality Improvement Project, by The Native Village of Eyak Project 13120112-A

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Executive Summary

Small coastal communities in AK were impacted by the EVOS and the repercussions linger today. In order to address harbor protection and marine restoration concerns, the EVOS TC selected the NOAA Restoration Center in a Project Management role to reach out to affected communities and help them build and implement important projects. Project management provided coastal communities aid and guidance as they navigated the project implementation, funding awards, project reporting requirements. Further, the Restoration Center staff have technical experience and served as a sounding board for our partners to ensure that the results from these projects meaningful and transferrable to other coastal communities. NOAA Restoration Center identified water quality issues as a meaningful way to add benefit to the injured resources and habitats from the Exxon Valdez Oil spill. Community engagement and support is key to project success and longevity, and the EVOS TC realized that having a strong project manager would benefit this restoration work under EVOS.

The NOAA Restoration Center (RC) responded to a 2012 EVOS TC Invitation to implement harbor project and marine restoration projects in spill affected areas of Alaska. The Restoration Center was awarded initial funds which were used to scope for potential projects while working with community members to raise awareness of this source of funding. Staff traveled to communities in Kodiak, Cordova, Whittier and Valdez and held public meetings. From those important initial conversations, the RC staff were able to first identify the community's needs with respect to harbor clean-up efforts and then to help them build a project. Later that year, the RC moved into an implementation phase by opening a request for proposals, receiving applications, reviewing (collaborating with AK DEC, Cook Inlet Keeper and USACE) and scoring them, and finally making a selection to propose award project funds to two excellent projects both located in Cordova, AK. The EVOS TC was presented with this information and decided to make financial awards. The awards were with the Copper River Watershed Project and the Native Village of Eyak.

Introduction

Since 2012 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Restoration Center (NOAA RC) has built awareness within Prince William Sound (PWS) communities of the funding opportunity presented by the EVOSTC.

Identify community partners: NOAA RC pro-actively sought out members of PWS communities and engaged existing partners to help identify priorities for restoration in the affected area. These priorities eventually informed the funding opportunity that NOAA RC published under this overall effort. Another focus of this engagement was to collaborate with the PWS restoration communities to brainstorm, via public meetings, potential projects in the affected area that fit the identified priorities and to identify viable partners to carry those projects out.

Selected community projects: After identifying community partners, NOAA RC helped form working groups to identify specific pollution issues, causes, best treatments and restoration needs for their location. In cases where there was a potential applicant with a stand-alone idea for a proposal, NOAA RC provided individual technical assistance to that applicant to hone their proposal. These events took place from February – April 2012. At the same time, an assessment of current equipment, equipment usage and location, and harbor hazardous waste disposal

facilities was conducted for each community (completed by the working groups, with assistance from NOAA RC). Following this assessment, a working group meeting was conducted in each community where ideas for improved storm water and wastewater treatment, oil abatement, and clean harbor projects were compiled. This information was brought together by NOAA RC and sent to the contributors in the community for review along with identified areas where their goals aligned with Exxon Valdez Oil Spill restoration needs. Following a review and comment period, the community specific restoration proposals were finalized with cost estimates formulated by the working groups in August and September 2012.

Project Formulation: In this phase of the project, NOAA RC released an open request for funding proposal (RFP) for Prince William Sound coastal communities to conduct storm water and wastewater treatment, oil abatement and clean harbor work. The announcement was published on September 24, 2012, and closed on November 16, 2012. Once proposals were finalized and submitted, NOAA RC and partners did an initial review and ranking and provided them to the EVOSTC for final funding recommendations. The work plans submitted with each proposal detailed different community group's plans for harbor improvement and mentioned the need for restoration equipment, training, or other resources, as well as a timeline and budget to complete the proposed work. The periods of performance for these activities ranged from 2 to 3 years depending on the project. The EVOSTC had a chance to review, comment on and approve each work plan. The EVOSTC made their final funding recommendations in the fall of 2013 and two projects were selected for year one funding.

Project Oversight: The NOAA RC successfully, in Spring 2014, negotiated and executed cooperative agreements with NVE and CRWP to implement these projects, and our oversight is on-going. NOAA RC staff visited the projects sites in June 2014 to oversee the work done to date and to work with the community organizations to address any questions or concerns that the award recipients had on the projects. NOAA RC staff verified the status of sub grantees' work goals and objectives against what was proposed, and where necessary, modified the projects' work plans accordingly. Some examples of this include: a change in the snow management project reporting due to a low snow year in 2013 for the Copper River Watershed Project and modifications to the mussel watch sample collection date for Native Village of Eyak.

Objectives

Project management objectives include: ensure that communities were able to voice their concerns regarding harbor water quality, turn those concerns into restoration projects in their communities, and lessen the administrative burden for these community groups as they implement their projects.

Methods

Public meetings were held in Kodiak, Cordova, Valdez and Whittier in spring 2012 to identify community concerns and to help build project ideas. In this phase of the project an open request for funding proposal (RFP) to conduct storm water and wastewater treatment, oil abatement and clean harbor work was released to the communities, October – December 2012. Involvement in the working groups was not a requirement for submission to the RFP but these groups had an advantage of having already worked through some of the major needs for their particular harbors as well as cost assessments for the work needing to be accomplished. Once proposals were

finalized and submitted, NOAA and partners performed an initial ranking and reserved the final decisions to be made by EVOS TC members.

Results

For project specific results, please see the final report submitted by Kristin Carpenter in February 2016. Ivy Patton will submit a final report in 2018 when her project concludes.

Discussion

On the ground restoration can restore species or habitats that are injured in an oil spill. In areas of Alaska restoration that is above and beyond the response activity following a spill is not always immediately available due to low development pressures. Water quality is often overlooked as a restoration activity but could be a powerful tool for restoration in Alaska. Water quality efforts in the freshwater and nearshore environment can be degraded by actions within the entire watershed. Often contaminants or sediment discharge can harm marine species during one of the most environmentally fragile times in their life history; early life history or even gamete stage. Improvements to water quality and avoidance of flashy systems due to impervious surfaces can help to protect these early life stages of marine species themselves and as forage fish for other species. The work in these projects served to inform the communities of the importance of water quality efforts and even resulted in further funding of projects from other funding sources.

Conclusions

The successful management of these projects identified that water quality projects can be used to improve water quality and educate communities about water quality issues in their communities. The projects illustrated that there is a need for water quality work that is outside of the bounds that AK DEC requires of communities and offers a restoration alternative for meaningful work that can address community concerns over clean water for marine species and habitats. The project management aspect of this project also addresses that communities may need assistance in turning their concerns into viable projects and to meet reporting and budget reporting requirements of EVOS.

Acknowledgements

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