Meeting Summary

A. GROUP: *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC) Public Advisory Committee (PAC)

B. DATE: September 28, 2017

C. LOCATION: Dr. Glenn A. Olds Conference Room, 4210 University Drive, Anchorage, AK

D. MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: (T = via teleconference)

Name	Principal Interest
Kurt Eilo	Sport Hunting/Fishing, PAC Chair
Gary Fandrei	Aquaculture/Mariculture
John French	Science/Technical, PAC Vice-chair
Stacy Studebaker	Recreational Users
Amanda Bauer	Commercial Tourism
Patience Andersen-Faulkner	Subsistence
George Skladal	Public at Large
Emilie Springer	Commercial Fishing

E. NOT PRESENT:

Name	Principal Interest
David Totemoff, Sr.	Native Landowner
VACANT	Conservation/Environmental

F. OTHER PARTICIPANTS:

Name	Organization
Lauri Adams	Trustee Council Habitat Program Director
Philip Johnson	Designated Federal Officer, Department of the Interior
Shiway Wang	Trustee Council Science Coordinator
Linda Kilbourne	Trustee Council Staff
Helen Woods	Alaska Resources Library and Information Services
Cherri Womac	Trustee Council Staff
Mandy Lindeberg	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Rys Miranda	Alaska Department of Natural Resources – State Parks
Scott Pegau (T)	Oil Spill Recovery Institute
Katrina Hoffman (T)	Prince William Sound Science Center
Sylvia Kreel (T)	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Christine Kehr(T)	General Accountability Office (GAO), Assistant Director
Amy Ward-Meier (T)	GAO, Senior Analyst
Dan Will (T)	GAO, Analyst
Jessica Lewis (T)	GAO, Analyst
Travis Schwartz (T)	GAO, Analyst

H. SUMMARY:

At 10:00 a.m. the Designated Federal Officer (Philip Johnson) opened the meeting and took roll call of PAC members. Seven members were present, establishing a quorum; an eighth member arrived later.

Kurt Eilo was re-elected as PAC chair and John French was re-elected as vice chair.

The PAC approved a slightly modified agenda (the order of two speakers was changed).

The PAC also approved the September 22, 2016 meeting summary. The chair will sign the meeting summary and it will be posted on the Trustee Council web site.

Johnson updated the PAC on the status of the Conservation/Environmental seat vacancy. Kate McLaughlin resigned from the PAC in April, 2017 because she was hired by one of the Trustee agencies (U.S. Forest Service). Johnson reported that the next step is to advertise the vacancy in the Federal Register. Prior to publication of this notice, he will obtain the required surnames (signatures) from within the DOI. He expects to initiate this process prior to the Trustee Council meeting in November, 2017.

Public Comment: The floor was open for public comment, telephonically and for attendees.

Mandy Lindeberg (NOAA), program lead for Gulf Watch Alaska (GWA), has worked on *Exxon Valdez* oil spill (EVOS) issues since the 1990s, and she thanked the PAC for their work and contributions to the public process.

No comments were provided by phone participants.

Executive Director's Report:

Lauri Adams (Trustee Council Habitat Program Director) provided the Executive Director report, as Elise Hsieh was unable to attend.

Adams noted that the Trustee Council appreciates the work of the PAC. She reported that Catherine Boerner (former Science Coordinator) has left the Trustee Council. The new Science Coordinator is Dr. Shiway Wang. Dede Bohn with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has retired; however, other USDOI staff will be working with the program. .

Proposed changes to the Reporting Procedures are found in the packet of meeting materials.

With respect to finances, an external audit was performed within the past year. It was a "clean audit" with no recommendations. The Restoration/Research and Habitat subaccounts are managed by the Alaska Department of Revenue. There is approximately $100 million remaining in the Research subaccount, with an additional $98 million in the Habitat subaccount. These totals include already encumbered funds. Details regarding the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Investment Fund are available on the Alaska Department of Revenue's web site: (http://treasury.dor.alaska.gov/Investments/Exxon-Valdez-Oil-Spill-Investment-Fund.aspx).

In response to a question, Adams discussed the Long-Term Spending Plan. The Trustee Council is in year 7 of a 20-year spend down plan of the account's principal. The spending trajectory is on track at the present time..

Adams discussed ongoing work and reports on lingering oil that were completed during the past year. The EVOSTC web site has been updated with new information on lingering oil, including an overview/summary of the most recent work for the public. Adams also noted that the Trustee Council is working on a proposal for targeted monitoring of lingering oil within the next year.

The PAC offered comments on lingering oil issues raised during the Executive Director's report. Studebaker noted that new generations of Alaskans are not aware of EVOS issues including lingering oil and ongoing monitoring program work. The Trustee Council should do more outreach on these issues.

French discussed new chemistry information coming out of the Deep Water Horizon (DWH) oil spill, with the identification of a reported 50,000 – 100,000 compounds in crude oil. These include polar aromatics which are appearing in fractions previously thought to not be bioavailable, including bio reactive (toxic) compounds found in asphaltenes. In the future, EVOS researchers should monitor a larger set of compounds. More consideration is needed on what constituents should be studied.

French also discussed biomarkers. In the past, CYP-1A has been studied, however it is not the best biomarker as its induction is not specific to oil exposure. French is a member of the *State of the Science on Dispersants in the Arctic – Human Health* working group [https://crrc.unh.edu/dispersant_science]. The group is looking at the efficacy of various biomarkers, which differ in sensitivity by an order of magnitude. French hopes this new science can be reflected in efforts to investigate lingering oil in future science plans.

Adams continued her report with a discussion of habitat restoration projects. Multiple sites are being addressed in several Kenai Peninsula projects, while another habitat restoration project is underway in the Buskin River watershed on Kodiak Island. Restoration work includes improvements to fish passage and stream bank restoration. These projects involve significant leveraging of funding from the Alaska Department of Transportation, the U.S. Coast Guard, and many other partners. All projects are on track for on-schedule completion. A similar Copper River watershed stream restoration project is under development and will likely be presented next year.

The DNR Habitat Catalog update is proceeding. The project team has recommended updating the technology to transition from a series of downloadable maps (PDF format) to an online, scalable and searchable catalog. The goal is to have this interactive habitat catalogue completed by FY 2019. This approach will be more user-friendly and more cost-efficient, as it will be more easily maintained and updated in the future. French noted that some people in Alaska do not have ready access to computers and he recommended that print copies also be available for the public.

Studebaker, a long-serving PAC member, expressed concern about the lack of public knowledge on the tremendous legacy of work conducted by the Trustee Council. The Trustee Council needs to get the word out about accomplishments. For example many people on Kodiak Island are not aware of the Trustee Council's role in establishing the Termination Point Conservation Easement.

Adams noted that the EVOSTC staff routinely responds to many individual public inquiries and that the web site and ARLIS library resources are utilized by many thousands of public inquiries annually. In recent years, other outreach has been conducted by the individual trustee agencies. Obtaining approval of Trustee Council outreach products by all six trust agencies has been time-consuming and inefficient in the past. When the EVOSTC programs were made more streamlined and focused in the spend-down plan implemented by the Council several years ago, the budget for outreach activities was folded into the administrative budget as those activities overlap.

French remarked that so much information has been generated by the efforts of the Trustee Council, and there needs to be a way to reach the public about issues that can affect their lives. Some touting of accomplishments by the Trustee Council is warranted.

EVOSTC Annual Budget:

Adams reported that the annual budget is similar to last year and has remained fairly stable over the past several years. There is a proposed $61,000 increase for this year. This includes roughly $30,000 for habitat expenses, including expanded work on various parcels and due-diligence work. An increase of approximately $58,000 is for additional staff time at the Alaska Resources Library and Information Services (ARLIS) to help complete scanning and cataloging the backlog of historic Trustee Council documents. Trust agency staff support to the Trustee Council also increased by approximately $11,000. These increases were partially offset by cost reductions in other areas, as detailed in the budget.

The PAC asked about the decrease in the budget for PAC administrative costs. The Trustee Council staff reported that this reflected decreased federal agency costs, as DOI has been carrying over a balance and the agency wants to spend down this balance. The carryover was due to a reduction in meetings and travel costs, compared to the past. There has been no decrease in DOI or Trustee Council support for PAC activities. French asked if sufficient funding was available to support DOI time. Johnson responded that for this fiscal year the funding was sufficient and that the funding request for the next fiscal year would be evaluated prior to the next PAC meeting.

French reminded the PAC that the public outreach component was zero after 2016. Eilo also noted the importance of this issue, recommending various outreach avenues that might be pursued, including participation in various public forums. The PAC had been silent on this issue for years, and the public perception is that EVOS issues and work are done. Eilo recommended that as the science ramps down, the outreach efforts should ramp up. Fandrei discussed the need to remind the public of the EVOS and warned about complacency.

According to French, our understanding of oil science is tied to big events, such as EVOS and DWH. It takes 10-15 years to publish data and some of the DWH science papers are coming out at the same time that public awareness of that spill is decreasing. Considering the potential for increased development in the Arctic, we need to use the best available science and apply lessons learned. French recounted the example of the pesticide DDT, which nearly resulted in the extinction of some raptor species. Echoing Fandrei, he warned about the need to overcome complacency and to get the word out about the effects of oil spills on the environment. French also noted that such complacency was the cause of the EVOS.

French noted the need to trust in facts, including science and chemistry. The federal and State agencies are doing good work. The main need is to revive public knowledge of these issues. He encouraged the Trustee Council staff and/or scientists to present at AFE.

Andersen-Faulkner also warned about complacency, as our population ages and memory of the EVOS wanes. While the Trustee Council and the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council (PWSRCAC) staff know about these issues, there is a need to reach other demographics. She noted that the Alaska Federation of Natives was another potential audience. An example of public awareness is annual reminders of the 1964 earthquake that are published annually in Alaska newspapers. Andersen-Faulkner reminded the PAC that the 30th Anniversary of the EVOS is coming up and an outreach plan is needed. The Trustee Council does not need to spend a lot of money on it, but it is important.

Adams replied that the PAC's perspective was important and she would take this information back to the Trustee Council and the Executive Director for consideration. She also noted the importance of the EVOS web site and ARLIS in delivering information to the public.

Katrina Hoffman discussed NOAA efforts to develop a special issue on the first five-years of the Gulf Watch Alaska program. Fandrei appreciated the work presenting the science, but noted often that is "speaking to the choir." He advocated for taking the science to a non-technical audience.

French mentioned that most projects include a synthesis step. He reported that the PWSRCAC was trying to enhance their public messaging by issuing a request for proposals.

Emilie Springer emphasized the importance of connecting with younger age groups. It is very important to reach youth and inform them of these issues.

Studebaker provided an example of using social media to share information on a recent lingering oil report. She posted this as a member of the public, not as a PAC member.

Adams and Wang said they were looking for opportunities to accelerate the schedule for publishing reports. Eilo said there is a need to generate public interest in the results of the Trustee Council's work, not just serve up data.

State Parks Project:

Reauthorization of one of a suite of six State Parks Riverbank Restoration & Protection projects (17170116) originally approved by the Council in 2016 was considered. This project was previously authorized to fund up to $2.24 million to support six streambank and fish habitat projects on the Kenai Peninsula. Five of the six projects are currently underway. The sixth, Kenai River Flats Riverbank Protection Project, was approved by the Council last year for $327,000, anticipating the possibility of leveraging federal transportation funds for the remainder of the project's costs. The State's application for federal funding is due in the summer of 2018. Due to this timing, the project managers are requesting to reauthorize the previously-approved amount of $327,000. This restoration project is expected to be completed by 2020.

Studebaker recently floated the Kenai River and she had not realized previously the amount of erosion that is occurring. She said that the restoration work being conducted is impressive.

Rys Miranda, with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources State Parks Division, was asked whether the parking area at Kenai River Flats area was going to be expanded. He replied that the parking area would be improved, but not expanded, as the intent is to accommodate current use and allow public access to the river with fewer impacts to the habitat. Fandrei raised concerns that these improvements may cause additional traffic problems in the area. Miranda replied that the Kenai River Special Management Plan is also under review.

French asked whether the Trustees should consider projects for further protection of Kenai riverbank habitat. Adams explained that the agency staff overseeing the current slate of restoration projects is operating at full capacity right now, but that the restoration benefits of the projects are notable, and the Council is open to considering additional projects in the future. Miranda said he would discuss that issue with his management.

Fandrei noted that these areas get a lot of use for both fishing and duck hunting, and the Kenai River is a resource for the entire Peninsula.

FY 2018 Draft Work Plan:

The Science Coordinator presented information on the FY18 Draft Work Plan and the status of the various funded programs. FY18 is the second year of the second 5-year program. All projects submitted proposals for renewal.

Long-Term Monitoring Programs – Gulf Watch Alaska (GWA):

The GWA program is progressing well. The Science Panel is pleased with the quality of the proposals and recommends funding the entire program. Program Lead, Mandy Lindeberg, and her management team continue to strengthen coordination of logistics and synthesizing results. The program has had a productive year with 19 papers accepted in a peer-reviewed journal and 45 data sets have been made public. Principal Investigators (PIs) are achieving program and project goals in a timely manner. Plans for FY18 have not shifted from their original submission in FY17. Notable highlights from FY17 include the following:

One project "The Seward Line: Marine Ecosystem Monitoring in the northern Gulf of Alaska," led by Hopcroft/Danielson/Coyle was awarded the Long-term Ecological Research (LTER) funding by the National Science Foundation. This award will allow the program to enhance its monitoring footprint by expanding sampling on the shelf upstream of PWS, including near Middleton Island.

Recent findings for 2014 – 2016 are that a warm water anomaly was present throughout all of the Program regions and a decline of cold-water phytoplankton species, with an increase of warm water species, was observed. This anomaly may be linked to seabird die offs in 2015 and 2016 and also sea star wasting disease observed in the nearshore study regions during 2014 – 2016.

Middleton Island monitoring data indicate that capelin virtually disappeared from seabird diets in 2014 – 2016, and in 2017 showed Black-legged Kittiwake diets were comprised of few fish, with copepods as the major component of their diets.

GWA is working on forging new relationships with other research efforts by making contributions to the PICES (North Pacific Marine Science Organization) 5-year report, contributing to the

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Ecosystem Considerations Annual Report to the National Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC). Additionally, there will be a special synthesis session and workshop with the NPRB-funded Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (GOA IERP) at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in January 2018.

***PAC Discussion of the GWA Program*:**

Studebaker reported that four dead humpback whales were found on Kodiak Island beaches this year. No whale biologists were available to perform necropsies. Capelin had been found to be closer inshore this year, potentially contributing to these stranding events.

French advocated for maintaining existing transects, but the Trustee Council should consider a new transect from Glacier Island to Hitchinbrook Entrance, along the southeast side of Montague Island, then south to the continental slope. This higher density of data would require more funding. Wang noted that the LTER funding will support an additional transect near Middleton Island. French said overall the researchers are making progress and that takes funding and staff. Collecting oceanographic data is expensive.

Studebaker asked if they are studying ocean acidification (OA). Wang said that the Seward Line does collect data on OA (now in its 10th year). The Alaska Ocean Observing System has published information on this in a newsletter. The Alaska Marine Highway System ferry Columbia has also been collecting data on OA.

Long-Term Monitoring Programs – Herring Research and Monitoring (HRM):

The HRM program is also continuing to make progress. Program goals are being achieved in a timely manner and all projects except for one are recommended for funding by the Science Panel.

The one exception is *Studies of Reproductive Maturity among Age Cohorts of Pacific Herring in PWS*, for which the Science Panel recommends that funding should be contingent upon the PI's satisfactory responses to questions and comments that are mainly related to some technical issues regarding using scales to assess the age of maturity of herring. The PI has been very responsive, quickly replying to the Science Panel's comments and questions. The Science Panel is reviewing the PI's responses and will review a revised proposal for this project before supporting a release of any approved funds.

The herring program has also been productive this year. Manuscripts from the first 5-year program are making their way through the review process; a special issue in Deep Sea Research II is due by the end of the year.

Overall, plans for FY18 HRM work have not changed from their original submission in FY17 except for two projects:

Herring Disease Program II (18120111-E Hershberger)

Last year the project developed a reliable test to detect antibodies associated with the viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) virus, which may be contributing to the lack of recovery of herring populations in PWS. VHS virus outbreaks can occur over a short period of time with significant mortality. This test allows researchers to determine when herring were exposed to

the VHS virus within at least the last year, which will provide a better measure of mortality between sampling events.

Archived samples were analyzed for the virus antibodies and, notably, the concentrations were much higher in the PWS herring populations in all the years analyzed (2012-2016) compared to herring in Sitka. These results may indicate why the herring biomass suffered a rapid decline over the past few years. Because of this important development last year, the herring program would like to expand the PWS field sampling efforts to more fully understand the demographics of these observations. If these data were separated into age classes, then the antibodies could be followed by year class, and the life stage at which herring were exposed to the virus could be determined. This would allow managers to incorporate this more detailed information about disease and age of exposure into the age-structure assessment model and improve model performance.

The herring program has requested, and the Science Panel and the Science Coordinator support the request for an additional annual funding of $24.5K starting in FY18 to expand sampling efforts.

Post-doctoral Fellows

The other requested change in FY18 is in regard to the post-doc position(s). In the FY17-21 Invitation, approximately $278K for FY18-20 was designated for funding one 3-year post-doc position, which was included in the Herring Program FY17-21 Budget. Two highly qualified candidates applied for the post-doc position.

One proposal will be funded under the currently authorized funding and addresses the role of disease as a top-down force affecting both herring recruitment and standing biomass, which will be important in light of the catastrophic decreases in spawning biomass over the last three years.

A second proposal will examine statistical relationships between herring recruitment and bottom-up and top-down forcing factors, which will provide the critical synthesis of data between the Herring and GWA programs over the last five years.

The Programs' post-doc selection committee, Science Panel and Wang consider both post-doc proposals to be of high quality and merit funding. Each proposal will provide different but necessary information that will benefit the Trustee Council's Programs.

As noted, there is funding for one of the 3-year post-docs already included in the Herring program budget. There is no funding dedicated for a second 3-year post-doc. The FY17-21 Invitation included $150K for a Cross-Program Publication Group, which has not attracted any successful proposals. The Science panel recommends using these Cross Program Publication Group funds this year toward the first year of the second post-doc to undertake the data synthesis work. Funding for this second post-doc would be expected to continue in FY19 and FY20 and would be requested in those future years' budgets. This second post-doc would work with Trevor Branch (Modeling and stock assessment of PWS herring; 18120111-C Branch).

Some HRM highlights from FY17:

- *Annual Herring Migration Cycle (tagging study- Bishop)*

    - In February 2017, additional receivers were deployed to determine which direction herring travel after detection, back into PWS or out towards the GOA.
    - In April 2017 another acoustic receiver array was deployed at Port Gravina, the site of all known spawning by PWS herring during 2017. Researchers also tagged 125 herring at that location using tags with an extended transmitter life to find out when herring depart from monitored spawning areas and the time of year that they return. At last report 58 of the 125 fish tagged have been observed at entrances to PWS, most in Port Gravina.
- *Modeling and stock assessment (Branch)*
    - The PWS herring crash is unusual in magnitude and duration compared to other herring population crashes around the world. Most do not experience this degree of decline or the length of time to recover.
    - As mentioned previously, the Herring Program has requested additional funding for a second post-doc to work with the PI Trevor Branch.
- *Age at reproductive maturity (Gorman)*
    - Over 800 fish were processed last spring.
    - During the fall capture cruise, researchers were able to catch adult herring but not in ideal samples sizes. They found small schools of adult herring in Port Gravina but not at other locations.
- *Disease Program II (Hershberger)*
    - Development of the test to detect the VHS virus antibody has already been discussed.
    - Hiring of a 3-year post-doc to help address the role of disease in herring recruitment and biomass also was previously discussed.
- *Age & Aerial Surveys (Haught)*
    - Considerable effort was put into these surveys, with few fish found.
    - Little spawning activity was observed.
    - Fish ages ranged from 3-5 years, with older fish age classes missing.
- *Acoustic Surveys (Rand)*
    - Initial estimates from FY17 are slightly more than last year.

***PAC Discussion of the HRM Program*:**

Regarding the VHS study, French indicated that it is good to have more than one control site or area. He wondered what is happening at Kodiak Island. How expensive is it to add a site? The additional data would help us understand the distribution of the virus. Scott Pegau, HRM program lead responded, noting that this monitoring is also occurring in Puget Sound. Pegau said that Kodiak herring are genetically very different, which might complicate interpretation of the data. Also the sampling is expensive as fish have to be harvested live for this type of testing.

Studebaker asked a question about modeling of herring data. Lindeberg said that they use an ADF&G model which now includes a disease component. The model has been tweaked frequently over the years they are not just counting fish and biomass.

French and others also discussed the lost herring fishery in PWS and the increasing spot shrimp fishery.

Break:

Eilo adjourned the meeting at 12:05 pm for a lunch break. The meeting was reconvened by Eilo at 12:33 pm.

Data Management

The Science Panel recommends full funding for the data project. Coordination between this project and the long-term monitoring projects has greatly improved. The PIs are doing a good job of getting the data published and available to the public. Lindeberg reported that 45 data sets have been posted online. Johnson asked whether there is a link from the Trustee Council's web site to these databases. Trustee Council staff will check on this.

PAC Discussion of Data Management

French emphasized the importance of being able to access raw data, not just scientific papers, which provide a summary of the results. He also noted the great improvements in data availability in recent years. Access to Trustee Council data is better than it was in the 1990s.

Pigeon Guillemot Restoration Project

Fiscal Year 18 is the last year of this 5-year project. No new mink were trapped in the 2017 field season, but there was snow for the first time in four years and mink tracks were seen. Counts of pigeon guillemot individuals at Peak, Naked and Story Islands have doubled in two years. Numbers on control islands did not experience a similar increase. Also the number of nests quadrupled since 2014. Colonies are starting to form with up to ten nests in one area.

Productivity was high which indicates that adult birds were able to find enough food for their chicks. The project has requested additional funding to cover the higher costs of trapping in FY18 to continue to remove mink adjacent to the nesting sites in the Naked Island Group. The Science Panel recommends supporting the requested funding for this project.

Immunological Compromise of Fish (Whitehead)

This continuing project is progressing well. State and federal agency researchers at ADF&G and NOAA are collaborating well with Project PIs. The ADF&G staff has also been helpful and responsive by collecting tissue samples, which has contributed to achieving project goals in a timely manner. The analysis of samples has also been conducted cost-effectively, which has allowed for additional samples to be collected at other locations.

Activities proposed for FY17 are underway including:

- Sequencing of the reference genome for herring.
- Early life development and pathogen challenge experiments.

The FY17 work is ahead of schedule and some activities proposed for FY18 are already under way, such as receiving samples from ADF&G. Because the work is ahead of schedule the PI has proposed shifting a portion of future years funding forward to FY18 to hire a Post-doc now instead of later, to accommodate the increase in data generated. The Science Panel supports this request.

***PAC discussion of Immunological Compromise of Fish*:**

Given the proposed shifting of funding to FY18, Fandrei asked if the net amount for the project would remain the same. Wang confirmed that the overall cost for the project would not increase.

French asked how the fish were exposed, and in particular he was interested in whether the WAF [water accommodated fraction] was used for exposure. He noted that PAHs are ubiquitous in the environment. French also wanted to know what PAHs [polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons] were analyzed. He further said that the 3 and 4-ring PAHs and their polar fractions were more soluble and therefore they may affect the immune system to a greater degree.

Habitat Program:

Adams briefed the PAC on Habitat Program activities. Habitat purchases are complex transactions, involving multiple steps. The Trustee Council becomes involved early in the process. Further work on these potential projects is conditional and subject to due diligence. The Trustee Council's action on parcels is to provide funding authorization to pursue the project.

During 2017, the EVOSTC has closed on two projects, the Termination Point parcel on Kodiak Island and the Thorsheim Drainage Project on Afognak Island. The Chief Cove project on Kodiak Island, within the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, is also nearly completed.

The PAC was briefed on a new proposed parcel, the Meals Hill Protection Project in Valdez, Alaska. Adams reported potential benefits, including the presence of kelp beds adjacent to the parcel, benefits to salmon, the proximity to other Trustee Council parcels, the high value of the habitat and the opportunity to provide public access by walking trails, enhancing recreation and tourism.

***PAC discussion – Habitat Program*:**

The PAC discussed the Meals Hill parcel. Bauer, a resident of Valdez, was asked her opinion about this proposal and what she knew about the perspective of the community. Bauer noted that this is one of the few areas in Valdez with large trees. Coastal old-growth forest is present. The tract is privately owned. Bauer's assessment was that the majority of residents want it protected, and she recommended that the Trustee Council pursue the purchase.

French was concerned that if the Trustee Council begins purchasing habitat within rural communities, where does it stop? Purchasing a parcel in the town of Valdez is an issue. What would prevent the Trustee Council from looking at upland areas in Seward and Homer, for example?

Adams said this would not be a first for a Trustee Council project, for example in Homer, the Beluga Slough parcel is within the city limits, and Termination Point on Kodiak is within the borough boundary. The Trustee Council pursues projects with the highest habitat values and works with communities to ensure local support is there.

Fandrei noted that this might not impede development, but it might re-direct it. He also asked if an inholding was involved. Adams said yes, there is an inholding, as well as an access road used by the homeowner. The inholding will not be purchased.

Andersen-Faulkner said that berry picking may not be the only subsistence use in this area. Making this site assessable to the public may also provide access to medicinal plants.

Springer thought this type of project would be opposed in Homer. Homer is a divided community, so some would support and some would not. She initially expressed opposition due to her concerns about potential community opposition in Valdez, but after hearing from other PAC members, ultimately voted in favor of the proposal.

Bauer said that the City of Valdez has discussed the project and that knowledge about it is widespread. Most residents support the acquisition, while a smaller number may be opposed. French noted that he had supported the Beluga Slough project as it mostly involved wetlands in need of protection. This project, which has a large upland component, is different.

Studebaker asked if this was the only old-growth forest in the area. Bauer said yes, at least old-growth that extends down to sea level.

Other PAC discussion:

Prior to meeting close, PAC members and the acting Executive Director shared some thoughts.

Adams reiterated that the Trustee Council appreciates the PAC's work, and that the Trustee Council values their viewpoints.

Andersen-Faulkner thanked the Trustee Council staff for the materials. She remarked that the PAC brings various perspectives from communities affected by the spill, as well as their subject-matter expertise.

Springer likes the public outreach and media emphasis. There is a need to reach non-science audiences. There are many ways to do this beyond social media, for example small-scale journalism.

French agreed that outreach is important. He noted that the PAC is smaller than it has been in the past, but it is still effective. He asked that the PAC members receive a copy of the Federal Register notice with the vacancy announcement. Johnson said that either he or Trustee Council staff will ensure PAC members get a copy of the notice. French suggested that PAC members should reach out to others they know. They should look for opportunities to spread the word and convey the importance of the mission.

Studebaker welcomed the new Science Coordinator. She suggested that the PAC take a "field trip" to ARLIS, as they have been doing a lot of excellent work and it has been a long time since the PAC visited. Studebaker also said she would like to see a presentation from the Great Land Trust. They are a very effective intermediary organization that works in the habitat arena. She is very impressed with their work. Studebaker also would like to hear presentations from the two post-docs.

Wang reminded the PAC they would be invited to attend a technical workshop organized by the Herring Research and Monitoring Program and Gulf Watch Alaska Program: Long-Term

Monitoring of Marine Conditions and Injured Resources 2019 which is year 3 of the second 5-year programs.

This was the first PAC meeting for Skaldal and he said that he learned a lot. Good information was conveyed during the meeting.

Bauer also thanked staff. The materials were, as usual, well organized.

PAC Motions:

Motion: Andersen-Faulkner introduced a motion to re-elect Kurt Eilo as the PAC chair. Second by Studebaker. **Motion carried.**

Motion: Andersen-Faulkner introduced a motion to re-elect John French as the PAC vice chair. Second by Eilo. **Motion carried.**

Motion: Andersen-Faulkner introduced a motion to approve the meeting agenda, as modified (change in the order of speakers). Second by Fandrei. **Motion carried**.

Motion: Andersen-Faulkner introduced a motion to approve the September 22, 2016 meeting summary. Second by Bauer. **Motion carried**.

Motion: Fandrei introduced a motion to approve the FY18 Annual EVOSTC Budget. He also recommended that the Trustee Council consider adding funding for outreach. Second by Studebaker. **Motion carried**.

Motion: Fandrei and Studebaker jointly introduced a motion recommending that the Trustee Council develop a plan, and devote funding to, increasing outreach using social media and other means to educate the public, emphasizing younger generations. Second by Andersen-Faulkner. **Motion carried**.

Motion: French introduced a motion to approve reauthorization of the Kenai River Flats Riverbank Protection Project in the amount of $327,000. Second by Fandrei. **Motion carried.**

Motion: Studebaker introduced a motion to concur with the Gulf Watch Alaska and Herring Research and Monitoring budgets as proposed by the Science Panel. Second by Fandrei. **Motion carried.**

Motion: Fandrei introduced a motion to recommend FY18 funding for the Long-Term Data Management Program. Second by Andersen-Faulkner. **Motion carried.**

Motion: Studebaker introduced a motion recommending approval of the requested FY18 funding for the Pigeon Guillemot Enhancement Project. Second by Fandrei. **Motion carried.**

Motion: French introduced a motion to recommend funding for Project 18170115 (Immunological Expressions of PAH Exposure in Fish) as requested for FY18. Second by Bauer. **Motion carried.**

Motion: Andersen-Faulkner introduced a motion to recommend approval of the Port Valdez Meals Hill habitat project. Second by Studebaker. **Motion carried *with one (French) opposing*.**

Closing Remarks:

The meeting was adjourned by Eilo at 1:12 p.m.

I. FOLLOW-UP:

1. The PAC meeting notes and recommendations will be distributed to the EVOS Trustee Council prior to their next meeting, which will be held on November 14, 2017 in Anchorage. The DFO and the PAC Chair will attend the meeting. The DFO will update the Trustee Council on the status of filling the existing vacancy on the PAC. The Chair will summarize the results of the September 28, 2017 PAC meeting. The PAC members are welcome to attend in-person or telephonically.

J. NEXT MEETINGS:

Trustee Council Meeting (Anchorage on November 14, 2017)

K. ATTACHMENTS (provided to PAC members prior to the meeting):

1. September 28, 2017 *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC) Public Advisory Committee (PAC) draft meeting agenda.

2. September 22, 2016 *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC) Public Advisory Committee (PAC) draft meeting summary.

3. Draft FY18 EVOSTC Annual Budget

4. Draft Reporting Policy

5. ARLIS Cataloging Librarian I Funding Extension Proposal for completion of the EVOS Special Collection Cataloging Project

6. Reauthorization Request for EVOSTC Document Digitizing Project Funds Phase 4: EVOSTC Official Record (1991-Present)

7. State Parks Kenai River Flats Riverbank Protection Proposal (17170116)

8. EVOSTC Draft FY17 – FY21 Work Plan for Restoration, Research and Monitoring Projects: Fiscal Year 2018

10. Great Land Trust's Request for Habitat Conservation Project Funding

11. Benefits Report for Port Valdez Meals Hill Habitat Protection Project

L. CERTIFICATION:

_____	_____
PAC Chairperson	**Date**