

To: Craig O'Connor

3 November 2021

From: Jeep Rice

Subject: *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council's (EVOSTC) failure to fund Killer Whale studies

The October Trustee meeting failed to fund the long-term Killer whale population monitoring studies, and brings into doubt the function and responsibility of the Trustee council to track and monitor species that were injured in the spill, particularly when the injury has been tracked and the recovery remains incomplete. This letter follows with several points, and concludes that Killer Whale study is arguably the most important EVOS study that should be continued. 1. Two pods of Killer Whales were injured by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, and most importantly, they remain un-recovered. Note the figure below. 2. As a marine mammal, they are a protected species, and a concern and responsibility of NOAA as a Trustee agency. The recovery, or lack of it, should be monitored in the future.

1. The documentation of oil impact and slow recovery is irrefutable, and was made possible because of baseline studies started in the mid-1980's prior to the spill, hence there is more than 36 years of population monitoring. Most importantly, the population monitoring is tracked down to the individual level made possible because of specific individual markings, thus their population is accurately measured along with the recruitment of their off-spring. Because of the accurate population monitoring before and after the spill, this study is arguably one of the most important specific oil impact studies ever funded, not only in Alaska, but the world.
2. This unprecedented finding of short and long-term population impact coupled with slow recovery have been used to stimulate studies of marine mammals in other spills, such as the 2010 Gulf of Mexico Deepwater Horizon spill, and will be justification for future damage assessment of marine mammals for future spills in Alaska if they occur, or any other place in the world.
3. This species is of general interest to the public, hence they were made a protected species within the marine mammal act. More importantly, the two pods that were injured are important as apex predators in PWS and Kenai fiords, and important to tourists, tourism operators, and local residents of Prince William Sound and Kenai Fiords area.
4. The power and importance of long term studies, that are integrated, is well demonstrated in the population monitoring graph below. It shows not only the long and slow struggles to recover by the AB pod, but also the effects of the "warm years", where the population took an un-expected hit, wiping out 30 years of slow recovery. Without the studies of salmon returns and oceanographic temperatures, we would not have known about the un-expected effects on a recovering apex predator.

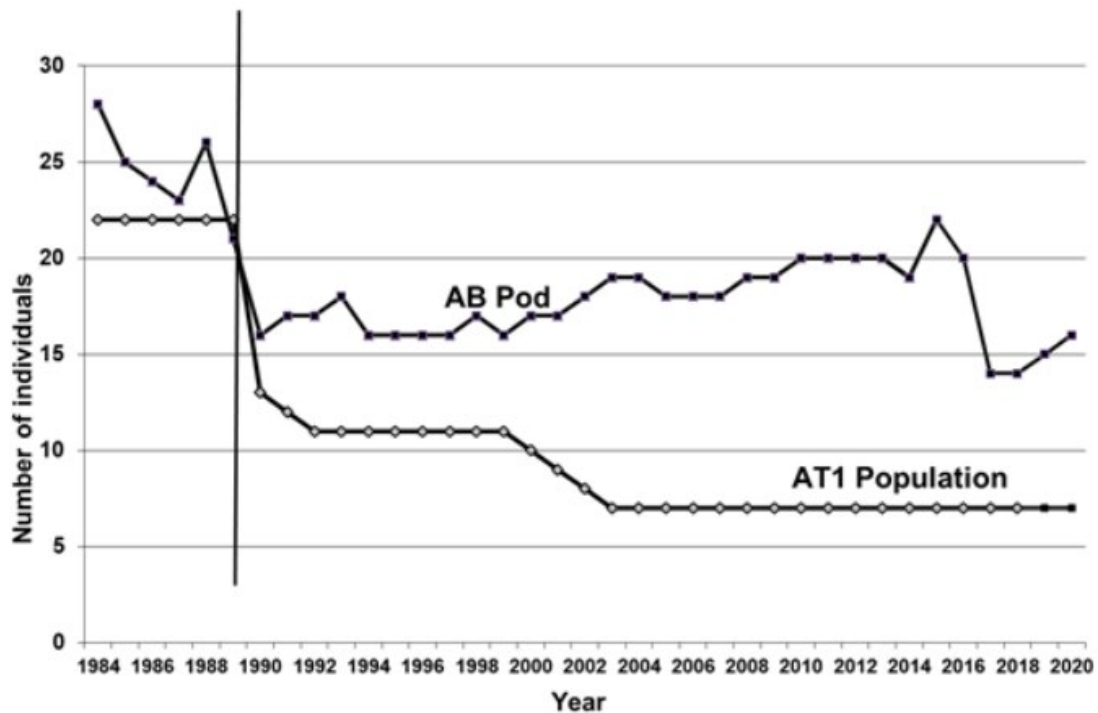
In conclusion, I urge the Trustees to reconsider funding the Killer Whale population monitoring study. The two pods of Killer Whales were injured at the population level, they continue to struggle in their recovery 32 years later, they are a protected marine mammal species, and they are important as apex predators to the PWS ecosystem. It is a quality study, with results reported in peer reviewed scientific literature, and has been recommended for funding at all levels (agency, scientific review panel, executive director) this year, and in all years since 1989!

Side Note: As a long term research scientist involved from the beginning of EVOS, with no funding ties to this project before or after my retirement, I am saddened and shocked that the Trustee Council failed to fund this specific long term study. I have cited this study in several review papers I have participated in, including the high impact paper published in Science by lead author Charles Peterson (1), probably the most cited paper concerning EVOS. I urge the Trustee Council to reconsider their decision on this study.

Stanley "Jeep" Rice

NOAA Research Scientist, retired, from Auke Bay Laboratory

- (1) Peterson, C.H., Rice, S.D., Short, J.W., Esler, D., Bodkin, J.L., Ballachey, B.E., Irons, D.B., 2003. Long-term ecosystem response to the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. *Science* 302 (5653). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.1084282>.



From: [Millane Family](#)
To: [DFG, EVOS Restoration \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#); [Wang, Shiway W \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#); [craig.r.o"connor](#)
Subject: Please do not eliminate funding for North Gulf Oceanic Society's killer whale research
Date: Friday, November 19, 2021 7:25:34 AM

I have been the owner of a local Alaskan business for many years, and I was extremely disturbed and disappointed to learn that funding for killer whale research in Alaska was recently eliminated by the EVOS Trustee Council. My business and I personally have benefitted greatly from the outreach and science that the North Gulf Oceanic Society has provided, through presentations, informational emails, Facebook, and Instagram, or VHF radio calls while on the water. Sightings of killer whales are always a special treat for not only us but our guests, and this experience is enriched when coupled with pertinent and recent information about the whales we are seeing.

When Alaskans and our visiting guests take a wildlife tour, an encounter with killer whales is at the top of the list. Not only is the sighting itself memorable, but current and relevant information makes it even more meaningful. For many of our guests seeing killer whales is one of the main reasons for their visit.

The North Gulf Oceanic Society has accumulated a valuable long-term dataset running back to 1984, which is rare in Alaska. Having data prior to the oil spill greatly informed the impacts of the spill on this population. It would be a shame to not maintain this population assessment, and lose track of health trends during spills and ocean temperature events.

We also see the benefit in continued studies, and are particularly excited about some of the newly proposed work with aerial body condition, diet, and year-round hydrophones that detect pods during any season.

We strongly urge the Trustee Council to continue funding this very important and valuable killer whale research performed by the North Gulf Oceanic Society, and extend the benefits that are enjoyed by many Alaskan communities.

Respectfully
Laurie Millane
14000 Shady Lane
Seward Ak. 99664
907-224-3635

From: [Bixler McClure, Seward Ocean Excursions](#)
To: [DFG, EVOS Restoration \(EVOSTC sponsored\); Wang, Shiway W \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#)
Cc: [craig.r.o"connor](#)
Subject: Support for orca research
Date: Monday, November 22, 2021 7:48:54 PM

I have been the owner of an Alaskan (Seward) tour company for 5 years, and a resident of Alaska for 12 years, and my family have been Seward, Alaska residents for over 90 years. I was extremely disappointed to learn that funding for killer whale research in Alaska was recently eliminated by the EVOS Trustee Council. We have all benefitted greatly from the outreach and science that the North Gulf Oceanic Society has provided, through presentations, informational emails, Facebook, and Instagram, or VHF radio calls while on the water. Sightings of killer whales are always a special treat, and this experience is enriched when coupled with pertinent and recent information about the whales we are seeing.

When Alaskans and other visitors take a wildlife tour, an encounter with killer whales is at the top of the list. Not only is the sighting itself memorable, but current and relevant information makes it even more meaningful. The North Gulf Oceanic Society has been very generous by distributing catalogues that include ages and relationships, as well as sharing information regarding diet, range, acoustic monitoring, health condition, and other scientific findings. I would hate to see us lose access to this resource.

The North Gulf Oceanic Society has accumulated a valuable long-term dataset running back to 1984, which is rare in Alaska. Having data prior to the oil spill greatly informed the impacts of the spill on this population. It would be a shame to not maintain this population assessment, and lose track of health trends during spills and ocean temperature events.

Two pods (AB and AT1) swam through the oil spill and subsequently lost many members, and our guests always seek to know more about these pods. We also see the benefit in continued studies, and are particularly excited about some of the newly proposed work with aerial body condition, diet, and year-round hydrophones that detect pods during any season.

We strongly urge the Trustee Council to continue funding the killer whale research performed by the North Gulf Oceanic Society, and extend the benefits that are enjoyed by many Alaskan communities.

Captain Bixler McClure
Seward Ocean Excursions
bixler@sewardoceanexcursions.com
1 (907) 599-0499
sewardoceanexcursions.com

Our Location: sewardoceanexcursions.com/location
Instagram/Facebook: [@sewardoceanexcursions](#)

From: [Stephanie Millane](#)
Subject: Letter of Support Killer Whale Research
Date: Wednesday, November 24, 2021 1:25:38 PM
Attachments: [Screen Shot 2019-10-20 at 10.41.16 AM.png](#)

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in support of reinstating funding for the North Gulf Oceanic Society Killer Whale Research. I was very frustrated to learn funding for killer whale research in Alaska was eliminated by the EVOS Trustee Council. I am the owner of a Seward based tour company and me, my company, my staff and my guests have greatly benefitted from the outreach and science that the North Gulf Oceanic Society has provided through various means.

They have presented locally to our staff members who then convey what they have learned to our guests, and we often hear them on VHF while on tours giving information about the killer whales we're seeing. This information not only enriches our tours, but also helps to educate guests, who then leave with a better understanding of killer whales and the natural world around them.

NGOS is a valuable resource to our community and our state, and I strongly urge the Trustee Council to continue funding killer whale research by their organization.

With gratitude,

Stephanie



Stephanie C. Millane - Owner

Sunny Cove Kayaking
Box 3332, Seward, AK 99664

info@sunnycove.com

www.sunnycove.com

O: 1(907)224.4426



Pacific Biological Station
3190 Hammond Bay Road
Nanaimo, B.C. V9T 6N7

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

November 19, 2021

EVOS Trustee Council:
dfg.evos.restoration@alaska.gov

Dear Trustee Council members:

Re: NGOS killer whale research funding

I am writing to express my strong support for continued funding of North Gulf Oceanic Society's killer whale research program in Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords.

The long-term field research that NGOS has been conducting is critical to future conservation and management of killer whales in the northern Gulf of Alaska. It is especially important that assessment continues to monitor the recovery of killer whale groups affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

As the oceans' top predator, killer whales rely on healthy and productive marine ecosystems. But climate change is affecting these ecosystems, and killer whales are vulnerable to such effects. This is clearly evident in the continued decline of endangered Southern Resident killer whales in British Columbia and Washington State. It is only through decades of population monitoring and field studies of foraging behaviour that my colleagues and I were able to establish the dependency of Southern Residents on Chinook salmon for their survival. Recent management actions in Canada and the US to improve availability of Chinook salmon for the whales have resulted from this knowledge, and hopefully this will improve the future prospects of this population.

The research that NGOS is undertaking is equally important to the conservation of killer whales in the northern Gulf of Alaska. This vital work needs to continue, and I strongly urge that funding be provided in order for it to do so.

Sincerely,

John K.B. Ford, PhD
Marine Mammal Scientist (Emeritus), Pacific Biological Station, Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Co-Chair for Marine Mammals, Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada
(COSEWIC)

From: [Lauren Peterson](#)
To: [DFG, EVOS Restoration \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#); [Wang, Shiway W \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#)
Cc: [craig.r.o"connor](#)
Subject: Please Reinstate the North Gulf Oceanic Society Killer Whale Research Funding
Date: Wednesday, November 24, 2021 12:15:13 PM

Dear Shiway Wang and the EVOSTC,

I am deeply saddened to hear that the funding for killer whale research here in Alaska has been eliminated by the EVOSTC. With a background in marine life, research, and education, it is no secret that I am a major proponent of research and would hate to see an even larger decline in the population of killer whales due to a lack of information. Over the years, one of my family's fondest memories has been hopping on a tour boat out in Resurrection Bay, observing all of Alaska's marine life, including the miraculous killer whale. These are such fascinating mammals and have always been on the top of our "must-see" list while visiting. I would hate to see visitors and locals lose all of the current and relevant information on the pods in our surrounding waters that has been graciously provided by the North Gulf Oceanic Society. I have loved keeping up with all of the outreach the North Gulf Oceanic Society has posted on social media and feel as though without this outreach, I would hate to miss out on all of the updates on the pods, current happenings, and fun stories. I would be very disappointed if they were no longer my resource for relevant information on killer whales, including how to protect them and understanding the long-term effects of large-scale ocean events, such as the Exxon-Valdez oil spill.

I strongly encourage the EVOSTC to reinstate the funding.

Sincerely,

Lauren

From: [Donna Schantz](#)
To: [Wang, Shiway W \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#)
Cc: [craig.R.OConnor@noaa.gov](#); [DFG, EVOS Restoration \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#)
Subject: Support for killer whale monitoring
Date: Tuesday, November 23, 2021 10:22:47 PM

November 23, 2021

Shiway Wang
Executive Director
Exxon Valdez oil Spill Trustee Council
shiway.wang@alaska.gov

cc: Craig 'Connor craig.R.OConnor@noaa.gov
General EVOS Trustee Council Dfg.evos.restoration@alaska.gov

Dear Executive Director Wang:

I am writing to urge you to fund the long-standing killer whale monitoring study in Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords. Continuing to monitor the AB pod and the AT1 killer whale populations in Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords is of the utmost importance as these groups of whales suffered serious losses at the time of the oil spill and have not recovered at projected rates. The AT1 population is considered to be not recovering due to a lack of recruitment of breeding females. Monitoring of all the major pods and their current movements, range, feeding habits, and contaminant levels will help determine their vulnerability to future perturbations, including oil spills.

The EVOSTC website states that your long-term monitoring program has two components: monitoring the recovery of resources from the initial injury and monitoring how factors other than oil may inhibit full recovery or adversely impact recovered resources. This second type of monitoring collects data on environmental factors that drive ecosystem-level changes. The study of the AT1 and AB pods of killer whales is exactly the type of long-term monitoring the EVOSTC was created to conduct, and it is important that this dataset be maintained, especially in light of the drastic environmental changes being observed in the North Pacific. These shifting environmental changes leave considerable uncertainty in terms of how these changes will impact injured species like the killer whales into the future. Continued monitoring of these changes along with injured species and resources, and the maintenance of these long-term data collections will help inform the scientific community and the public, and will lead to good management decisions.

Please consider funding the continuation of the long-term monitoring and close study of the killer whale populations in Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Donna Schantz
P.O. Box 1224
Valdez, AK 99686
schantzbird@valdezak.net
907-255-5116

From: [Tammy Lang](#)
To: [DFG, EVOS Restoration \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#); [Wang, Shiway W \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#)
Cc: [craig.r.o"connor](#)
Subject: An Urge to Continue Funding the North Gulf Oceanic Society
Date: Sunday, November 28, 2021 10:30:35 AM

To the EVOS Trustee Council, and to Any Other Concerned Parties,

My name is Tamara Lang, and I am a marine tourism captain operating out of Seward, Alaska. I recently heard that you were considering removing funding from the North Gulf Oceanic Society, and I am reaching out to let you know what an invaluable part of our community the North Gulf Oceanic Society plays, and the negative effects it will have on our community and our far-reaching tourism base should this organization be defunded.

When tourists visit Alaska and set out on a vessel to view glaciers and wildlife, we have a unique opportunity to educate them about the ecosystem of this region, and the surest way to do so is to allow them a glimpse at a species to whom they can deeply relate, a species which serves as an ambassador for all the other unseen facets of the ecosystem: killer whales. An experience with killer whales invariably creates a sense of awe in our passengers, which will inspire their future actions and will deepen their understanding of the fjord environment.

However, this experience means nothing if we do not have relevant information about these animals to share with passengers. I can honestly say that the harbor in Seward is the best educated I have ever encountered about these animals, and the credit for that goes to one organization: the North Gulf Oceanic Society. In addition to planning yearly symposiums detailing killer whale information and current research for captains, crew, and any other interested parties, the North Gulf Oceanic Society works hand-in-hand with tour operators to deliver on-the-spot information about pods in the area via VHF radio. This means that I can tell my passengers the specific names of the animals we are seeing, their birthdates, their family tree, and sometimes even specific stories about the life history of that individual. At times, the North Gulf Oceanic Society will even play audio recordings of that pod's vocalizations over VHF, which we can then share directly with our passengers to further expand their experience. I daily share with my passengers the results of studies conducted by the North Gulf Oceanic Society, citing the results of DNA analysis of salmon scales in resident killer whale fecal matter, of observed predation of offshore killer whales and awaited dna analysis of their prey species, and of the diet composition of resident killer whales as determined through fecal matter collected by NGOS. And even when *Natoa*, the North Gulf Oceanic Society research vessel, is not on the water, I still hold a wealth of information in the form of the killer whale catalog which they are constantly updating, and which I will use as a daily reference to identify individuals.

And of course, when discussing killer whales and the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, it is impossible not to mention the AT1 transient pod, or the Chugach Transients. This pod swam directly through the slick of the Exxon-Valdez oil spill, and they have not had a single successful calf since that day in 1989. There are only seven members of this pod in existence, and they use a series of vocalizations heard nowhere else on the planet. They are genetically distinct from other transients and have a much narrower range, staying within the region of the Kenai Fjords and Prince William Sound, and this narrow location makes them integrally tied to the aftermath of the Exxon-Valdez Oil Spill. I know all of this information I have just shared as a direct result of the North Gulf Oceanic Society and the community they have created, a community for whom these whales are a vital part of our story and the story of our region.

To remove funding from the organization that does the most work to understand and document the AT1 Transients, and which connects the tourism demographic to up-to-date research on these and other killer whales, would be to tear away a part of the heart of our community. These whales are our history, and they are your history too. We cannot leave that history to be forgotten. And we cannot let our present and our future suffer from the loss of our valuable resource: the scientific pursuit of killer whales as performed by the North Gulf Oceanic Society.

I urge you to continue funding the North Gulf Oceanic Society, so that they can continue their work in killer whale research, continue their years of study upon the AT1 transient pod, and remain a strong voice for science communication in our region.

Thank you,

--

Tamara Lang

Captain and Author

tamannlang@gmail.com

562-896-4968

From: [Andrew Smith](#)
To: [DFG, EVOS Restoration \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#); [Wang, Shiway W \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#)
Cc: [craig.r.o"connor](#)
Subject: Funding for Killer Whale Research
Date: Monday, November 29, 2021 9:09:33 AM

Dear Shiway Wang and General EVOS Trustee Council,

I have been a sea kayak guide in the Kenai Fjords National Park for many 5 years, and I was extremely disappointed to learn that funding for killer whale research in Alaska was recently eliminated by the EVOS Trustee Council. I have benefitted greatly from the outreach and science that the North Gulf Oceanic Society has provided, through presentations, informational emails, Facebook, and Instagram, or VHF radio calls while on the water. Sightings of killer whales are always a special treat, and this experience is enriched when coupled with pertinent and recent information about the whales we are seeing.

When Alaskans and other visitors take a wildlife tour, an encounter with killer whales is at the top of the list. Not only is the sighting itself memorable, but current and relevant information makes it even more meaningful. The North Gulf Oceanic Society has been very generous by distributing catalogues that include ages and relationships, as well as sharing information regarding diet, range, acoustic monitoring, health condition, and other scientific findings. I would hate to see us lose access to this resource.

The North Gulf Oceanic Society has accumulated a valuable long-term dataset running back to 1984, which is rare in Alaska. Having data prior to the oil spill greatly informed the impacts of the spill on this population. It would be a shame to not maintain this population assessment, and lose track of health trends during spills and ocean temperature events.

Two pods (AB and AT1) swam through the oil spill and subsequently lost many members, and our guests always seek to know more about these pods. We also see the benefit in continued studies, and are particularly excited about some of the newly proposed work with aerial body condition, diet, and year-round hydrophones that detect pods during any season.

We strongly urge the Trustee Council to continue funding the killer whale research performed by the North Gulf Oceanic Society, and extend the benefits that are enjoyed by many Alaskan communities.

Thank you for your consideration. This place I work in is sublime and hope we all do our part to protect the creatures within it.

Sincerely,

Andrew Smith
smith_andrew@outlook.com



November 29, 2021

Dear Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council,

I am writing this letter to argue for continuing support of the North Gulf Oceanic Society (NGOS) and their long-term killer whale monitoring studies. The ongoing research that NGOs has been conducting since 1984 is immensely valuable to our understanding of killer whale population dynamics and their roles as top predators in the Alaskan marine ecosystem.

Both resident and transient killer whales were adversely impacted by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill and some pods have still not fully recovered. Furthermore, the AT1 transient group appears to be headed for extinction. Continuation of studies on this impending tragedy is vitally important and of broad interest, from its impacts on the ecosystem food web to the human dimension of what it means to permanently lose a well-studied and well-known family grouping of such an iconic species.

The importance of long-term monitoring studies cannot be overstated. As a principal investigator of a long-term monitoring project, I have a deep appreciation of the importance of long-term individual-based population monitoring studies. The only way to fully understand many aspects of behavior and population dynamics is to monitor individuals and their relationship to the environment over several decades and generations that span a variety of ecosystem changes. Very long-lived species such as killer whales require the longest continued research efforts.

The Alaska SeaLife Center has collaborated with NGOs on multiple studies including an important assessment of transient killer whale predation on Endangered Steller sea lions. Such research partnerships, and so many other collaborations undertaken with NGOs exemplify their commitment to understanding the many aspects of killer whales and their relationship to the environment that they, and we, live and work in. Furthermore, NGOs continues to innovate and collaborate with others in their research efforts, making valuable new contributions to research methodologies that facilitate broader knowledge of cetacean biology and ecology. Organizations like NGOs that promote strong scientific collaborations with research that is published in high-profile scientific journals are most worthy of continued funding.

Threats to killer whale populations in Alaska are ongoing with warming ocean temperatures and oil spills that continue to occur from ship groundings and at the Alyeska Pipeline terminal in Valdez. While recent oil spills in Alaska have been minor compared to the *Exxon Valdez* disaster, they have not been without their impacts, and with continued tanker shipping, threat of

another major disaster is always present. We cannot abandon research activities when such threats persist. Threats also include a record-breaking marine heat wave in the north Pacific Ocean in the recent past, with more of these anticipated in the future. Concerned citizens and scientists expect the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council to continue funding important research such as that conducted by NGOS through full recovery of the populations under study. Please continue funding the important research conducted by NGOS.

Sincerely,

John M. Maniscalco

John M. Maniscalco, Ph.D.
Research Scientist

November 30, 2021

Shiway Wang
Executive Director
Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
4230 University Drive, Suite 220
Anchorage, AK 99508-4650

RE: North Gulf Oceanic Society Funding

Dear Executive Director Wang,

I am writing to urge you to fund the long-standing killer whale monitoring study in Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords conducted by the North Gulf Oceanic Society (NGOS).

I am a USCG licensed Captain for Stan Stephens Cruises, located in Valdez, and have worked for the company since 1995. For the last two decades, I have witnessed the public's love and interest in these animals explode to the point where I feel confident saying killer whales have become the most beloved animal in Prince William Sound.

Since 1984, the NGOS has accumulated a long-term dataset for killer whales that is quite remarkable for Alaskan waters, and for the last three decades, NGOS has been able to accomplish this through funding from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC). Of particular interest is the information gained about the AB and AT1 pods, both of which swam through the spill and subsequently lost many members. The EVOSTC states on their website that "Long-term monitoring after a spill has two components: monitoring the recovery of resources from the initial injury and monitoring how factors other than oil may inhibit full recovery or adversely impact recovered resources". The future work proposed by the NGOS directly meets both of these components and is supported by the Science Panel, the Executive Director and the Public Advisory Committee. Therefore, it was an absolute shock to me to learn that the Trustees had decided to eliminate the funding for the NGOS.

I am very fortunate to see multiple pods of killer whales from our vessels throughout the summer. After we leave the animals for the day, tourists often comment to me about how much knowledge I have about these pods. Nearly all this information has been given to me by the NGOS. The photo catalogues they provide to operators like us are invaluable. It helps to ID pods and their members, as well as their age and relationships. There is no other mean to obtain this information for the killer whales of Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords. This catalogue goes back decades, it would be devastating to lose this information.

I frequently get to show tourists both the AB and AT1 pods, oftentimes right at Bligh Reef. Seeing the AT1 pod is one of the most rewarding, yet emotionally difficult things to narrate about to our passengers. The oil spill had a devastating impact on this extremely unique pod, and their future is grim. Yet I have always been able to add in some positive highlights to the AT1

story based on updates about the pod passed on by the NGOS. Telling their story provides a natural lead-in to speak about the EVOSTC and the funding allocated for the long-term study of killer whales. I cannot imagine telling that story now, explaining to visitors from all over the world, that the Trustees decided that these animals are no longer deserving of the funds from the oil spill they and their families swam through.

Please consider funding the continuation of the long-term monitoring of the killer whale populations in Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Bauer', with a stylized, flowing script.

Amanda Bauer

P.O. Box 2953

Valdez, AK 99686

amanda@stephenscruises.com

907-831-0403

CC: General EVOS Trustee Council

Craig O'Connor, NOAA

North Gulf Oceanic Society



November 30, 2021

Shiway Wang
Executive Director
Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
4230 University Drive, Suite 220
Anchorage, AK 99508-4650

RE: North Gulf Oceanic Society Funding

Dear Executive Director Wang,

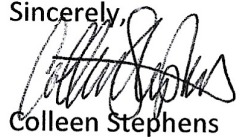
I am writing to request that the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustees please restore the funding necessary for the North Gulf Oceanic Society to continue its important work. The killer whale research and community outreach/education that the North Gulf Oceanic Society conducts directly meets the Long-term Monitoring portion that the EVOS funds are intended for, and therefore should be reinstated.

Our family company, Stan Stephens Cruises, has operated glacier and wildlife cruises in Prince William Sound since 1971. In 1989 my father and our company's founder, Stan Stephens, operated one of the first vessels to respond to the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill by bringing regulators to the site for observation and monitoring. Stan directly witnessed the impacts of the spill including watching members of the AB and AT1 killer whale pods swim through sections of the spilled oil. Due to these firsthand observations, our company has supported the funding that the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC) has administered to the North Gulf Oceanic Society since 1990. We were completely surprised to learn last week that this funding has been discontinued.

Our company has benefitted greatly from the outreach and science that the North Gulf Oceanic Society has provided through presentations, informational emails, Facebook, and Instagram, or VHF radio calls while on the water. With this information our captains convey to our guest's specific biological information about the animal or pod we are viewing. This makes killer whale viewing opportunities educational and memorable. Most guests walk away with an entirely new appreciation for killer whales and the ecosystems of Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords that supports them.

We urge the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council to fund the full request made by the North Gulf Oceanic Society. Their work is truly important to the residents, visitors and wildlife of the oil spill impacted regions. Please feel free to contact us if you have additional questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colleen Stephens', written over a horizontal line.

Colleen Stephens
President

CC: Craig O'Conner, NOAA
North Gulf Oceanic Society

From: [Caleb Craig](#)
To: [DFG, EVOS Restoration \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#)
Cc: [craig.r.o"connor; Wang, Shiway W \(EVOSTC sponsored\)](#)
Subject: North Gulf Oceanic Society
Date: Tuesday, November 30, 2021 4:12:11 AM

Hello, my name is Caleb Craig, I am a lifelong Alaskan resident of Valdez and Prince William Sound, and am writing as a concerned citizen to implore you to reconsider your decision to cancel funding to the North Gulf Oceanic Society.

I have had the privilege of working for Stan Stephens Cruises based in Valdez, where we regularly view our amazing orcas, and the sole provider of data concerning our whales is the NGOS. This ranges from identification photos, eating and breeding habits, to vital information concerning the recovery of our orca pods following EVOS. NGOS is the only group absolutely devoted to providing accurate, humane research of our Alaskan whales, and they are essential to all who live and work on the water for giving us a better understanding of the beautiful creatures that we share it with.

My sincere thanks to you for reading this, and please, do not let the North Gulf Oceanic Society's years of hard work cease.

- Caleb Craig

Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)

From: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Sent: Wednesday, December 1, 2021 3:35 PM
To: Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)
Subject: FW: North Gulf Oceanic Society Funding

Here's the newest for the T drive!

From: John Coffey <captainjohn@majormarine.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 1, 2021 2:00 PM
To: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored) <shiway.wang@alaska.gov>
Cc: craig.R.Oconner@noaa.gov; whalesalaska@gmail.com
Subject: North Gulf Oceanic Society Funding

Shiway Wang,

The North Gulf Oceanic Society (NGOS) is a critical resource for us in Alaska. I have had the opportunity to captain glacier and wildlife tour boats in Kenai Fjords National Park and Prince William Sound for 9 years and NGOS has been such an important part of this experience. Tourist to the area and long-term residents have benefited from this relationship with NGOS aboard our tour vessels for many many years!

NGOS has been monitoring the Killer Whales in our area since 1984, and have provided priceless research and long term data sets for these animals and the ecosystem which our tourism industry relies.

Since I started piloting tour vessels in Alaska in 2013, Dan Olson and Craig Matkin, from NGOS, have been an amazing resource for our company, Major Marine Tours, as well as all the 30 plus other tour operators out of Seward, Valdez, and Whittier, Alaska. Providing up-to-date information on Orca pods, behaviors, diet, morphology, identification, etc. through seminars, brochures, emails, and direct contact through VHF are only a few of the many ways we have all stood to benefit from their work.

Just this past July we were on a trip in Kenai Fjords National Park and Dan Olson gave me a call on the VHF to let me know the AD16 killer whales were in Agnes Cove. When we arrived, Dan captained the Research vessel Notoa abeam our tour boat and discussed with all our 148 passengers that day, the work they were doing. Standing on the bow of his ship, speaking directly to all my passengers he discussed how NGOS was working with a researcher who was flying drones above the whales and taking images of them from above. These would then be used to discuss body size as an indication of health among the various populations and pods of whales. These daily interactions with NGOS, both as a tour operator and as a person interested in the health of our ecosystem, have paramount importance to our community, our businesses, but most of all, to our whales.

We strongly urge the Trustee Council to continue funding the killer whale research performed by the North Gulf Oceanic Society, and extend the benefits that are enjoyed by many Alaskan communities

Thank you for your consideration,

John Coffey

Captain, Major Marine Tours

captainjohn@majormarine.com

Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)

From: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Sent: Friday, December 3, 2021 5:02 PM
To: Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)
Subject: FW: Restoration of killer whale research

From: James Bodkin <jldbodkin@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 3, 2021 4:56 PM
To: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored) <shiway.wang@alaska.gov>
Subject: Restoration of killer whale research

Dear Shiway

The following letter is in support of continuation of one of the premier long-term studies that evaluates the long term consequences of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill in the Gulf of Alaska. The killer whale monitoring project was initiated in 1984, providing one of the few time series with pre-spill data for an injured resource (see <https://www.whalesalaska.org/>). This work has documented the spill to have clear, long-term and continuing effects on killer whales that were exposed to spilled oil. The AB pod of Alaska Resident killer whales has not recovered and the AT1 Transient population is heading for extinction.

As the top level marine predator in the Gulf of Alaska, killer whales are a critical link in marine food webs and without question a contributing factor in driving populations of lower trophic levels of other marine consumers, many of which have high social, cultural and economic value, such as salmon, pinnipeds and sea otters. As such, continued study of this species is essential to an improved understanding of the structure, function and future of marine resources in the Gulf of Alaska, and beyond.

Because killer whales remain an unrecovered injured resource of the Exxon Valdez oil spill and are at the apex of the marine food, it is essential that the important killer whale research that has been supported by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council since the spill be continued under the umbrella of the Exxon Valdez Gulf Watch Alaska Monitoring Program.

Sincerely Yours,

James L. Bodkin

USGS Scientist Emeritus

--

James Bodkin
Scientist Emeritus
US Geological Survey
917-873-2799 jldbodkin@gmail.com

Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)

From: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Sent: Monday, December 6, 2021 9:57 AM
To: Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)
Subject: FW: Support letter for continued funding of the NGOS killer whale monitoring project
Attachments: NGOS Letter of Support 04DEC2021.PDF

From: Gina M Ylitalo <ginaylitalo@comcast.net>
Sent: Saturday, December 4, 2021 10:34 AM
To: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored) <shiway.wang@alaska.gov>
Subject: Support letter for continued funding of the NGOS killer whale monitoring project

Dear Dr. Wang,

Attached is a support letter for the continued funding of the North Gulf Oceanic Society (NGOS) killer whale monitoring project. I am a former (retired) Program Manager at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Northwest Fisheries Science Center in Seattle who collaborated with Craig Makin and other staff from the NGOS over the past 25 years on killer whale research. I strongly recommend continued funding of this project that has helped provide information on environmental changes occurring in the Gulf of Alaska and their effects to these whale populations.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Gina Ylitalo

04 December 2021

Support Letter for Continued Funding of the North Gulf Oceanic Society Killer Whale Monitoring Project

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing this letter in support of continued funding for the killer whale monitoring project in Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords conducted by the North Gulf Oceanic Society (NGOS). This organization has been collecting crucial data on the demographics and population structure, behavioral ecology, and environmental contaminant levels in resident and transient killer whales in the region for more than 25 years. Long-term data sets for top level marine predators in the region are limited, and thus the data collected by NGOS and their collaborators can provide information on environmental changes occurring in the Gulf of Alaska and their effects to these whale populations.

Prior to retiring in February 2020, I was a Supervisory Research Chemist in the Environmental Chemistry Program at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) in Seattle, WA. During my 30-year career at the NWFSC, the ECP research focused on measuring environmental contaminants, stable isotope ratios and other chemical tracers that describe the health and feeding ecology of marine animals, including killer whales from the eastern North Pacific. Since the mid-1990's, staff members of the ECP have worked closely with the NGOS to determine the potential health risks posed by toxic legacy environmental contaminants to Gulf of Alaska killer whales. In addition, NGOS field observations combined with NWFSC contaminant, fatty acid, and/or stable isotope ratio data obtained from non-lethal samples collected by NGOS have also helped describe their dietary preferences and geographical feeding range. Using field and chemical tracer data collected by NGOS and ECP, we recently drafted a manuscript that examines the extent to which contaminant levels and stable isotope ratios varied between Prince William Sound/Kenai Fjords resident killer whales and the ESA-listed Southern Resident killer whale population from Washington State over the same 10-year period, and how they fluctuated through time within each population. These two long-term data sets can aid in determining if these changes in chemical tracers are likely a result of alterations in whale feeding habits and/or due to shifts in isotopic baseline values for the oceanic basins in which the whales reside. Therefore, I strongly recommend continued funding of the North Gulf Oceanic Society killer whale monitoring project which would provide more clarity into the roles of shifting prey and ecosystem flux in the study region.

Respectfully,



Gina Ylitalo

Former Program Manager (Retired) – Environmental Chemistry Program
at NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)

From: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Sent: Monday, December 6, 2021 9:57 AM
To: Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)
Subject: FW: Discontinued funding for killer whale research

From: Olga Filatova <alazorro@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 6, 2021 5:39 AM
To: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored) <shiway.wang@alaska.gov>
Cc: whalesalaska@gmail.com
Subject: Discontinued funding for killer whale research

Dear Dr. Wang,

I am a Leading Research Fellow at the Faculty of Biology, Moscow State University. I have been working with killer whales in the North Pacific since 2000, pioneering killer whale research in Russia and collaborating with colleagues from the US and Canada. I am writing to you regarding the recent decision of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council to discontinue funding for the long-term killer whale monitoring project in Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords by North Gulf Oceanic Society.

I have been collaborating with NGOS on several projects based on their excellent and outstanding killer whale work. NGOS has the most extensive long-term data sets on individual cetaceans in Alaska, invaluable for studies of different aspects of their ecology and behavior. Without these studies, it is impossible to achieve effective conservation and sustainable management of cetacean populations. Specifically, the killer whale monitoring data obtained by NGOS is crucial for the future decision making related to this species in Alaskan waters. The NGOS killer whale monitoring project, initiated in 1984, is one of the few time series with pre-spill data for an injured resource. NGOS has documented the spill to have clear, long-term and continuing effects on the killer whales that were exposed. They have shown that the AB pod of Alaska Resident killer whales has not recovered and the AT1 Transient population is heading for extinction. The AB pod was on 30+ year recovery trajectory since the spill, but apparently has suffered a major setback following the recent heatwave. NGOS needs to continue monitoring to assess recovery potential, and evaluate the importance of environmental drivers.

As top predators, the status of killer whales informs on the status of the marine ecosystem that supports them. In recent years, NGOS is adapting to more effectively monitor killer whales in a changing environment. They have proposed new field and analytical methods, and brought on new staff, to build on their existing time series to better integrate with broader ecosystem studies. This will allow them to understand mechanisms of population change (long response time), by linking to body condition, growth, diet and distribution (short response times). I believe that discontinuing the funding at this critical moment will have long-lasting negative consequences for conservation of killer whales and the whole marine ecosystem in Alaska.

Sincerely yours,

Olga Filatova

PhD, Leading Research Fellow

Faculty of Biology, Moscow State University

Leninskiye Gory 1-12, Moscow 119234

Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)

From: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Sent: Monday, December 6, 2021 6:04 PM
To: Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)
Subject: FW: NGOS Funding Status

Please save on the T drive. Thank you!

From: Michael Boyce <denalimike@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, December 6, 2021 5:55 PM
To: DFG, EVOS Restoration (EVOSTC sponsored) <dfg.evos.restoration@alaska.gov>; Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored) <shiway.wang@alaska.gov>; craig.r.o'connor <craig.r.o'connor@noaa.gov>
Subject: NGOS Funding Status

Dear Director Wang and EVOSTC Trustees,

It was with great surprise and disappointment that I learned of the recent denial of funding for the North Gulf Oceanic Society. As a longtime Alaskan and boat captain working in the marine tourism industry out of Seward, I am writing to urge you to reconsider.

Many times during my tenure as a boat captain for Kenai Fjords Tours running trips through Kenai Fjords National Park, I have been able to provide visitors with the experience of a lifetime due in no small part to the NGOS research staff. Perhaps Dan Olson will play the killer whale calls that he is recording from his hydrophone over the VHF radio in real time, which we then play over the boat's sound system. To watch the animals and hear their communications simultaneously is a very moving experience. As we like to say, "not a dry eye in the house"! Or perhaps there will be information freely given about the individual animals, their ages, their histories, etc, in a way that allows people to relate to them in much more intimate fashion. Unforgettable are the occasional sightings of the AT 1's, a pod that was filmed literally swimming through the oil from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill. Visitors are captivated by the story of this family and how it has fared in the 30 years since the spill, a story that continues to this day.... As a captain I have an immense appreciation for the fact that they will take time during their important work to tell us what is happening at a sighting in a way that we can provide literally hundreds of passengers with the experience of a lifetime.

Locals and visitors alike have an insatiable interest in killer whales, and the high quality of experience that we have been able to provide people in terms of both viewing and interpreting killer whales is due in large part to the work of NGOS. The organization has always placed a high priority on community outreach, providing regular informational presentations to the general public on summer evenings in Seward. NGOS also gently provides guidelines to boat operators in these presentations in how to run their boats in a way that provides both an optimal viewing experience to visitors as well as minimal disturbance to the whales.

Most importantly, killer whales live a long time, perhaps longer than we humans do. Therefore, to assemble as complete as possible a body of research on these animals requires a long uninterrupted span of observation and study. The commitment thus far to studying these whales for nearly 40 years nonstop is truly inspiring. Much would be lost by stopping now. The Trustees should restore funding to NGOS so that they can continue to add to the incredible body of knowledge they have created, and so they can continue to enrich the lives of Alaskans and visitors alike.

Respectfully,

Michael J Boyce

Seward, Alaska

Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)

From: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 2021 9:09 AM
To: Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)
Subject: Fwd: restore funding to North Gulf Oceanic Society

Another one for the T drive.

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From: Kevin Clement <kvncmnt@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 21, 2021 8:41 PM
To: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Cc: craig.r.o'connor
Subject: restore funding to North Gulf Oceanic Society

You don't often get email from kvncmnt@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the State of Alaska mail system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Shiway Wang,

As an owner of a tour company that operates in Alaska and as a longtime resident of the Kenai Peninsula, I was extremely disappointed to learn that funding for killer whale research in Alaska was recently eliminated by the EVOS Trustee Council. It is a very poor decision for several reasons.

Our company has benefitted greatly from the outreach and science that the North Gulf Oceanic Society has provided, through in-person presentations, informational emails, and VHF radio calls while on the water. Sightings of killer whales are always a highlight for our clients, and current and relevant information makes it even more meaningful. The Society has been very generous in distributing catalogues that include ages and relationships, as well as sharing information regarding diet, range, acoustic monitoring, health condition, and other scientific findings. I would hate to see us lose access to this resource.

What's more, the Society has accumulated an invaluable long-term data running back to 1984, a rarity for Alaska. Having data prior to the oil spill was enormously important for assessing the impacts of the spill on this population. It would be tragic not to maintain this dataset and lose track of health trends during spills and ocean temperature events.

The two pods (AB and AT1) that swam through the oil spill subsequently lost many members, and it's important for our guests to understand these impacts. We also see the benefit in continued studies, and are particularly excited about the possibilities for some of the newly proposed work with aerial surveys and year-round hydrophones that detect pods during any season.

We strongly urge the Trustee Council to continue funding the killer whale research performed by the North Gulf Oceanic Society, and extend the benefits that are enjoyed by many Alaskan communities.

Sincerely,

Kevin Clement
Apex Expeditions

--

*Love many. Trust few.
Always paddle your own canoe.*

Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)

From: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 2021 9:11 AM
To: Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)
Subject: Fwd: Support letter
Attachments: UAF support letter.pdf

Another one. Pdf attached.

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From: Craig Matkin <comatkin@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 2021 8:19 AM
To: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Subject: Support letter

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the State of Alaska mail system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Wanted to forward on this support letter from UAF which was sent to us. Hope you have a great Holiday season with family and friends. Much thanks, Craig

--

Craig Matkin
North Gulf Oceanic Society
3430 Main St Ste B1
Homer, AK 99603
(907) 202-2579



Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research
P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

Dr. Nettie La Belle-Hamer
Interim Vice Chancellor for Research
907-474-6000
907-474-5993 fax
nettie.labellehamer@alaska.edu
research.uaf.edu

December 17, 2021

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
Grace Hall Building
4230 University Drive, Ste. 220
Anchorage, AK 99508

Dear Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council:

I am writing in support of the long-term research on killer whales conducted by the North Gulf Oceanic Society (NGOS) and to urge the Council to reconsider their decision to discontinue funding of this project. As the Vice Chancellor for Research at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), I can speak to the exceptional research opportunities NGOs has provided. As a scientist and lifelong Alaskan, I understand that NGOs' research on killer whales is critical to our understanding of the marine ecosystem as a whole, especially during a period of rapid change.

NGOS has a long history of supporting UAF students and expects to continue to do so if funding allows. NGOs' research approach combines long-term, individual-based monitoring with cutting edge technologies and techniques that provide unique opportunities for UAF students to build on historical knowledge while making important advances in their fields. As one example, passive acoustic monitoring is a rapidly evolving technology with broad applications in marine science. Through support from NGOs and UAF, Hannah Myers is currently the only marine mammal bioacoustician who both lives and works in Alaska.

The partnerships between UAF and NGOs strengthens UAF's ability to attract students and provide diverse, high-quality research experiences. Most recently, NGOs has fully supported Marine Biology Ph.D. student Hannah Myers. Myers came to UAF to work with NGOs on killer whale passive acoustic monitoring research, and her thesis research relies on NGOs' acoustic data, vessel-based fieldwork, and long-term photo-identification studies. NGOs also fully funded Myers' tuition and stipend during her first year of graduate study at UAF, before she earned the National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellowship from the Office of Naval Research. In 2021, Myers also began mentoring a UAF undergraduate student who is conducting a year-long independent research project using NGOs' passive acoustic dataset through the Undergraduate Research and Scholarly Activities Program.

NGOS is a valuable research and education partner to UAF, and I urge the Council to reconsider the decision to discontinue funding of their work. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Nettie La Belle-Hamer

Nettie La Belle-Hamer, Ph.D.
Vice Chancellor for Research
University of Alaska Fairbanks

America's Arctic University

UAF is an AA/EO employer and educational institution and prohibits illegal discrimination against any individual:
www.alaska.edu/titleIXcompliance/nondiscrimination.

Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)

From: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 2021 4:31 PM
To: Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)
Subject: Fwd: Letter of Support
Attachments: NorthGulfEVOSLetterAPU.pdf

Another one. There's one more from today I will forward.

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From: Paul Twardock <pault@alaskapacific.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 2021 12:25 PM
To: DFG, EVOS Restoration (EVOSTC sponsored); Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Cc: craig.r.o'connor
Subject: Letter of Support

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the State of Alaska mail system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Please find a letter of support for the North Gulf Oceanic Society's Killer Whale Research project.

Sincerely,

Paul Twardock
Outdoor Studies Professor
Director: Outdoor Studies Program
907-564-8254
<https://www.alaskapacific.edu>

*Dena'inaq elnen'aq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu.
I live and work on the land of the Dena'ina.*



12/22/21

Exxon Valdez Trustee Council
Shiway Wang
Craig O'Connor

re: Letter of Support for EVOSTC funding of North Gulf Oceanic Society's Killer Whale Research

Dear Shiway and Craig,

Please accept my letter supporting the reinstatement of EVOS funding for the North Gulf Oceanic Society's Killer Whale research project. The Society's project has contributed greatly to the understanding of Killer Whales in Alaska and elsewhere and continued funding is important to the species long term viability. New technology that the society is proposing to use such as hydrophonics and aerial body conditioning will add to our knowledge of the species. I suspect over the 5-10 year funding cycle other techniques and technology will come into play that will also contribute to Killer Whale's conservation. From APU's point of view the project offers great opportunities for our students and faculty. We have had students work with the Society in various roles, provided very unique and exciting educational opportunities. I have learned a great deal from their work to use in my field classes and follow their work closely.

I appreciate the challenging funding decisions that the Council must make, and I encourage you reconsider your decision to de-fund the North Gulf Oceanic Society's Killer Whale project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Paul Twardock".

Paul Twardock
Professor, Outdoor Studies
Director, Outdoor Studies
907-564-8254
pault@alaskapacific.edu

Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)

From: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 2021 4:32 PM
To: Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)
Subject: Fwd: Letter of Support for EVOSTC funding of North Gulf Oceanic Society's Killer Whale Research
Attachments: NorthGulfLetterofSupportPWSSF.pdf

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From: PWS Stewardship Foundation <info@princewilliamsound.org>
Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 2021 3:23 PM
To: DFG, EVOS Restoration (EVOSTC sponsored); Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored); craig.r.o'connor
Subject: Letter of Support for EVOSTC funding of North Gulf Oceanic Society's Killer Whale Research

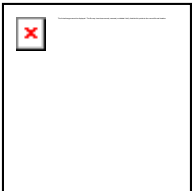
You don't often get email from info@princewilliamsound.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello Shiway and Craig,

Please see the attached letter supporting the EVOSTC funding of North Gulf Oceanic Society's Killer Whale Research. Thank you for your consideration.

Ellen Ray
Vice Chair, PWSSF



Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation
www.princewilliamsound.org
info@princewilliamsound.org

Keeping Prince William Sound healthy, clean and wild for all to enjoy.



Prince William Sound
Stewardship Foundation

PO Box 963 Girdwood AK 99587
info@princewilliamsound.org
www.princewilliamsound.org

12/22/21

re: Letter of Support for EVOSTC funding of North Gulf Oceanic Society's Killer Whale Research

Dear Shiway and Craig,

Please accept our letter supporting the reinstatement of EVOS funding for the North Gulf Oceanic Society's Killer Whale research project. Over the past few years the Society's staff have presented their work and findings at our Prince William Sound Natural History Symposium, which has helped inform our members and partners; and guides, land managers, recreationalists, students, and others of the amazingly complex and interesting lives of Killer Whales.

Our organization is a community of people, organizations, land managers/owners, and businesses interested in keeping Prince William Sound healthy, clean, and wild for all to enjoy. Killer Whales are a key to not only the ecosystem but to people's experience in the Sound: the same as calving glaciers, breaching humpbacks, shrimping, and catching salmon. We have benefited greatly from the North Gulf Society's presentations, information, and even their on water presence in the form of radio calls and in person contact. We have also discussed opportunities to partner with them. The research and long term data that they have collected is invaluable for the conservation of Killer Whales, which continue to face the challenges of our modern times. Long term monitoring of any species should be supported for all the above reasons, and we strongly encourage the Trustee Council to continue funding the North Gulf Oceanic Society's Killer Whale research.

Sincerely,

Ellen Ray

To: *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council

From: Alan Springer
Research Professor, Emeritus
College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Subject: Renewal proposal for killer whale studies

Date: 4 January 2022

The decision by the EVOSTC to not renew funding for continuing, expanded studies of killer whales in the GOA is highly regrettable for several reasons.

- Two groups of killer whales that frequent PWS were severely injured by the EVOS and have failed to recover. This has been documented by an unparalleled time series of observations of their abundance, productivity, and distribution. Such detailed, long-term information on killer whales is not available from anywhere else in Alaska.
- Killer whales are the apex predator in the N. Pacific Ocean, and integrate ecosystem processes across multiple trophic levels. Recent patterns in abundance of killer whales in PWS are similar to patterns in abundance and productivity of other high-profile pelagic species there (data in Suryan et al. 2021), indicating common responses to variability in the physical and/or biological environment across upper trophic level species in three taxonomic Classes. The rich data set for these killer whales, in the context of environmental variability, is becoming ever more important as a point of comparison to, and understanding of, dynamics of killer whales elsewhere in the Pacific NW: one group, the Southern Residents, are in alarming decline for unagreed upon reasons, while nearby the Northern Residents are markedly increasing.
- The expanded studies of growth and body condition of individual killer whales described in the proposal, and of the spatial and temporal distribution of individual groups (e.g., Myers et al. 2021), will greatly inform efforts to understand ecosystem processes important to them and to numerous other species at lower trophic levels. The addition of J. Durban and H. Myers to the program brings invaluable energies and abilities to an already highly competent team.
- In addition to their scientific value, in their own right and as windows on, and drivers of, ecosystem processes in the GOA and elsewhere, killer whales are extremely charismatic and have an extremely high profile in the public eye. Moreover, they have deep cultural importance to coastal residents of the GOA. A lack of further attention to their study and conservation in Alaska by the TC will hardly go unnoticed.

I encourage the TC to consider these points, and reconsider their funding decision for the renewal proposal for killer whales. The project is, has been, and will continue to be a feather in the cap of the Council.

Myers HJ, Olsen DW, Matkin CO, Horstman LA, Konar B (2021) Passive acoustic monitoring of killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) reveals year-round distribution and residency patterns in the Gulf of Alaska. ***Nature, Scientific Reports*** 11:20284.

Suryan RM, et al. (2021) Ecosystem response persists after a prolonged marine heatwave. ***Nature, Scientific Reports*** 11:6235.



To: EVOS Trustee Council

01/06/2022

We are writing to express our concern at the removal of funding for killer whale research in Alaska that the North Gulf Oceanic Society has been doing these past years. As an Alaskan born and raised in Fairbanks, and now managing a small ship expedition cruise ship company, I was extremely disappointed to learn that the EVOS Trustee Council has eliminated funding for this killer whale research. Seabourn has greatly benefited from the outreach and science that the North Gulf Oceanic Society has provided, through presentation, informational email, social media and even VHF radio calls while out on the water. Sightings of killer whales are always a very special treat for our guests onboard, and this experience has been so much enriched when coupled with pertinent and recent information about the whales we are seeing and encountering. Our guests learn more and care more and have a greatly enhanced experience in Alaska. When people take wildlife tours, encounters with killer whales make the top of the list every time. This species impresses and amazes everyone who sees them. Although any encounter is magical and memorable, current and relevant information makes an encounter even more meaningful. The North Gulf Oceanic Society has generously distributed catalogues of killer whale images that include age, relationships and other information, in addition to which they have shared information regarding diet, range, acoustic monitoring, health condition, and other scientific findings. With their funding being cut off we will lose access to this amazing resource.

The North Gulf Oceanic Society has accumulated a valuable long-term dataset running back to 1984, which is rare in Alaska. Having data prior to the oil spill greatly informed the impacts of the spill on this population. It would be a shame to not maintain this population assessment and lose track of health trends during spills and ocean temperature events. Two pods (AB and AT1) swam through the oil spill and subsequently lost many members, and our guests always seek to know more about these pods. We also see the benefit in continued studies and are particularly excited about some of the newly proposed work with aerial body condition, diet, and year-round hydrophones that detect pods during any season.

We strongly urge the Trustee Council to continue funding the killer whale research performed by the North Gulf Oceanic Society.

Kara Weller
Senior Manager, Expedition Operations

Seabourn
450 Third Avenue West
Seattle, WA 98119
mobile: +1-206-321-5623
kweller@seabourn.com

