



Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
Long-Term Research and Monitoring, Mariculture, Education and Outreach
Annual Project Reporting Form

****For Instructions for each section below, see Reporting Policy, II (B); the Reporting Policy can be found on the website, <https://evostc.state.ak.us/policies-procedures/reporting-procedures/>***

Project Number: 25220301

Project Title: Social, cultural and economic assessment of kelp mariculture opportunities for coastal villages within the EVOS spill zone

Principal Investigator(s):

Aaron Poe, Alaska Conservation Foundation (PI)

Kevin Berry, Department of Economics, University of Alaska Anchorage

Willow Hetrick, Chugach Regional Resources Commission

Jacqueline Keating, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence

Dune Lankard, Native Conservancy

Michael Stekoll, University of Alaska Southeast

Thomas F. Thornton, Alaska Coastal Rainforest Center, University of Alaska Southeast

Reporting Period: Quarter 2 May – July, 2025

Submission Date: December 22, 2025

Project Website: <https://www.kelpvalues.org/>

Please check all the boxes that apply to the current reporting period.

☐ **Project progress is on schedule.**

☒ **Project progress is delayed**

Due to not receiving a signed contract for funding until October of 2022 we remain delayed in some aspects of the project. Further, two significant personnel changes as well as two new opportunities caused the project team to re-evaluate our approach relative to Hypothesis 1 & 2. These changes are documented in the FY23 annual report.



Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
Long-Term Research and Monitoring, Mariculture, Education and Outreach
Annual Project Reporting Form

☐ **Budget reallocation request.**

Nothing additional is requested at this time.

☐ **Personnel changes.**

1. Summary of Work Performed:

Our Kelp Values has made significant progress this quarter with additional analyses and Healthy Land and Sea Planning development for four communities (Ouzinkie, Nanwalek, Port Graham, and Qutekcak), community engagement with knowledge holders in Sitka to inform our ethnographic research approach, continued outreach to 16 tribal communities in the region and organizing August field work for two communities (Nanwalek and Port Graham). We continue our practice of monthly meetings and have also agreed to organize our Kelp Values annual team meeting in association with the Alaska Mariculture Conference to be held in Anchorage March 8-10, 2026. This will allow our team to connect to share our work at that conference and we hope to also connect with the other EVOS funded project and help organize a mini-summit of the teams to come together and share information during that timeframe as well.

H1: Evaluation of historical ecology, distribution and practices of traditional Indigenous mariculture and subsistence harvest activities is necessary for effective site selection of potential future mariculture sites. Key highlights include:

- Dr. Tom Thornton and Karen Grosskruetz are actively transcribing, coding, and analyzing interviews from Southeast and Lower Cook Inlet communities carried out during this quarter. In May they also worked with knowledge holders in the Sitka Tribe of Alaska based on knowledge that tribal members in that region have around seaweeds that will be used to inform their analytical approach of interviews from the spill zone. Ahead of August, they worked with CRRC to conduct 5 additional interviews in Port Graham and an initial set of 5 interviews in Nanwalek which they were not able engage with during their spring trip due to a



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Annual Project Reporting Form

tragedy in the community. They have gotten approval and interest from knowledge holders in Port Lions as well and a trip is being proposed for this fall. They are also planning fall visits (aiming for October or November) in conjunction with the Applied Archaeology International (AAI) and Native Conservancy (NC) efforts for Healthy Land and Sea Planning, pending agreement by Old Harbor. This team has sent invitational letters to 16 Tribes in the spill zone and continues to follow up on several to inquire about interest in participating in their work.

- Work has been delayed for Dr. Tom Bell (subcontractor for UAS) on mapping surface kelps in the Spill Zone based on satellite imagery due to the need to shift the subaward that contains his contract from UAS to UAF with a change in Dr. Thornton's affiliation. We are in active conversations with UAF currently to resolve this issue.

- The Native Conservancy (NC) has contracted David Guilfoyle, an anthropologist with Applied Archaeology International (AAI), specializing in a community engagement methodology known as Healthy Country Planning, developed in collaboration with Aboriginal communities in Australia. David and his team have adapted this planning approach to Healthy Land and Sea Plans (HLSP) for Alaska Native communities in the Spill Zone region. They have narrowed their list of potential communities to complete these plans to 6 based on some discussions this quarter. Chenega, Tatitlek, and Eyak Tribes were invited a couple of times to participate in the HLSP effort and each confirmed they are not interested in participating in this part of the Kelp Values project. Following conversation with the other project partners and ACF this quarter, NC believes the best way forward is to focus on completing robust HLSPs for five communities of: Ouzinkie, Qutekcak (Seward), Port Graham, Nanwalek, and Old Harbor (pending their interest).

- Chugach Regional Resources Commission (CRRC) helped liaison ahead of an August trip for community interviews by Dr. Thornton and Karen Grosskreutz but otherwise did not have a significant operational role this quarter.



Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
Long-Term Research and Monitoring, Mariculture, Education and Outreach
Annual Project Reporting Form

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H1 Milestones/Tasks	FY 22/23 ¹				FY24				FY25				FY26				FY27			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Identifying which kelp forests have been affected by the EVOS	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	X	X	X							
Anthropological research at focal communities		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Engage with 21-30 Alaska Native tribes located within the EVOS spill zone- listening tour led by Native Conservancy	C	C	C	C																
Create a story map					C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X								
Develop children's books ²									D	D	X	X								
Cultural GIS mapping		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Research and document Indigenous place names and their associations with mariculture resources and sites used by communities historically		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Peer reviewed paper																		X	X	X
Data posted online																		X	X	X

H2: New kelp mariculture activity that is led by Indigenous communities in the spill zone will have additional benefits relative to subsistence harvest and commercial fishing activities at the local scale. Key highlights include:

- Christian Woodard from ADF&G has completed life history data collection efforts for Port Graham and Nanwalek and completed data digitization in June. These datasets have been shared back out to these two communities for review and comment before they will be finalized this fall. No additional data collection work is being planned by ADF&G at this time, but this could change if funding becomes available.

D=delayed, X=planned or not completed, C=completed

¹ A delay in funding set our project back several months such that significant work did not begin until the latter few months of FY22, with the majority of effort focused in FY 2023.

² The project team is now questioning if this deliverable is appropriate and necessary and will consult with the CORal Team in 2025 to discuss more impactful and appropriate communication products.



Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
Long-Term Research and Monitoring, Mariculture, Education and Outreach
Annual Project Reporting Form

H2 Milestones/Tasks	FY22/23 ³				FY24				FY25				FY26				FY27			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Confirm interest maintain relationships with Indigenous leadership from up to 10 partner communities who will participate in a five-year study			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X							
Conduct incentivized household surveys	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X								
Conduct targeted focus groups in partner communities to understand broader community interests												X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Conduct post-farm household surveys										C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Community Survey Reports									C											

H3: Kelp mariculture led by Indigenous communities presents a viable economic activity that can help attenuate continued impacts on commercial fishing in the spill zone. Key highlights include:

- Progress has been delayed for Dr. Kevin Bell as UAA has had to procure a different survey data collection platform—moving away from the Qualtrix system they had originally planned to use. He expects surveys will go out to thousands of households late this fall. Barbara Johnson continues to engage with kelp/seaweed buyers including three additional companies from across different industries (food products, biomaterials, and agriculture). Early insights include that price consistently is a primary concern and though the “Alaska brand” has appeal, they estimated it only supports about a 10% price premium. Across the board, the maximum prices mentioned for dried kelp ranged from \$0.60–\$0.85/lb, with organic kelp fetching the higher end. Key insights were gained from one company which has been purchasing dried kelp for 40 years who flagged the relatively limited number of buyers, which each interviewee also flagged. She is planning to work with NC to review some of their recent sales efforts which have achieved \$1.00 per pound, which they consider to be a threshold necessary for profitability.

³ A delay in funding set our project back several months such that significant work did not begin until the latter few months of FY22 with the majority of effort focused in FY 2023.



Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
Long-Term Research and Monitoring, Mariculture, Education and Outreach
Annual Project Reporting Form

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H3Milestones/Tasks	FY22/23 ⁴				FY24				FY25				FY26				FY27			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Conduct a national willingness-to-pay survey to identify valuation perspectives									C	D	X	X	X							
Develop several Pilot projects														X	X	X				
Conduct a willingness-to-pay analysis for environmental monitoring data								C	C	C	X	X	X							
Survey and Interviews (B2B)					C	C	C	C	C	C										
Identify processing strategies			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X	X						
Existing market channels			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X	X						
Examine supply chain of products			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X	X						

2. Products:

Peer-reviewed publications:

NA

Reports:

NA

Popular articles:

NA

Conferences and workshops:

⁴ A delay in funding set our project back several months such that significant work did not begin until the latter few months of FY22 with the majority of effort focused in FY 2023.



Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
Long-Term Research and Monitoring, Mariculture, Education and Outreach
Annual Project Reporting Form

ACF has been invited to share a proposal for the Kelp Values project as whole at the Alaska Mariculture Conference of Alaska in Anchorage in March of 2026. The UAS/UAF team and UAA teams are also planning to submit abstracts for that conference as well as the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in January of 2026.

Public presentations:

NA

Data and/or information products developed during the reporting period:

NA

Data sets and associated metadata:

NA

Additional Products not listed above:

We organized a contract with an award-winning journalist and cartographer who has agreed to work with our team to complete an ESRI story map documenting the progress of the Kelp Values team over the past 3 years. Our aim is to have a final product that folks from Tribes and communities in the region can access easily online. We will specifically be using it to reach out to folks who have participated in our project to date as well as those whom we would like to be able to draw in—allowing them to see the broader arc of this project and the thoughtful ways we are incorporating their insights. It will also serve as a broader communication tool for the project overall and we hope to be able to share it at the Alaska Mariculture Conference in March of 2026 as well.

3. Coordination and Collaboration:

The Alaska SeaLife Center or Prince William Sound Science Center



Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
Long-Term Research and Monitoring, Mariculture, Education and Outreach
Annual Project Reporting Form

NA

EVOSTC Long-Term Research and Monitoring Projects

NA

EVOSTC Mariculture Projects

We continue to work very closely with CRRC on many aspects of the Kelp Values given they are a key member of our team. Melissa Good remains a vital contact for our team to the Mar ReCon (project 24220302) team. She is invited to all our team's monthly meetings to keep lines of communications open across all 3 EVOSTC projects. Melissa is interested in helping us organize a mini-summit of the four kelp mariculture projects funded by EVOS and we have shared this idea with CRRC who is also interested in this opportunity.

EVOSTC Education and Outreach Projects

Melissa Good also remains our best contact with the CORaL (project 24220400) team primarily through our monthly Kelp Values team check-in meetings. Our aim is that the CORaL project can be a key organizer of the mini-summit mentioned above.

Trustee or Management Agencies

We have reached out to a \$3M project recently funded by NOAA to form the Alaska South Coast Partnership which directly overlaps the EVOS spill zone. This effort is being led by 3 Alaska Native Organizations in the region: CRRC, Kodiak Area Native Association, and Kodiak Archipelago Leadership Institute and is focused on community-led, coastal resilience and adaptation projects and includes a specific focus on kelp mariculture in that regard. Aaron Poe will be serving on the Steering Committee of that partnership which launched this spring officially and he will be working to tie in the work of Kelp Values to help inform this new effort funded by NOAA.



Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
Long-Term Research and Monitoring, Mariculture, Education and Outreach
Annual Project Reporting Form

Native and Local Communities

Our project continues to center the perspectives of Alaska Native Tribes and communities in the spill zone. During this quarter we continue to engage with 4 of them very closely through our HLSP and ethnography efforts as well. Additionally, our ethnography team has made a number of contacts with additional communities in a continued effort to identify more knowledge holders who are willing to participate in interviews. Notably, the project also trapped into the insights of knowledge holders from the Sitka Tribe of Alaska in an effort to inform our ethnographic analyses as well.

5. Budget:

Budget Category:	Proposed FY 22	Proposed FY 23	Proposed FY 24	Proposed FY 25	Proposed FY 26	5-YR TOTAL PROPOSED	QUARTERLY EXPENDITURES	ACTUAL CUMULATIVE
Personnel	\$49,625	\$27,338	\$103,783	\$134,183	\$128,232	\$443,161	\$6,979	\$122,298
Travel	\$0	\$5,876	\$11,288	\$14,884	\$8,650	\$40,698	\$0	\$11,163
Contractual	\$316,428	\$475,556	\$567,276	\$543,349	\$495,684	\$2,398,292	\$129,972	\$873,226
Commodities	\$0	\$0	\$750	\$799	\$972	\$2,521	\$0	\$5,354
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Indirect Costs (report rate here)	\$64,059	\$89,035	\$110,777	\$111,890	\$104,546	\$480,307	\$23,966	\$177,107
SUBTOTAL	\$430,112	\$597,804	\$793,874	\$805,105	\$738,083	\$3,364,978	\$160,918	\$1,189,148
General Administration (9% of subtotal)	\$38,710	\$53,802	\$71,449	\$72,459	\$66,427	\$302,848	N/A	N/A
PROJECT TOTAL	\$468,822	\$651,607	\$865,323	\$877,564	\$804,511	\$3,667,826		