



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

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***\*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 3 August – October, 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.



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☐ **Budget reallocation request.**

Nothing additional is requested at this time.

☐ **Personnel changes.**

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**1. Summary of Work Performed:**

Our Kelp Values project continues to make progress this quarter with our ADF&G Subsistence team wrapping its data analysis and reporting for life history harvest wrapping at the end of October. Healthy Land and Sea Planning development continues with four communities (Ouzinkie, Nanwalek, Port Graham, and Qutekcak) and significant efforts were made to identify a fifth community to participate in this planning process. Engagement with kelp and seaweed knowledge holders continued with our ethnography efforts completing 12 new interviews in Nanwalek and Port Graham. This quarter we also launched production of an ArcGIS Story Map as an interactive way to offer a visually-driven and comprehensive update to communities, regional partners, and the other EVOS teams about the Kelp Values project. We continue to meet monthly as a team and we have begun planning our annual in person meeting for March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026, in conjunction with Alaska Mariculture Conference. We also successfully worked to secure interest in a 'mini-summit' to compare results to date across all four EVOS-funded kelp mariculture projects which will happen on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

***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 continue to analyze interviews from Southeast and Lower Cook Inlet communities carried out during this quarter. In August they worked with CRRC to conduct 12 interviews in Port Graham and in Nanwalek. They also worked with Applied Archaeology International (AAI) and the Native Conservancy (NC) to engage the communities of Old Harbor and Port Lions about a joint data collection in either interested community. They



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secured an invite to present their ethnography work at the annual Fall Forum hosted by the Kodiak Archipelago Initiative in Kodiak where they will follow members from both communities in November.

- Work continues to be held up 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. These conversations are underway with UAF currently and we expect to resolve this issue in Q4 but expect that progress will be delayed until at least Q2 of 2026.

- The Native Conservancy (NC) and David Guilfoyle (AAI) have narrowed their list of potential communities to complete these plans from 6 to 5 based on interests of communities this quarter. Several communities across the spill region have declined to participate in this portion of our project. NC believes the best way forward is to focus on completing robust HLSPs for five communities of: Ouzinkie, Qutekcak (Seward), Port Graham, Nanwalek, and now likely Port Lions (pending their final approval). Discussions led by NC this quarter resulted in Old Harbor indicating they were not interested in participating at this time due to recent changes in tribal leadership and other community priorities. The community leaders that AAI and NC worked with in Ouzinkie were invited to present their HLSP at the Kodiak Archipelago Initiative Fall Forum in November.

- Chugach Regional Resources Commission (CRRC) helped liaison with an August trip for community interviews by Dr. Thornton and Karen Grosskreutz. They also worked with Port Graham on a kelp out planting project via their EVOS award and were able to update the community on the status of the Kelp Values project as well. They also began efforts to recruit interests from their communities in assisting UAF in piloting community-led seaweed sample collection efforts over the fall and winter.

- Alaska Conservation Foundation worked with AIA to contract a specialist in ArcGIS Story Map development who is working with Kelp Values team members to collect data and information about each team's progress. The Story Map will be completed by February of 2026 so that it can be used to help share the story of our work to date and invite broader perspectives about our work from communities and other partners/researchers in the focal region and more broadly as well.



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H1 Milestones/Tasks	FY 22/23 <sup>1</sup>				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	C	D	X	X	X						
Anthropological research at focal communities		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	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	C	X								
Develop children's books <sup>2</sup>									D	D	D	X								
Cultural GIS mapping		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	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	C	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:***

- At the time of writing Christian Woodward (ADF&G) is completing a final report and an ADF&G Special Publication summarizing the life history data collection and analysis for Port Graham and Nanwalek. No additional field work is being planned by ADF&G currently, but they are interested in additional work if funding becomes available.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> The project team is now questioning if this deliverable is appropriate and necessary and will consult with the CORal Team in 2026 to discuss more impactful and appropriate communication products.



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H2 Milestones/Tasks	FY22/23 <sup>3</sup>				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	C	X	X							
Conduct incentivized household surveys	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	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	C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Community Survey Reports									C	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. Highlights include:***

- Progress has been delayed for Dr. Kevin Bell as UAA continued to struggle with internal procurement procedures for a new survey data collection platform—moving away from the Qualtrix system they had originally planned to use. Dr. Bell now expects surveys will go out to thousands of households now in Q1 or Q2 of 2026. Barbara Johnson continued to engage with kelp/seaweed buyers including three additional companies from across different industries (food products, biomaterials, and agriculture).

<sup>3</sup> 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.



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H3Milestones/Tasks	FY22/23 <sup>4</sup>				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	C	D	X	X	X	X					
Develop several Pilot projects														X	X	X				
Conduct a willingness-to-pay analysis for environmental monitoring data								C	C	C	C	X	X							
Survey and Interviews (B2B)					C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X								
Identify processing strategies			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X						
Existing market channels			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X						
Examine supply chain of products			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X	X	X						

## 2. Products:

### Peer-reviewed publications:

NA

### Reports:

NA

### Popular articles:

NA

### Conferences and workshops:

<sup>4</sup> 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.



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Our Kelp Values project has been invited to present at the national Aquaculture America conference, February 17-20, 2026 in Las Vegas, Nevada. At time of writing we are developing a synthesis talk about all aspects of the project to be shared during that gathering. Though the final abstract selection has not been made for the Alaska Mariculture Conference in Anchorage in March of 2026, our team has been advised that we will receive a couple of speaking slots to offer updates during the conference. At time of writing, three team members have submitted abstracts for speaking slots at the 2026 Alaska Marine Science Symposium in Anchorage; they have not yet heard if those will be invited for talks.

*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:*

NA

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**3. Coordination and Collaboration:**

*The Alaska SeaLife Center or Prince William Sound Science Center*

NA

*EVOSTC Long-Term Research and Monitoring Projects*

NA



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*EVOSTC Mariculture Projects*

In February of 2025, the Kelp Values team recognized the need for a more focused exchange between the 4 EVOSTC funded Mariculture projects as we all proceed closer to summarizing team efforts. Working with Melissa Good (who spans all four projects) and two representatives from the CORaL team (project 25220400) we developed the idea for a ½ day ‘mini-summit’ that will be held March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026 when representatives of all 4 teams will be in Anchorage for the Alaska Mariculture Conference. The gathering will focus on the following 5 objectives:

1. Figuring out how to possibly integrate the results of the 3 research projects, such that collectively they can guide better permitting processes by agencies and possibly offer better information for site selection practices by prospective mariculture operators.
2. Identifying our collective data or planning products to date that can help NOAA NCOS with their ongoing efforts on their Area of Opportunity analyses now or in the future.
3. Helping CORaL tell the story of these 3 projects more holistically, including exploring potential ways to work with Axiom Data Science to help visualize data resulting from the projects to make it useful to #1 above, as well as local communities.
4. Exploring an interest in combined stakeholder engagement efforts across all 4 teams including more engagement with local farmers to build upon and/or explore new potential science partnerships.
5. Helping to demonstrate to the EVOS Trustees that all four teams are actively working to share knowledge with the aim of integrating the results of our collective works toward the continued recovery of the region.

We continue to work very closely with CRRC on many aspects of the Kelp Values given they are a key member of our team. We are delighted that the Mar ReCon (project 25220302) team has agreed to help us develop the content and process for the mini-summit mentioned above. Similarly, we are very grateful to the CORaL project which has agreed to be a key organizer of the mini-summit. Melissa Good continues to be invited to our Kelp Values team check-in meetings and she was instrumental in helping us to shape the ideas for the mini-summit and securing interest from the other teams.

*EVOSTC Education and Outreach Projects*





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NA

Trustee or Management Agencies

NA

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 others through our ethnography efforts 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	\$4,743	\$127,042
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	\$81,249	\$954,475
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	\$15,049	\$192,156
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$430,112</b>	<b>\$597,804</b>	<b>\$793,874</b>	<b>\$805,105</b>	<b>\$738,083</b>	<b>\$3,364,978</b>	<b>\$101,041</b>	<b>\$1,290,189</b>
General Administration (9% of subtotal)	\$38,710	\$53,802	\$71,449	\$72,459	\$66,427	\$302,848	N/A	N/A
<b>PROJECT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$468,822</b>	<b>\$651,607</b>	<b>\$865,323</b>	<b>\$877,564</b>	<b>\$804,511</b>	<b>\$3,667,826</b>		