



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 4 November 2025 – January 2026

Submission Date: March 2, 2026

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 (include any no-cost extension requests in Q4 report).

Note: These carryover amounts by expense area from FY2025 represent the cumulative totals that have been brought forward since FY 22 (or year 1 of the Kelp Values project) through FY2025.

Personnel (\$167,974): Substantial synthesis work by ACF staff was not initiated in FY2025 with results from various project components being delayed by about one year. This work will accelerate in 2026 and pending approval of an overall project NCE though 2027 will be consumed as the project moves forward.

Travel (\$17,335): Travel costs have been less than expected as team travel has been able to coincide with Alaska Mariculture Conference for the last 2 years vs. having to support specific travel for annual project meetings. These funds will be needed in 2026 and 2027 to cover results synthesis meetings with Kelp Values team members.

Contractual (\$791,593): Contract costs have been less than expected for the past few years due to overall project delays. Field work will continue through 2026 which will significantly deplete these funds and pending an approval of an NCE for the project into 2027, analyses and reporting will consume the balance of these funds.

Commodities (none)

Equipment (none)

Indirect Costs (\$152,770): A lower claim of indirect costs coincides with decreased overall project expenditures though 2025 but these funds will be consumed in 2026 and pending approval of an NCE into 2027.

Personnel changes.

1. Summary of Work Performed:

Our Kelp Values project continues to make progress this quarter with our ADF&G Subsistence team having completed a full draft report of their life history harvest mapping efforts at the end of November. Healthy Land and Sea Planning (HLSP) development continues with four communities (Ouzinkie, Nanwalek, Port Graham, and Qutekcak), and discussions are on-going



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with three communities to be the fifth and final community to participate in this planning process. Engagement with kelp and seaweed knowledge holders continued with our ethnography efforts completing a total of 60 interviews now. This quarter also saw expansion of an ArcGIS Story Map into five draft modules 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 completed planning for our annual in person meeting for March 13th, 2026, in conjunction with Alaska Mariculture Conference (AMC). We also successfully worked with the CORaL Network to initiate planning for a ‘mini-summit’ to compare results to date across all four EVOS-funded kelp mariculture projects which will happen on March 9, 2026, also conjunction with the AMC.

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 have completed initial analysis of about a dozen interviews of kelp and seaweed knowledge holders from Southeast and Lower Cook Inlet communities collected last summer and fall. They continue to work with the Kodiak Archipelago Leadership Institute (KALI) and the Chugach Regional Resources Commission (CRRC) to connect with other knowledge holders in the region, and to date have completed over 60 interviews. They continued to work with Applied Archaeology International (AAI) and the Native Conservancy (NC) to explore joints data collection efforts and were in discussions with the Valdez Native Tribe and Port Lions this quarter. They were also invited to present an initial summary of their work as an oral presentation at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in January, but unfortunately inclement weather resulted in canceled flights for Dr. Thornton, and he was ultimately unable to attend.

- With the shift of UAS funding to UAF, ACF was asked by UAF to contract directly with Dr. Tom Bell (originally planned to be a subcontractor for UAS) to complete mapping surface kelps in the Spill Zone based on satellite imagery. This contract will be established in the next Quarter and surface mapping will be completed by fall of 2026. As mentioned in our last report, we had expected progress will be delayed until at least Q2 of 2026.



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- Native Conservancy and David Guilfoyle (AAI) have narrowed their list to one of three remaining communities (Old Harbor, Port Lions, or Valdez Native Tribe) to be the last community to complete an HLSP. Meanwhile, they continue to work with Ouzinkie, Qutekcak (Seward), Port Graham, and Nanwalek on their HLSPs and made travel arrangements this quarter for community visits to continue with plan development. At the start of this quarter, it seemed very likely Port Lions would be the fifth community that NC and AAI worked with. However, this was followed by some interest from the Valdez Native Tribe and some further, recent interactions with Old Harbor again. We expect that NC will have made the final decision about which community they will ultimately proceed with in Q1 of 2026.

- Chugach Regional Resources Commission continued to help liaison with Dr. Thornton and Karen Grosskreutz connecting them to dozens more interviewees. They have once again offered their annual Spring Subsistence Gathering as an opportunity to update Chugach Tribes on the Kelp Values project, and Dr. Thornton and Karen Grosskreutz as well as the ADF&G Subsistence team are planning to attend and present in March of 2026.

- Alaska Conservation Foundation (ACF) continues our development of an ArcGIS Story Map to be used as communication tool updating relevant stakeholders on project's progress. Engagements have been had with each of the five research groups that comprise our project, resulting in five draft modules that make up the story map. We have also engaged an emerging artist from the South Coast region to create graphic elements that tie the pages of the map together. Work is expected to be completed on the Story Map early in Q1, and we will begin actively sharing it with our partner networks including Tribes, mariculture operators, scientists, and managers in the South Coast region. Our aim is to share the story of our work to date and invite broader perspectives about it from those who live and work in the focal region and more broadly as well.



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

| 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 | C | D | D | X | X | X | | | | | |
| Anthropological research at focal communities | | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | 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 | C | X | | | | | | | |
| Develop children’s books ² | | | | | | | | | D | D | D | D | | | | | | | | |
| Cultural GIS mapping | | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | 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 | C | X | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| Peer reviewed paper | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | X |
| Data posted online | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 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:

- ADF&G has completed a full draft of a Special Publication summarizing the life history harvest data collection and analysis for Port Graham and Nanwalek, and it is currently being reviewed internally according to their publication channels. They will be sharing a draft copy with the rest of the Kelp Values team in March so that teams can incorporate findings into their own efforts. At the close of Q4, they are also now planning to complete a subsistence household survey of Cordova leveraged by partner funds. The intent is that the survey will be completed in fall of

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 2026 to discuss more impactful and appropriate communication products.



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2026, and it will include specific questions about kelp and seaweed harvest such that its results can also inform the Kelp Values project.

Efforts to organize some engagements with other user groups have been delayed until we have more comprehensive results to share from across the Kelp Values project. Similarly, efforts to conduct surveys of communities after farms have gone in has been challenged by the limited number of communities where farms are now active. We expect these delays to persist into FY 2026.

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| 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 | C | C | X | | | | | | | |
| Conduct incentivized household surveys | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | | | X ₄ | X | X | | | |
| Conduct targeted focus groups in partner communities to understand broader community interests | | | | | | | | | | | | | D | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| Conduct post-farm household surveys | | | | | | | | | | C | C | D | 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:

- Dr. Kevin Bell at UAA has been able to successfully complete an initial pilot to test the viability of his consumer Willingness to Pay data collection platform and approach. This clears the way for him to launch his much larger effort to collect data from thousands of potential kelp/seaweed consumers from states on the west coast of the U.S. beginning in Q2. Efforts

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⁴ New surveys from leveraging funding secured by ADF&G will be implemented in Fall of 2026 and will help inform the work of the Kelp Values project.



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have concluded around engaging with kelp/seaweed buyers with 20 respondents to long form interviews from companies across different industries like food products, biomaterials, and agricultural supplements. Further ACF, has completed a survey that is being used at time of writing to collect insights from mariculture operators, scientists, and managers. It aims to identify barriers to research/monitoring collaborations and how to overcome them as well as the best ways to financially incentivize equitable partnerships between these three groups.

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| H3Milestones/Tasks | FY22/23 ⁵ | | | | 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 | D | C | X | X | X | | | | | |
| Develop several Pilot projects | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | X | X | | | |
| Conduct a willingness-to-pay analysis for environmental monitoring data | | | | | | | | | C | C | C | C | C | X | | | | | | |
| Survey and Interviews (B2B) | | | | | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | | | | | | | | |
| Identify processing strategies | | | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | X | X | | | | | | |
| Existing market channels | | | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | X | X | | | | | | |
| Examine supply chain of products | | | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | C | X | X | | | | | | |

2. Products:

Peer-reviewed publications:

NA

Reports:

NA

⁵ 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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Popular articles:

NA

Conferences and workshops:

Our Kelp Values project was asked to present at the national Aquaculture America conference in February in Las Vegas, Nevada, and the Alaska Mariculture Conference in Anchorage, Alaska, in March of 2026. We were also invited to present at the 2026 Alaska Marine Science Symposium but inclement weather on the east coast of the U.S. at the end of January prevented Dr. Thornton from being able to make it to Anchorage.

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

We worked with two staff from the Sea Life Center with the CORaL Network to organize a ‘Mini Summit’ of the four project teams that were funded simultaneously by EVOS back in 2022 (more below).

EVOSTC Long-Term Research and Monitoring Projects

NA

EVOSTC Mariculture Projects

In February of 2025, the Kelp Values team recognized the need for a more focused exchange between the three EVOSTC funded Mariculture projects as we all proceed closer to summarizing team efforts. Working with Melissa Good (who spans all three projects) as well as one of the leads from the CRRRC project, we’ve organized a workshop half-day on March 9, 2026, when representatives of all three teams will be in Anchorage for the Alaska Mariculture Conference. The gathering will focus on the following five agreed upon objectives:

1. Figuring out how to possibly integrate the results of the three 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 three 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 four 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 three 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.



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The aim of this summit is to conclude with a few to several items that the three EVOS teams agree to push forward together over the next year that will 1) help us leverage each other's work to improve our respective deliverables and 2) better share the work of our teams with decision/policy makers and community members in the South Coast 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. We also attended their team's gathering in Homer in January 2026 and were able to offer an update presentation on the Kelp Values project as well.

EVOSTC Education and Outreach Projects

The Kelp Values team worked closely with Melissa Good and two other representatives from the CORaL team (project 25220400) to organize the half-day workshop described above.

We are very grateful to the CORaL project which has agreed to be the key logistics organizer of the mini-summit described above. 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.

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 continued to engage with four of them very closely through our HLSP and several others through our ethnography efforts as well.



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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 | FY Carryover Request |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Personnel | \$49,625 | \$27,338 | \$103,783 | \$134,183 | \$128,232 | \$443,161 | \$16,158 | \$143,200 | \$167,974 |
| Travel | \$0 | \$5,876 | \$11,288 | \$14,884 | \$8,650 | \$40,698 | \$3,550 | \$14,713 | \$17,335 |
| Contractual | \$316,428 | \$475,556 | \$567,276 | \$543,349 | \$495,684 | \$2,398,292 | \$156,540 | \$1,111,015 | \$791,593 |
| Commodities | \$0 | \$0 | \$750 | \$799 | \$972 | \$2,521 | (\$50) | \$5,304 | \$0 |
| Equipment | \$0 | \$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 | \$30,835 | \$222,991 | \$152,770 |
| SUBTOTAL | \$430,112 | \$597,804 | \$793,874 | \$805,105 | \$738,083 | \$3,364,978 | \$207,033 | \$1,497,223 | \$1,129,673 |
| General Administration (9% of subtotal) | \$38,710 | \$53,802 | \$71,449 | \$72,459 | \$66,427 | \$302,848 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| PROJECT TOTAL | \$468,822 | \$651,607 | \$865,323 | \$877,564 | \$804,511 | \$3,667,826 | | | |

The commodities category is overspent by \$3,755.60, which remains within the allowable 10% threshold. Personnel funds will be used to cover this overage.