



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: 26220301

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 1 February 2026 – April 2026

Submission Date: May 29, 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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Please that we will be making a request for a No Cost Extension (NCE) to carry the project work through to completion in January of 2028.

☒ **Budget reallocation request (include any no-cost extension requests in Q4 report).**

We plan to complete a budget projection in conjunction with the forthcoming NCE mentioned above and have also received an initial inquiry about the availability of additional funds from ADF&G Division of Subsistence to expand upon some of their community sampling and analysis work that would bring new and helpful insights to the project.

☐ **Personnel changes.**

1. Summary of Work Performed:

Our Kelp Values project continues to make progress this quarter with substantial focus placed on mapping a remaining timeline for our team's work together and engaging with the other two EVOSTC-funded mariculture research projects and the CORaL Network to explore potential opportunities to connect our respective results. Healthy Land and Sea Planning (HLSP) development has been completed for Ouzinkie and continues for Nanwalek, Port Graham, and Qutekcak, with inquiries continuing for Valdez Native Tribe and the Salamatof Tribe to be the final community to participate in this planning process. Engagement with kelp and seaweed knowledge holders continues with transcripts reviewed by 61 respondents across the region and expanded engagement with Native Village of Eyak in advance of planned interviews there this fall. This quarter also saw the completion and distribution of an ArcGIS Story Map offering a visually driven and comprehensive update on the status of the Kelp Values project to the communities we've worked with to date, regional partners, and the other EVOSTC-funded teams. We've also launched an online survey targeted at researchers, managers, and mariculture operators to identify opportunities and barriers to mutually beneficial research partners with mariculture operations that has received 50 responses to date.

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:



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- Dr. Tom Thornton and Karen Grosskruetz have completed 61 interviews to date and has scheduled several more for the coming quarter. They have also proofed transcripts from 60 of the interviews with the respective respondents. They are working on a letter of support from Native Village of Eyak to approve the work in the community and the Tribe has identified several key knowledge holders whom they will follow up with later this fall.
 - ACF has developed a statement of work for Dr. Tom Bell (originally planned to be a subcontractor for UAS) to complete mapping surface kelps in the Spill Zone based on satellite imagery to be completed by fall of 2026 and this work will begin in Q2.
 - Native Conservancy and David Guilfoyle (AAI) have narrowed their list to one of two remaining communities (Valdez Native Tribe or Salamatof Tribe) to be the last community to complete an HLSP with a plan of engaging either community with pre-planning meetings this summer and community visits in the fall. Meanwhile, they have completed work with Ouzinkie and work continues with Qutekcah (Seward), Port Graham, and Nanwalek on their HLSPs.
 - Chugach Regional Resources Commission continues to help liaison with Dr. Thornton and Karen Grosskreutz connecting them with the Native Village of Eyak and Valdez Native Tribe. They are also helping the HLSP efforts with outreach to the Valdez Native Tribe. They have also wrapped their own EVOSTC-funded project (part of project 300) and are interested in connecting with the Kelp Values team for some initial outreach with permitting and regulatory agencies to share initial results from both projects.
 - Alaska Conservation Foundation (ACF) has completed development of an ArcGIS Story Map to update relevant stakeholders on project's progress. The work of each of the project's five teams and been summarized in interactive and visually focused format to explain the purpose and status of the work. The story map is available at [KelpValues.org](https://kelpvalues.org). We have also actively shared it with project participants and contributors to date as well as through our partner networks including Tribes, mariculture operators, scientists, and managers in the South Coast region. The aim is to offer an update on work to date and invite broader perspectives about it as we begin to synthesize results from the five teams.

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



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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	C	D	D	D	X	X	X				
Anthropological research at focal communities		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	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	C							
Develop children's books ²									D	D	D	D								
Cultural GIS mapping		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	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	C	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:

- 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 September so that teams can incorporate findings into their own efforts. They have also begun to develop a series of map layers that integrate Shorezone datasets with total subsistence use (an early deliverable from the Kelp Values project) and also the life history harvest mapping they collected for two communities last year. They are also developing a proposal for expanded data collection effort that would add questions about kelp

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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mariculture into upcoming household survey efforts to help collect more perspectives from subsistence communities about implications of the activity.

We have also made initial inquiries with Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council and the Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation (an organization serving outfitter and guides) in regard to their interests in engagement with the Kelp Values team in late 2026 early 2027. Our aim is to gather perspectives from these other users about results to share from across the Kelp Values project.

Efforts to conduct surveys of communities after farms have gone in have been challenged by the limited number of communities that we have been able to engage with where farms are now active. The new work being proposed by ADF&G Subsistence may help to get into this question in the coming quarters, but 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	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	C	X	X	X	X	X		
Conduct post-farm household surveys										C	C	D	D	X	X	X	X	X		
Community Survey Reports									C	C										

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.

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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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 complete his consumer Willingness to Pay data collection effort from over 1000 households in Washington, Oregon and California and he is in the process of compiling results this quarter with the aim of producing an article on the work this fall. Efforts have concluded around engaging with kelp/seaweed buyers with six respondents to long form interviews from companies across different industries like food products, biomaterials, and agricultural supplements. Further ACF, has launched a survey that has been completed by 50 mariculture operators, scientists, and managers to date about barriers to research/monitoring collaborations and how to overcome them with 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	C	X	X					
Develop several Pilot projects															X	X	X			
Conduct a willingness-to-pay analysis for environmental monitoring data									C	C	C	C	C							
Survey and Interviews (B2B)					C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C							
Identify processing strategies			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X						
Existing market channels			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X						
Examine supply chain of products			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	X						

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 most of the effort focused in FY 2023.



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2. Products:

Peer-reviewed publications:

NA

Reports:

NA

Popular articles:

NA

Conferences and workshops:

ACF was able to present an overview of the Kelp Values project as part of a panel at the 2026 Alaska Mariculture Conference in Anchorage, Alaska.

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:

ACF has released a final version of our Arc GIS Story Map update describing the focus of the project and the status of the work to date. It has been distributed through partner networks and included in newsletters from the CORal Network and Alaska Ocean Observing System. The story map is available at KelpValues.org



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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 and implement 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 the CORaL Network and Melissa Good (who spans all three projects) as well as one of the leads from the CRRC project, we organized a half-day workshop on March 9, 2026 for all three teams in association with Alaska Mariculture Conference. The session was facilitated by Shelly Wade of Agnew::Beck Consulting and attendees from all four teams included:

- **CORaL Network** – Cristina Reo and Shana Kent
- **CRRC Farm Test Sites Project** – Willow Hetrick (online)
- **Kelp Values Project** – Aaron Poe, David Guilfoyle (online), Della Stroh, Kevin Berry (online), Michael Stekoll, Rachel Lekanoff, and Thomas Thornton.
- **Mar ReCon** – Caitlin McKinstry, Ginny Eckert, Jessica Whitney, Katrina Hoffman, Melissa Good, and Nick Mangini.
- **EVOSTC & Axiom** – Shiway Wang (online for an early portion) and Adrienne Canino.

The groups exchanged stats updates on their respective work as well as key audiences for the results of their projects and key methods for reaching those entities and individuals. We also identified 12 near and long-term opportunities for collaborative actions to work together in sharing results and engage key audiences that are shared by the team. Some of these collaborative actions have already been taken and others are planned for later this fall.



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EVOSTC Education and Outreach Projects

The Kelp Values team is expanding our efforts to work with the CORaL team (project 25220400) who has helped to promote the release of our Arc GIS Story Map and also our researcher/farmer collaboration survey this quarter. Following the mini summit in March we are also discussing the opportunity to collaborate with them on creating and implementing a 'field school' curriculum later this fall to training teachers and their classrooms from the spill zone on how to collect seaweed samples. The hope is to engage communities in collaborative research and improve upon what's known about the distribution of kelp and seaweeds to bolster mapping efforts being implemented by Dr. Stekoll.

Trustee or Management Agencies

We have worked through our agency partner networks that include, ADF&G, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA, USGS, and the National Park Service to share our Arc GIS Story Map as well as our research collaboration survey which has been completed by 16 managers and researchers from agencies to date.

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 work with four of them very closely through our HLSP and reach out to two additional Tribes to inquire about their interest in participating in the effort. Our ethnography efforts around defining traditional and contemporary values around kelp and seaweed have conducted formal outreach to 17 Tribes in total and has worked with several to conduct interviews of knowledge holders



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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
Personnel	\$49,625	\$27,338	\$103,783	\$134,183	\$128,232	\$443,161	\$22,634	\$165,833
Travel	\$0	\$5,876	\$11,288	\$14,884	\$8,650	\$40,698	\$1,021	\$15,734
Contractual	\$316,428	\$475,556	\$567,276	\$543,349	\$495,684	\$2,398,292	\$137,153	\$1,248,168
Commodities	\$0	\$0	\$750	\$799	\$972	\$2,521	\$851	\$6,155
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	\$28,290	\$251,281
SUBTOTAL	\$430,112	\$597,804	\$793,874	\$805,105	\$738,083	\$3,364,978	\$189,948	\$1,687,171
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		
Other Resources (In-Kind Funds)	125,000.00	-	-	-	-	\$125,000		