

Restoration Update

July 1994

Volume 1 Number 4



Draft Oil Spill Restoration Plan and Environmental Impact Statement Released for Comments

A comprehensive Restoration Plan outlining activities to restore injuries from the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill and an accompanying Draft Environmental Impact Statement were released June 18, 1994 by the Trustee Council for public review and comment.

The Draft Restoration Plan is the culmination of a 3-year joint effort by federal and state agencies following the October 1991 court settlement between Exxon Corporation, the United States government and the State of Alaska.

Written comments will be accepted through August 1, 1994 and should be mailed or delivered to: Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee

Council, Attn: EIS Comments, 645 G Street, Suite 401, Anchorage, AK 99501-3451.

Public meetings have been taking place in Anchorage, Seward, Homer, Kodiak, Cordova and Valdez to provide information and take public comments on both the Draft Restoration Plan and the Draft EIS.

An additional teleconference hearing is scheduled for July 20 beginning at 7:00 pm. Access to the teleconference will be available to residents in all the communities and villages in the oil spill region. Contact an Alaska Legislative Information Office or L.J. Evans at the Trustee Council offices for information about participating in

the teleconference meeting.

To deliver comments by telephone, call 278-8012, or dial toll-free within Alaska at 1-800-478-7745, toll-free from outside Alaska at 1-800-283-7745. Fishermen or subsistence users unable to access a regular telephone may provide comments by way of a collect marine operator call, through August 1.

For more information or copies of the Draft Restoration Plan or EIS, contact the Oil Spill Public Information Center at the same address or by calling 907/278-8012, toll-free within Alaska at 1-800-478-7745, toll-free outside Alaska at 1-800-283-7745.

Important Trustee Council Action Dates Coming Up

- August 1 • *DEIS & Draft Restoration Plan Comments and Public Advisory Group nominations due*
- August 2 • *Public Advisory Group meeting*
- August 8 • *Trustee Council Meeting (tentative)*
- August 29 • *Trustee Council Meeting (tentative)*
- September 6 • *Draft 1995 Work Plan out for Public Review*
- October 6 • *Public comment closes on Draft 1995 Work Plan*
- October 31 • *Trustee Council meeting to act on Draft 1995 Work Plan (tentative)*



On May 26, Governor Walter J. Hickel signed HB 447, which established Afognak Island State Park. The park consists of 42,000 acres of prime wildlife habitat and recreational use lands at Seal Bay and Tonki Cape on Afognak Island, purchased in 1993 by the Trustee Council as part of the habitat protection program. Pictured with Gov. Hickel at the signing ceremony are (left to right) Sen. Fred Zharoff, Laurie Nottingham, Assistant Attorney General and State Trustee Designee Craig Tillery, Walt Ebell, Ralph Eluska and Rep. Cliff Davidson. Photo by Georgene Sink, Kodiak Daily Mirror.

Oil Spill Region Fisheries Outlook

Commissioner Carl Rosier
Alaska Department of Fish and Game



Fisheries resources provide the primary livelihood for most residents of the Exxon Valdez oil spill area. Safely managing fish resources already injured by the oil spill for harvest by commercial, subsistence and recreational users can best be improved through intensified field research and monitoring. While using early information to give us a glimpse of what is happening in this summer's fisheries in the oil spill regions, I would like to show how field work sponsored by the Trustee Council and the Department of Fish and Game will help us do our job better.

For a second year the herring fisheries in Prince William Sound were disastrous. Herring abundance was estimated to be below the threshold of 22,000 tons required to sustain future harvests,

and no commercial fisheries were allowed. The decision to not open the fishery was based on biologists' field surveys of herring spawn deposition. Additional field work was initiated this year by the Trustee Council to determine the effect of disease on herring and the ecosystem factors which affect herring production.

It is too early yet to make a call on this year's total pink salmon return to Prince William Sound, but an early fishery in Valdez Arm looks positive. Millions of pink salmon were harvested there for hatchery cost recovery needs in a recent opening. Fisheries biologists launched a long-term field research program this spring to determine ecosystem factors affecting pink salmon production. In-season decisions about management of fish stock are now more accurate with the aid of wide-scale recoveries of coded wire tags from tagged salmon.

While commercial salmon fisheries in Kodiak began slowly, they are now tracking on pre-season forecast levels, with the exception of the Ayakulik River. Based on

expected poor sockeye returns resulting from oil spill injuries, no commercial openings have been allowed on salmon returning to the Ayakulik system this year. Intensive monitoring at the stream indicates the present return is only meeting escapement requirements at this time.

The Trustee Council has made a significant commitment to achieving a better understanding of the ecosystem processes affected by the oil spill. In most cases the data collection necessary to gain this information can only take place in the real-life laboratories of Prince William Sound and the Gulf of Alaska. The knowledge thus gained will assist and influence agency decisions about management of fish stocks and other resources in order to enhance recovery and restoration. I continue to be optimistic that the Trustees will support good research and monitoring as a necessary part of a comprehensive, balanced approach to restoration.

A Cordova field crew samples pre-emergent pink salmon fry in March 1994 as part of a Trustee Council study. Photo by J. Johnson, ADF&G.



Restoration Update

The Restoration Update is published approximately six times a year by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council. Its purpose is to update interested members of the public about actions, policies and plans of the Trustee Council to restore resources and services injured by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

For more information, mailing address correction or to request future articles on specific subjects, contact:

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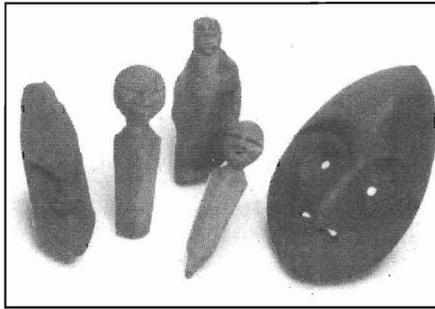


Kodiak Alutiiq Archaeological Repository

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held in Kodiak on May 26 for the construction of the Alutiiq Archaeological Repository, an 18,000 square-foot facility scheduled to be completed in February 1995.

Representing the Trustee Council, Fish and Game Commissioner Carl Rosier said that the Trustees "found considerable personal satisfaction in funding this outstanding restoration project conceived by the public in Kodiak."

The Archaeological Repository project was established by the Kodiak Area Native Association and the Trustee Council in cooperation with Natives of Kodiak, dedicated to the restoration and preservation of cultural resources injured by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. The Trustees approved funding of \$1.5 million toward construction of the building. Other sources will provide funding for the total expense of \$2.4 million. The Kodiak Area Native Association and Natives of Kodiak will be



Archaeological artifacts such as these Koniag masks and figurines will be part of the research collection at the Alutiiq Archaeological Repository. The full-sized mask (right) of a short-eared owl was found lying face down inside a storage box in a collapsed late Koniag house at Karluk.

responsible for furnishing, staffing and maintaining the facility once the structure is complete.

The Repository will provide safe, secure storage and access for the study of artifacts and other data recovered from archaeological sites in the Kodiak region. The center will also help to preserve the knowledge of traditional subsistence practices of the Native community, many of which were disrupted by the oil spill, and further public education to help reduce vandalism damage to archaeological sites and artifacts.

Institute of Marine Science Project DEIS

Meetings to gather comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Institute of Marine Science Infrastructure Improvement Project are scheduled to take place in Seward on July 26 and in Anchorage on July 28, 1994.

Project team members will be available from 5:00 - 8:00 PM to discuss the project and answer questions. A presentation to describe the project will be delivered at 7:00 PM. The formal hearing to take public comment will begin at 8:00 PM. Both oral and written comments will be accepted at the meetings. In addition, written

comments will be accepted until August 8, 1994.

The meetings will take place at the following locations:

Seward: Tuesday, July 26
Institute of Marine Science
K.M. Rae Building
125 Third Avenue

Anchorage: Thursday, July 28
Oil Spill Public Information Center
645 G Street, Suite 100

Written comments should be mailed or delivered to: Nancy K. Swanton, EIS Project Manager, 949 East 36th Ave., Room 603, Anchorage, AK 99508-4302. For more information, contact Nancy Swanton at 907/271-6622.

PAG Nominations

Deadline August 1

The *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council is soliciting nominations for the Nov. 1994 - Oct. 1996 term of the Public Advisory Group. Members of the Public Advisory Group reflect balanced representation from the public at large and the following principal interests: aquaculture, commercial fishing, commercial tourism, environmental, conservation, forest products, local government, native landowners, recreational users, sport hunting and fishing, subsistence, and science/academic. Nominations will be accepted until August 1, 1994.

For more detailed information on the role of the Public Advisory Group or the nomination process, or to obtain copies of documents relating to the Public Advisory Group, contact Doug Mutter, U.S. Department of the Interior, at 907/271-5011.

1995 Work Plan Process Underway

Approximately 160 projects totaling almost \$66 million were submitted in response to the invitation to submit 1995 restoration projects. These proposals are undergoing technical, legal and policy review, and will be presented for public comment in a Draft 1995 Work Plan in September.

Following review by the Public Advisory Group and other public comment, and further scientific review, the Trustee Council will consider the plan and take action at the end of October.

For more information contact the Oil Spill Public Information Center, 645 G Street, Anchorage, AK 99501-3451, or call 907/278-8008, toll free within Alaska at 1-800-478-7745, outside Alaska at 1-800-283-7745.

Forage Fish Project

Bruce Wright

NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service

The Trustee Council has initiated a research effort this summer enable scientists to better understand the distribution, abundance, and availability of several small fish which are important as food sources to other species in the oil spill affected area. These "forage fish" include capelin, herring, pollock, sandlance, euphausiids, squid, and other similar species.

Scientists know that the availability of forage fish affects the distribution, abundance, growth and reproductive success of some other species injured by the oil spill, particularly harbor seals, pigeon guillemots, black-legged kittiwakes and marbled murrelets. More and better knowledge about forage fish is needed to aid efforts to restore these injured species.

The project will first involve a reconnaissance survey using a combination of hydroacoustics and net sampling techniques to

estimate distribution and abundance of forage fish resources in Prince William Sound. This years' late summer field work will primarily be an exploration effort to locate forage fish schools and identify the fish species detected.

The forage fish study is expected to be a multi-year project. Subsequent years' tasks may include expansion of the survey area, incorporation of characterizing oceanographic parameters, and development of models to estimate productivity of forage fish as related to changing oceanographic conditions.

Coordination with several state and federal agencies is incorporated in the project to insure that forage fish surveys occur in areas appropriate to understand how fish abundance influences marine birds and mammals.

You can help

Residents of Prince William Sound may also have knowledge of areas of high forage fish abundance to contribute to this effort.

The forage fish investigators would be interested in learning what residents know about forage fish in the Prince William Sound and oil spill areas. Important information would include spawning locations of capelin or sandlance (researchers have lots of information about herring spawning locations). The presence of abundant marine predator activity, such as seabirds, seals, sea lions, and whales, may be another indication of forage fish concentrations. Some fishing vessels may even locate large concentrations of forage fish species on their fish finders. Any of this information may be useful to the scientists who will be assessing forage fish populations.

If you have information about locations of forage fish concentrations please contact Bruce Wright, at 907/789-6600 or write National Marine Fisheries Service, Auke Bay Fisheries Laboratory, OOSDAR, 11305 Glacier Highway, Juneau, AK 99801-18626. The results of the 1994 forage fish survey work will be made available to the public in an annual report in early 1995.

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