

RESTORATION

U P D A T E

May, June, July 1998

Volume 5 Number 3

AT LAST!

Years of effort pay off with three big events

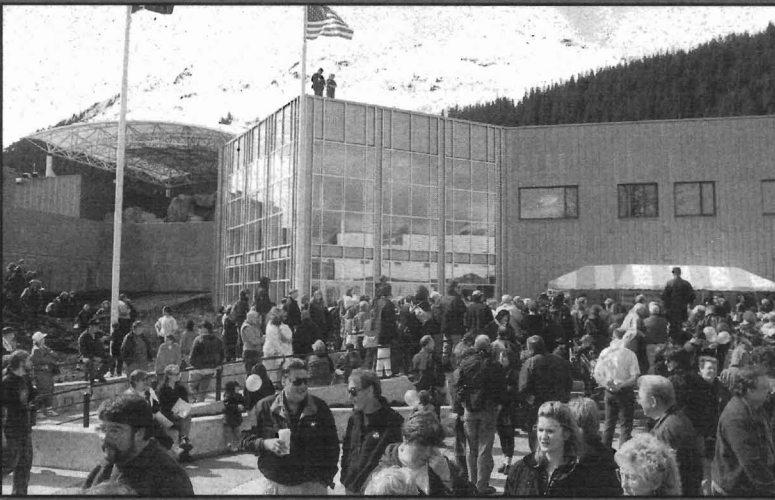


Photo by Joe Hunt

Alaska SeaLife Center Opens • Pg. 4

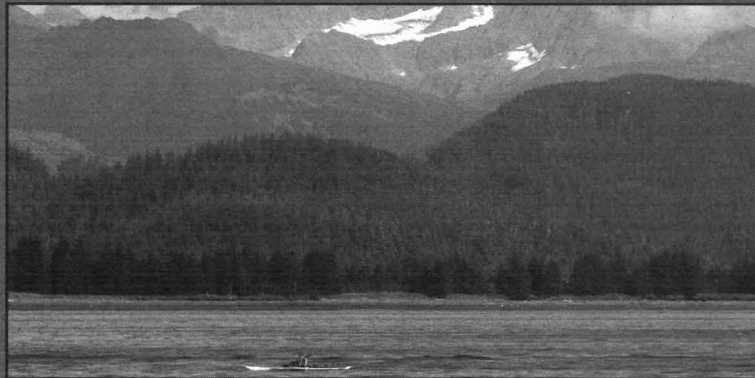


Photo by Kevin Hartwell

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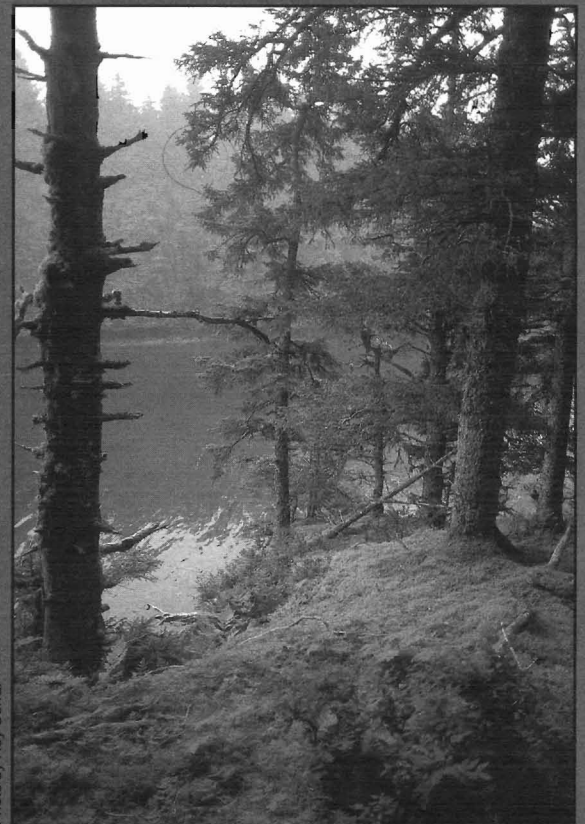


Photo by Roy Corral

Afognak Land Protected • Pg. 3

Comments on Reserve provide a variety of opinions

To no one's surprise, the ideas are many and varied when it comes to how the public would like to see the Restoration Reserve used.

The Restoration Reserve is a savings account set aside as part of the long-term restoration plan established by the Trustee Council in 1994. That plan calls for the Trustees to place up to \$12 million into a reserve account each year for nine successive years. By the time the money is needed in the Year 2002 (after the last Exxon payment), it is expected to be worth approximately \$140 million.

After six weeks of public comment and meetings in 22 communities throughout Alaska, the Restoration Office received 1,099 responses to questions on how to use and manage the Reserve funds.

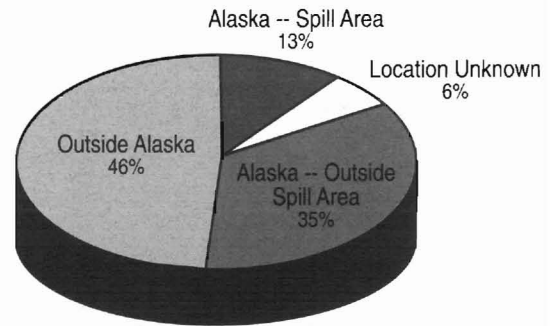
About three-quarters of all responses urge the use of the Reserve primarily for habitat protection. This included about 700 cards, letters and e-mails. The comments varied slightly in content, but each suggested that at least 75 percent of the fund should be available for habitat protection.

When responses were analyzed by location, however, it appears that residents of the spill area had different ideas. Only about one-fifth of the 140 responses from the spill-affected region advocated using the fund primarily for habitat protection. About half of spill-area responses proposed other combinations of uses.

Public Advisory Group Chairman Rupe Andrews reported that the 17-member PAG was split on the issue, but that the majority

Origin of Responses

1,099 Total



preferred long-term funding of science, education and community projects. Most of the PAG members attending a recent meeting felt that some level of habitat funding was appropriate, generally in a range of 10-20 percent.

Other issues did not receive as much attention. When asked whether the Trustee Council should continue to govern the fund, only 174 people responded. Two-thirds favored retaining the Trustee Council as it is currently configured. Some suggested changing the membership of the Council to provide more direct representation of various interests such as spill-area residents, Alaska Natives, scientists, and commercial fishers.

More than half of the 140 comments received about the PAG favored continuing the group in its present form. Others recommended disbanding the PAG or reorganizing the group.

About 400 people made suggestions on how the fund should be invested. Nearly three-quarters of those responses urged the Council to manage the Reserve for maximum flexibility rather than create a permanent endowment. Most of the proponents of this idea explained that it would allow the Council flexibility to use the principal to complete large land purchases.

Residents of the spill area, however, favored a permanent endowment by a 3-to-1 ratio.

The Public Advisory Group plans to discuss the Restoration Reserve further during a meeting planned for July 28. The Trustee Council will consider the Reserve during a September meeting. A meeting date was not confirmed as of press time.

Meetings were held in 19 spill-area communities as well as in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau. Executive Director Molly McCammon and Science Coordinator Stan Sanner listened to public testimony as part of the Anchorage meeting.



Photo by Joe Hunt

Northern Afognak Is. protected

Council, AJV agree to long-sought-after package that protects one-of-a-kind forest

The Trustee Council reached an agreement in April to protect prime old-growth forest, estuaries, and salmon streams on northern Afognak Island. The Council authorized \$70.5 million to purchase 41,750 acres from Afognak Joint Venture, a partnership of several Native corporations with interests on Afognak Island. The AJV Board of Directors met two weeks later and accepted the offer.

Negotiations lasted more than three years, complicated by the high value of timber on the property. The Trustee Council originally earmarked funds for this protection package when it established its restoration plan in 1994 and this was the third time they made an offer on the land.

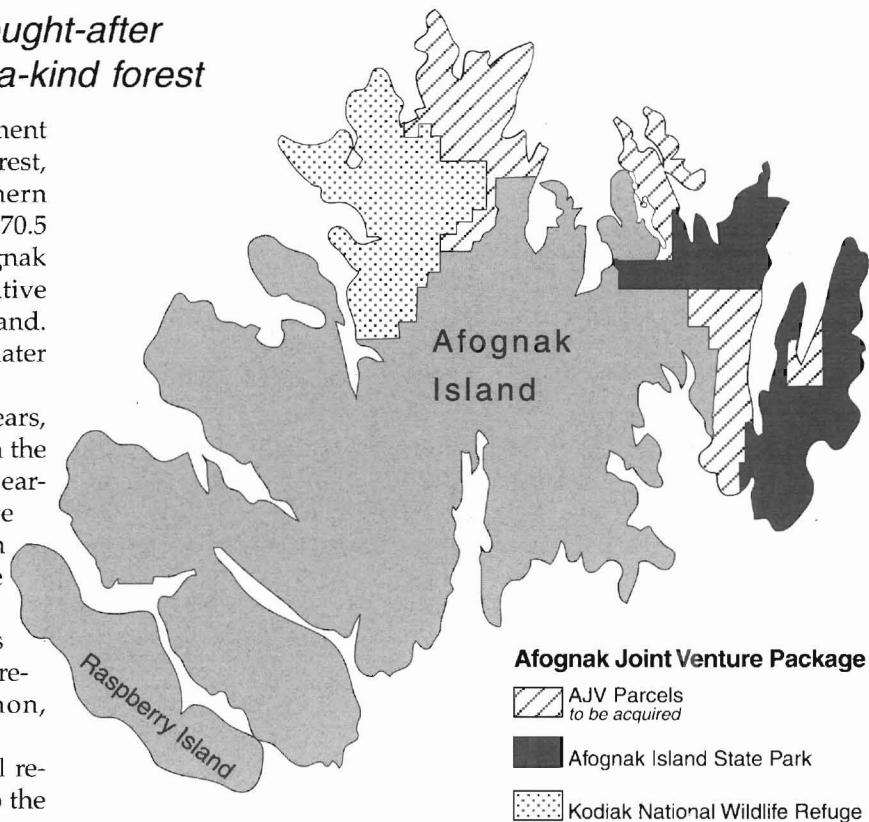
"This area is extraordinary in terms of its resource values, its natural beauty and recreation potential," said Molly McCammon, executive director of the Trustee Council.

In a survey of available land in the spill region, from eastern Prince William Sound to the Alaska Peninsula, the habitat on northern Afognak Island ranked as the most valuable for restoration of species injured in the 1989 oil spill. Lands included in the offer are adjacent to Afognak Island State Park and the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge and are across the strait from Shuyak Island State Park.

Numerous species injured by the oil spill use the area for nesting, feeding, molting and wintering. Tidal, subtidal and upland areas are important for pink salmon, black oystercatchers, harbor seals, harlequin ducks, bald eagles, marbled murrelets, pigeon guillemots, sea otters, and river otters.

"The agreement is fair and will provide both long-term conservation of Afognak Island's outstanding natural resources for the public and a secure future for our partners," said Howard Valley, chairman of the Afognak Joint Venture board. "Determining the proper value for a sale of assets of this magnitude and complexity is not easy. Our discussions have been long, frank and at times difficult."

AJV will maintain timber harvest operations on its remaining land, Valley said. The land sale will provide income to the partners of AJV to make investments and diversify operations, he said.



"In addition, AJV will explore opportunities for low-density recreation and ecotourism on its remaining lands adjacent to Afognak State Park and Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge," Valley said. "In this way, we plan to provide a long-term financial base for our partners, our communities and future generations."

The high value of timber precluded the Council from protecting the entire area, McCammon pointed out. "The package provides a management plan that protects the resources while allowing some limited timber harvest," she said. "State and federal biologists and forestry experts have worked with AJV to ensure that large tracts of the highest value habitat are protected."

The popular Paul's and Laura Lakes will have buffer zones between them and any timber activity, she said.

It's expected that about 6,200 acres will be managed as part of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge and the remaining 35,500 acres will likely become part of Afognak Island State Park. The state park was created in 1994 under Gov. Wally Hickel as a result of one of the first habitat protection packages made possible by the Exxon Valdez civil settlement.



Photo by Daniel Zatz

Afognak timber is very valuable, due to its size and accessibility. Much of the island is slated to be logged, but the northern portions, including Afognak Island State Park and recently protected AJV lands, have been preserved through the Trustee Council's Large Parcel Program.



Visitors view the graceful movements of harbor seals, sea lions and seabirds as they swim or feed underwater. Huge aquariums allow both underwater and above water viewing of the animals and their habitats.

SeaLife Center makes a splash

More than 30 years and \$56 million later, Seward has the marine education and research facility it has long dreamed of. The Alaska SeaLife Center opened May 2 with a gala that included band music, bagpipes, and a flyover by F-15s courtesy of the U.S. Air Force.

The dignitaries -- Gov. Tony Knowles, former governor Wally Hickel, Sen. Frank Murkowski, and, representing the Trustee Council, Deborah Williams -- each commended Seward residents for their persistence in making their dream come true.

Hickel noted that he first heard about plans for a sealife center when Seward resident Willard Dunham briefed him on the idea in 1966. When the criminal and civil claims against Exxon were settled in 1991, Dunham again sat down with then-governor Hickel and explained how the facility could be made self-sustaining through tourist dollars.

Two years later, the state provided \$12.5 million from the criminal settlement and the Trustee Council added another \$25 million to bring the idea to life.

The SeaLife Center opened with three massive aquariums housing harbor seals, sea lions and a variety of seabirds. Several smaller aquariums and touching ponds are also included with starfish, crab, halibut, jellyfish and other sea creatures found in Alaska waters.

Hickel called it the "flagship" for marine science in Alaska. The Trustee Council is funding five research projects at the SeaLife Center this year.

"Seward and all of Alaska should be proud of this," Hickel said to an opening day crowd of about 2,000. "It was a combined effort of so many."

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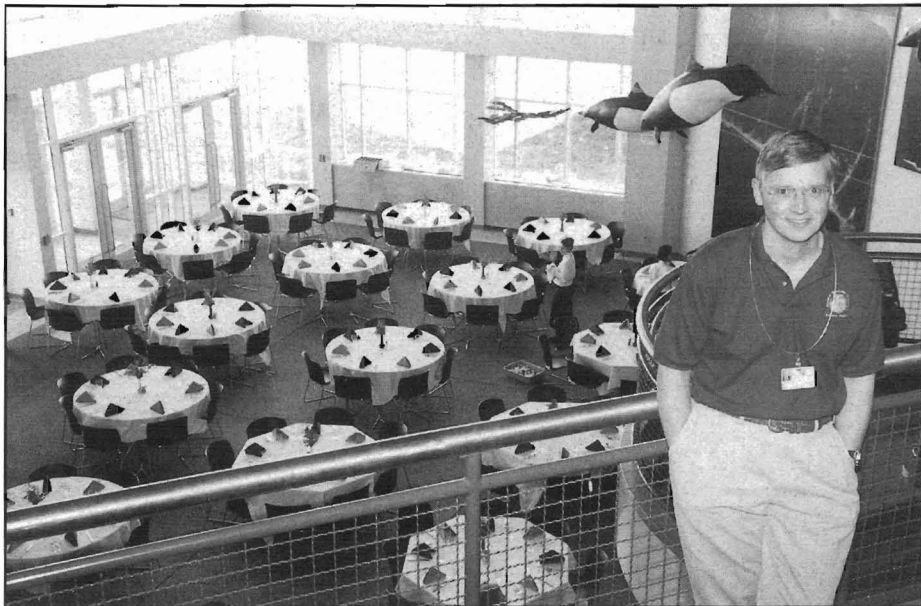
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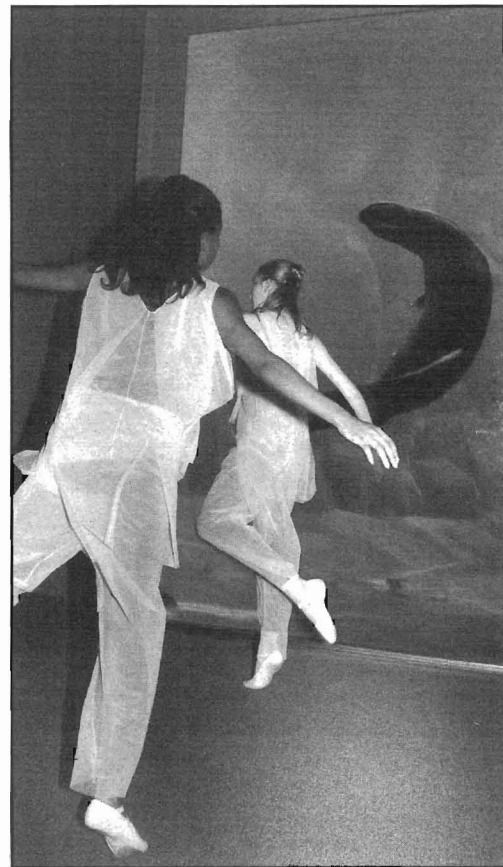
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Kim Sundberg, above, was named director of the SeaLife Center in the weeks before the grand opening. Sundberg retired from the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game in 1996 after serving as the department's liaison to the SeaLife Center. The entryway of the SeaLife Center was converted into a dining facility for a private party. Revenue from such events will help sustain both the exhibit and research portions of the SeaLife Center.



A sea lion gets into the swing of things as students from Alaska Dance Theater performed.



Children learn about animals commonly found in tide pools. With the help of SeaLife Center staff, children are encouraged to touch the animals while learning more about their ecology and survival needs.



Photos by Joe Hunt

The sun turned out for opening day events and so did this pair of jugglers who entertained the crowd with the SeaLife Center in the background.

Draft of FY 99 Work Plan now available

A record number of FY 99 proposals had to be organized by category, duplicated, and prepared for review by a panel of independent scientists and other experts. Putting it all together were, from left, Sandra Schubert, Tami Yockey, Rebecca Williams and Cherri Womac of the Restoration Office staff.



Photo by Joe Hunt

A record number of proposals was received for funding during fiscal year 1999, which begins October 1. The FY99 Draft Work Plan was released June 17 and contains recommendations to fund approximately \$11.2 million of research, monitoring and restoration projects. The Restoration Office received more than 142 project proposals requesting \$25.6 million in funds.

The Draft Work Plan will include recommendations by Executive Director Molly McCammon and Chief Scientist Bob Spies. A

panel of scientists and experts reviewed each of the proposals, taking into consideration project methods, budgets and how each fits into the overall restoration goals of the Trustee Council. Trustee agencies and the Public Advisory Group also provided input.

The draft plan is available for public comment until July 27 when a public hearing will be held at the Anchorage Restoration Office. The Trustee Council is scheduled to meet in Anchorage August 13 to make final funding decisions for the FY 99 Work Plan.

Subsistence conference set for Cordova

A subsistence conference will be held this summer in Cordova, bringing together elders and youth from each village in the spill-affected area.

The Native Village of Eyak will host the Elders/Youth Subsistence Conference in Cordova on August 19-22.

The conference, funded by the Trustee Council, will bring traditional knowledge and western scientific knowledge together and share it with the elders and youth.

One elder and two youths will be invited from each village to discuss subsistence prior to the oil spill and sub-

sistence today. Chugachmiut is also planning to sponsor some elders, the community facilitator and a Tribal Council member from each village.

A panel of three scientists, an elder and a youth will be discussing issues related to research and traditional knowledge in the spill area. A roundtable also will be held on ways to assist recovery efforts.

Information booths and arts and crafts booths will be available for community members. For more information or to donate door prizes, contact Altana Olsen, Native Village of Eyak, P.O. Box 1388, Cordova, AK 99574, (907) 424-7738.

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Shareholders of Tatitlek Corporation voted overwhelmingly to join with the Trustee Council in protecting valuable habitat in eastern Prince William Sound. A shareholder vote in May resulted in 86 percent approving a protection package that includes a combination of conservation easements, timber easements, and fee simple land transfer on 68,914 acres. Tatitlek Corporation will receive \$34,550,000 for the land, with \$10 million of that coming from the federal portion of the Exxon criminal settlement.

The protection package includes a conservation easement covering Bligh Island, the closest point of land to the now famous reef that put the *Exxon Valdez* into the maritime history books. Bligh Island is considered one of the most valuable parcels in Prince William Sound for its habitat and its importance as a subsistence harvest area.

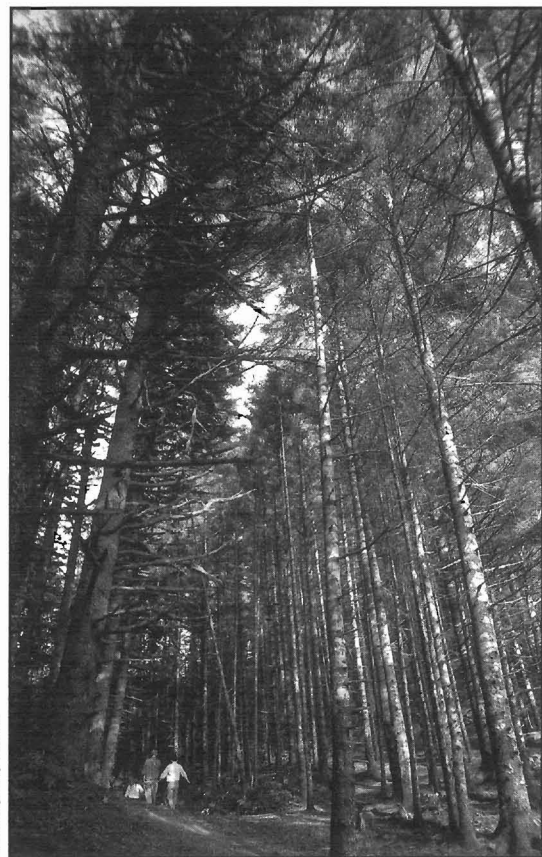
The land package covers most of Port Fidalgo (including Two Moon Bay, Landlocked Bay, Fish Bay and Whalen Bay), the eastern shore of Columbia Bay and western shore of Sawmill Bay.

Most of the land purchased will be administered as part of the Chugach National Forest. Several smaller tracts will be managed by the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. The package covers approximately 212 miles of shoreline and about 50 salmon streams.

Under the agreement, Tatitlek Corporation will continue to retain about half its 137,000-acre entitlement for future development and its shareholder land program. The closing occurred for about two-thirds of the package in early June.

Numerous species injured by the oil spill use the area for nesting, feeding, molting and wintering. The area is important to harlequin ducks, bald eagles, black oystercatchers, marbled murrelets, pigeon guillemots, harbor seals, sea otters and river otters. Bligh Island has the highest nesting concentration of pigeon guillemots in eastern Prince William Sound. The Hells Hole area is highly productive and is a significant sport fishing area for salmon, cutthroat trout and Dolly Varden.

Tatitlek Shareholders ratify purchase agreement



The Trustee Council has offered to acquire a 1,028-acre tract at the west end of the road system on Kodiak Island. Termination Point is a heavily-used recreation area on Monashka Bay, approximately 12 miles from Kodiak. The parcel contains large Sitka spruce and has four miles of convoluted shoreline characterized by rocky cliffs and protected beaches.

Ownership of the land is currently in the courts and the Trustee Council's offer is pending Lesnoi, Inc., obtaining clear title.

Acquisition of Termination Point has been a top priority for the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly and the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce. The land would be managed by the State Department of Natural Resources.

At a recent meeting, the Trustees also made offers on three parcels totaling 200 acres in the Three Saints Bay and Sitkalidak Strait areas of Kodiak Island.

In 1996, the Council set aside \$1 million to acquire a number of 10-acre tax-delinquent parcels on Kodiak Island. The Council recently decided to use those funds to make offers on 22 borough-owned parcels and another 42 private parcels, all in the Uyak Bay region.

Trustees offer \$1.9 million for Kodiak's Termination Point

Photo at left: A trail winds through the tall spruce of Termination Point, a popular recreation area at the west end of the Kodiak Island road system.

Nominees sought for Public Advisory Group

Nominations are being accepted for two-year terms on the Trustee Council's Public Advisory Group. This broad-based group brings representatives of different interests together, providing a direct link between the Trustee Council and user groups throughout the spill area.

The 17-member PAG provides input on key decisions related to planning, funding and carrying out restoration projects. Its members review specific issues as well as make recommendations concerning overall direction of the restoration effort. Nominations will be accepted for five public-at-large members and one member each from the following principal interests:

- aquaculture
- commercial fishing
- commercial tourism
- environmental
- conservation
- forest products
- local government
- native landowners
- recreation users
- sport hunting / fishing
- subsistence
- science / academic

Two *ex officio* members representing the Alaska State House and Senate have non-voting seats. All Public Advisory Group members and alternates must be unanimously approved by

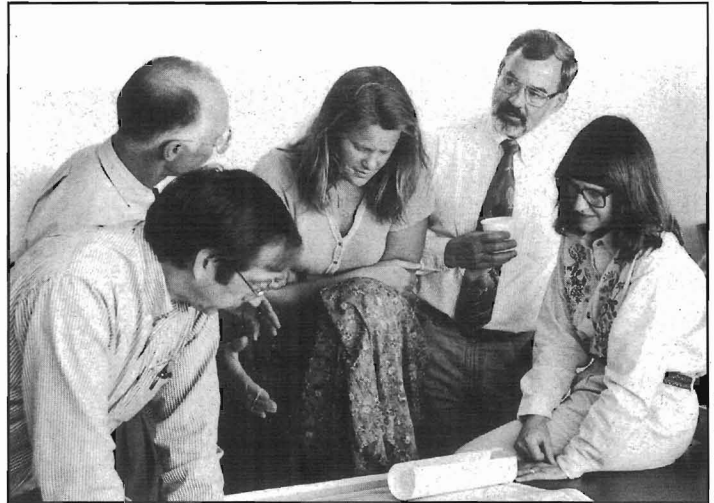


Photo by Joe Hunt

PAG members go over habitat protection maps with National Park Service liaison Bud Rice. From left are Howard Valley, Rice, Eleanor Huffines, Chuck Meacham, and Stacy Studebaker.

the Trustee Council. Nominations may be submitted by any source and must be received by 5 p.m. August 21.

To learn more about the PAG and nomination procedures, contact Cherri Womac at 907-278-8012 or 800-478-7745.

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council



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Frank Rue
Commissioner
Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game

PWS
facility
targets
marine
pollution



Photo by Stan Semner

Prince William Sound communities now each have facilities for disposing hazardous waste, household waste, used oil and other potential pollutants. The The Sound Waste Management Program, funded with \$1.5 million from the Trustee Council, reduces marine pollution by providing proper disposal facilities for each community. Among those taking part in the May grand opening ceremonies in Cordova were (from left) Susan Cogswell, director of the PWS Economic Development Council, Contractor Matt Stephi, and Cordova Mayor Ed Zeine.

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