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Public Meeting on
FY98 Draft Work Plan

July 15, 1997

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council

Public Meeting on the FY 98 Draft Work Plan
Tuesday, July 15, 1997
7 p.m.

Restoration Office
645 G Street, Suite 401
Anchorage, Alaska

TRUSTEE COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT

Molly McCammon, Executive Director
Eric Myers, Director of Operations
Stan Senner, Science Coordinator
Sandra Schubert, Project Coordinator
Joe Hunt, Communications Coordinator
Rebecca Williams, Executive Secretary

PUBLIC ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS PRESENT

Rupert Andrews, Chairman
Chris Beck
Jim King
Pam Brodie
Dave Cobb
Nancy Yeaton
Howard Valley
Stacy Studebaker
Chuck Meacham
Eleanor Huffines

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Eileen Bechtol, Homer
Jerome Selby, Kodiak
Jack Cushing, Seldovia
Monica Riedel, Cordova

(Proceedings)
(On Record at 7:09 p.m.)

EILEEN BECHTOL, Planning Director, City of Homer: My name is Eileen Bechtol and I am the Planning Director for the City of Homer (COH). I will be speaking tonight about Project #98314, Homer Mariner park habitat Assessment and Restoration Design Project. The objective of this project is to develop an environmental assessment that will provide a feasible project to restore the intertidal area of Mariner Park, located at the base of the Homer Spit. The restoration project is to restore and rehabilitate the area in such a way as to increase, preserve, and protect a diverse feeding habitat for migrating shorebirds. Also, due to the fact that Mariner Park is on the flight approach to the airport, the plan will address the issue of how to discourage geese and cranes from frequenting the area. Lastly the plan will establish mechanisms to enhance the recreation use of the area in an environmentally compatible manner. Tasks that will be involved are as follows:

1. Conduct a review of past documentation to establish a historical perspective for the comparison of past to present community related information and technical data.
2. Collect traditional and local information on prior and expected use of the area. Solicit comments on issues and concerns relative to the impact on resources and services from a restoration project.
3. Measure the diversity, frequency, and abundance of flora and fauna in Mariner Park.
4. Determine the geophysical characteristics of Mariner Park and the head of Mud Bay.
5. Develop restoration design alternatives and conduct a comparative study to identify the preferred restoration project design.
6. Write an environmental assessment.

The COH is the sponsoring, coordinating and responsible agency for this project. The ADNR is the sponsoring lead Trustee agency. ADNR is a property owner of a significant portion of the project area. In developing this proposal the City met with ADNR, ADF&G, ADOT, USF&W, USCOE and FAA. It is anticipated that local expertise will be an integral component of the planning, assessment and design team. We found

out today that the recommendation for this project may be changed from "fund" to "defer until December." We strongly request that the project be put back on the fund list because we need to go ahead with this project this fall so that we can collect data during the upcoming fall migratory period. If not, we will be set back another full year. Thank you for your consideration of this project; the citizens of Homer greatly appreciate and support the opportunity to study one of the most vital areas of our community.

JEROME SELBY, MAYOR, KODIAK ISLAND BOROUGH: Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I appreciate all the work put into the Work Plan effort and I wish you well on your efforts to get down to \$14 million, I know it is a lot of hard work and it's hard not to fund projects. There is one project I'd like for you to take another look at and that is 98270, Akalura Lake Sockeye Salmon Project. I realize the salmon in this particular area, arguably or probably were not impacted by the oil spill however, it's fairly clear that the sockeye salmon runs around Kodiak Island were impacted by the EVOS. And Akalura Lake represents one the best opportunities to build back some response to the impact on the sockeye salmon of Kodiak, so the concern kind of runs towards doing something positive that's going to have some economic impact for the fishing industry who basically didn't fish in 1989 around Kodiak Island. This would be an opportunity to recover some of the loss as well as some of the concern with what is going on with the sockeye salmon in general. I think most of you are aware that the Bristol Bay run wasn't exactly what folks had thought it would be, we've had a similar but not nearly so dramatic experience here on Kodiak Island with sockeye salmon this summer. So there is something going on with sockeye and it seems to me we ought to try to increase the Sockeye salmon runs in Akalura Lake and there seems to be a pretty good possibility of doing that. I'd like to ask that you folks take another look at this project and proceed with a fund recommendation on this project. I know that's tough when you are trying to cut projects out. I feel there is a pretty big potential for Kodiak Island and I think it may have some impact state-wide as well. I'd like to urge you to keep the small parcel acquisitions high on the priority list with previous support

for Long Island.

JACK CUSHING, Mayor of Homer: We in Homer appreciate the tremendous amount of work that you folks are doing from the Citizen's Advisory Committee to the Trustee Council and their staff. Regarding Mariner Park, I will get some maps to you before your next meeting so you can see where this area is on the Spit. Anyone who has been to the Spit will know this area. This area has traditionally flushed, from the beginning of time, until two years ago. Just recently, in 1994, was the last time the flushing made it to the 70 acres in question. The changes to the shore birds that our planning director, Eileen Bechtol, mentioned, with the flushing stopping the pattern, has shifted from small shore birds, western sandpipers, to much larger birds. The geese are starting to come into this area now, much the same way they did around the airport at Elmendorf. It's a great place for them to hang out when it's not flushing because it's dry, they can protect themselves, they have good visibility all the way around and they are seemingly making it part of their migratory route which they never did before. It used to be small birds and small waterfowl. The cranes are very much doing the same thing. One or two pairs traditionally used this area up to now and now there seems to be a flock of up to 20 pairs, in a migration type sense. Folks at the airport, which is some distance away, there is actually a whole bird reserve between the two areas This is part of the Kachemak Bay critical habitat area and ironically enough, when the airport shortened the runway by 700 feet, they took out the landing lights but left the boardwalk at the end of the old runway and suggest it be used for bird viewing. As Eileen mentioned, the data is very important to us on this because these questions are going to be coming up, how best to make this area flush so that its diverse species won't add any danger to aircraft but at the same time will add to the Shore Bird Festival that takes place there and help with recreational aspects for the community. We need data to do that, so it's real important that we proceed as soon as possible to collect some data in some form. While I was in Anchorage today, I took the opportunity to meet with the Corps folks who are currently looking at an intermediate permit we have with them indirectly as the City of Homer to reestablish a channel in the outer beach;

that this area has traditionally flushed through for the last 50 years. Since it hasn't flushed in two years now, it's going stagnant, it's dying out, it's a slow and painful death. We need to get an intermediate solution so we're working with the Corps for right now to try and get the flushing going again. We're getting a good response from the Corps, the permit process looks good. They have comments in from DDC, Fish and Wildlife, and ADF&G and all are favorable. This will be an excellent project for the Trustee Council because it's an area that gets passed by over 100,000 visitors a year. It's a high profile project to undertake. One interesting aspect of this project that you probably won't find in any of the others, is that the channel we are trying to reestablish was blocked off during the spill, when the oil was making its way around the lower peninsula and making its way towards Homer. It was deemed advisable to block that channel off so that no oil would get into this wetlands area. There is some thought that that was the start of the downfall of this channel when the blockage was completed and sediment began piling up on the other side of the blockage. That's about all I have to say to follow up on what Eileen said. We encourage you to follow through on the Spit small parcel process, it's come a long way in the last six months. We hope this program ties in with what is happening with the small parcel program. We'd like to preserve at least half the Spit.

PAM BRODIE, PAG Member; Is this any chance of other money, like federal airport money, since this is a safety issue as well as an environmental issue, that you might be able to get for this project?

JACK CUSHING; We specifically looked at that. The safety issue seems to be worse since it's not so much of a wetlands as it was, with more and bigger birds using the area. I don't want that, the safety issue, to be the focus other than an important design aspect. I think the prime issue should be the Shorebird Festival in Homer, putting back 70 acres of really productive wetlands the way it was, and what this means to the Homer area. We did talk to Ducks Unlimited, and they did show some interest and they may be a source but towards the small parcel issue, more than the other. The more

money we can find to pony up with your funds the better off our projects will be. We are actively pursuing those avenues too.

MONICA RIEDEL, Executive Director for the Alaska Native Harbor Seal

Commission: I'd like to thank the Trustee Council for funding the Harbor Seal Management and Biological Sampling project and I'd like to thank you for supporting it again this year. I think it's the right direction to take by involving local people that were directly impacted by the oil spill. It gives us a chance to be directly involved in the restoration process with the data collection and reviews. At this time I'd like to speak in support of several subsistence projects that have been proposed and I will briefly mention them. Community Involvement Project, I believe without this the local communities would not have a voice with the Trustee Council and a continuation of this project is vital to our communities. The Youth Area Watch, 98210, the Executive Director's preliminary recommendation at the bottom of the page, was to transition away from the Trustee Council funding I have to disagree with this because the Youth Area Watch is a vital connection with the restoration process. We should always be for involving the youth, especially the youth from the impacted areas to continue monitoring the restoration process. The Elder's Youth Conference and Subsistence and the Oil Spill, I have to commend Molly's work on this with the communities. I think she has very much favored involvement of local people and this speaks true with this proposal. The next one I'd like to say a couple of words about is the Community Based Harbor Seal Field Research. This is the second year we have proposed this and it's recommended as a "do not fund." If the next logical step is to have people in the field, living in the local area, collecting data; then the next step is to have them involved with designing their own research project and directing us towards stewardship. I think this is the direction to go for Native communities and the people who are directly impacted by the oil spill. The next project, which is also a "do not fund" recommendation, but I think it should be brought to your attention, is the Eyak Subsistence Recovery Camp that has been submitted several times in the past. This one looks at the viewpoint and the frustration of people who are dependant on the natural resources for their livelihood

and their food, in the emotional and psychological trauma sense. It is still a stressful situation and I don't think it should be overlooked. Lastly, I'd like to say I agree with Margaret Roberts of the Kodiak Tribal Council for proposing subsistence restoration through community participation. With that, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of our proposals.

(Off record 7:43 p.m.)