

EVOSTC: 20 Years After the Spill COMMUNICATION PLAN

Final 9/29/08

GOAL

To inform the public as to the status of restoration of injured resources and services, and the results of restoration activities 20 years after the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill.

To discuss the status of recovery: what we do know, what we may never know, and what the implications are for the future.

BACKGROUND

Since the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill on March 24, 1989, the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council has spent millions of dollars and sponsored hundreds of projects as part of the Natural Resources Damage Assessment and the subsequent Restoration Program. Projects have included studies on such topics as the fate and effects of oil, injury to and recovery of fish and wildlife resources, loss of services provided by injured natural resources, and ecological and other factors that limit or influence recovery, productivity, and long-term population trends. The Trustee Council also has sponsored a major habitat protection program and many general restoration projects including local fisheries enhancement, removal of residual oil from mussel beds and shorelines, and protection of vandalized archaeological sites. Although not part of the Trustee Council's Restoration Program, there has been increased attention to the prevention of and response to oil spills, as well as to cleanup techniques appropriate in cold maritime waters.

In March 1994, five years after the oil spill, the Trustee Council sponsored a public symposium to review what had been learned about injury and recovery and to update the public on what the Trustee Council had done to aid restoration. In 1999, the Trustee Council again sponsored a symposium and produced a variety of communication products (10th anniversary edition of the annual status report; video; traveling exhibit; poster and other conference materials) to again update the public, resource managers, industry, the news media, and researchers on what has been learned since the oil spill and what has been done to aid recovery from the effects of the spill. .

The need to pull together this information will be especially great during the 20th Anniversary of the spill, when the eyes of the nation, if not the world, will once again focus on the aftermath of the worst marine oil spill in United States history. Restoration Office staff and ARLIS have already responded to significant interest from media and the general public. The Trustee Council has provided additional staff time and support to update the public at this important milestone.

NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The Trustee Council's Restoration Program has produced dozens of annual and final project reports each year, as well as an annual status report, workplans, and other materials that are used to involve and inform the public. Although these products and outreach efforts are effective, it can still be difficult – particularly for persons who have not followed the Restoration Program closely over the last decade – to understand the larger picture of what has been learned since the spill and what has been done to restore and enhance the injured marine environment. The project reports are of a technical nature, not written for the general public. Additionally, the sheer volume of material available after nearly 20 years is overwhelming for most besides researchers and those directly involved with the Restoration program. It has been several years since the Trustee Council has had public information staff focused on translating science to the general public and ensuring the dissemination of this information.

Preceding and during the 20th anniversary year, most people, including those in the news media will turn to the Trustee Council as the primary source of information about EVOS and the Restoration Program.

LINK TO RESTORATION

Public involvement is a requirement of the settlement between the state and federal governments and the *Exxon Company USA*, and disseminating material about the spill is fundamental to the Trustee Council's mission. In addition, helping the public take stock of what has been learned about injury and recovery and what has been done in the Restoration Program is, in itself, an important part of the restoration process. The anniversary should help bring a measure of closure to the EVOS experience for some, and the availability to the public of scientific information gained plays an important role in the restoration of passive uses, which was a lost or reduced service as a result of the spill.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

There is no single means of effectively providing this information. A suite of approaches will be most effective with a priority placed on enhancing and expanding web based materials.

1. Utilize a mix of communication channels to reach different audiences effectively. Integrate electronic communications and social media into products.
2. Partner and leverage efforts, avoid duplication and work collectively to extend reach and effectiveness where possible.
3. Fund expedited projects.
4. Support programs and activities that have value beyond the anniversary year.
5. Solicit input from TC, liaisons, PAC, staff (past & present), communities and the general public before determining actions.

AUDIENCE

1. National & international
2. Alaska residents
3. Spill affected communities

Detailed breakdown:

- EVOSTC members, liaisons and staff
- Elected Officials (local community, governor, to national)
- Federal Departmental & Agency leadership (and people of influence in regards to work of EVOSTC)
- State Government
- Native villages and corporations
- Communities (state wide and spill affected)
- Alaskans
- General public (National and International constituency)
- Scientific community
- Educators
- Youth

ACTIONS

- Prepare updates written for the general public on each injured species and service. Work with liaisons and TC staff to coordinate outreach to PI's in developing overview of the key lessons learned over time and benefits from funded projects.
- TC Website
 1. Develop on-line clearinghouse and forum for collaboration across communities (share information, resources & materials).
 2. Update Trustee Council website and enhance public accessibility of information. Provide overall update of public information, recognizing that the internet is the most important communication tool. Meet expectation that the TC website is the primary source of information for researchers, teachers, students and citizens (also state & federal agencies, native villages and communities).
 3. Develop interactive, on-line media (on *hold for now*).
- Publications: Produce series of high quality communication materials both published and all downloadable from the website. Create and distribute materials in advance of March 24th and 2009 summer season. (as developed at 5, 10 & 15 years).
 1. Issue a special, expanded 20th anniversary edition of the Trustee Council's annual status report.
 2. Tier other products from this, such as white papers with multiple uses (base for radio spots, local newspaper columns, as briefing papers and teaching materials).
 3. Produce "Mission Without a Map: the Politics & Policies of Restoration Following the EVOS," by *Joe Hunt*. Make downloadable from web and print limited copies.

- Community presentations: Participate and encourage discussion at community events. This substitutes for a stand alone session as in previous years. Partnering with a well established and organized event improves efficiency and effectiveness and reduces the potential for duplication of efforts. Community events can be a more effective forum for reaching large numbers of Alaska residents, especially those in spill affected communities because they are in the local community.

Additionally, provide funding for a 'speakers bureau' of Principal Investigators (PI's), TC members, staff or others with EVOSTC related work, who are available to speak at community events.

1. Alaska Marine Science Symposium, January 19-23.
 2. Alaska Forum on the Environment, February 3-6. Trustee Council sponsorship. Organize and host 7-8 EVOSTC related sessions, exhibit and 2 keynote presentations.
 3. Local Community events, March 21-24 (March 24 is a Tuesday) including "Day of Remembrance", and throughout 2009.
- Media Outreach: Gain media coverage of restoration efforts. Encourage inclusion of restoration efforts: outcomes and continuing issues; results of science, habitat protection and community effects.
 - Create materials in advance that are useful to media (b-roll of footage for science and habitat conservation stories, briefing papers or press release for news).
 - Meet with editorial staffs (print, radio, tv). Discuss: column and/or Op Ed pieces (Op Ed scheduled for March 24 or Sunday prior).
 - Use press release to alert media. Develop or access list serve via state or federal agency for maximum outreach (includes AP wire).
 - Develop & distribute press kit (will include: 20th year Status Report; fact sheet; contact list).
 - Exhibit(s):
 1. Partner with the Cordova Historical Society to update the Darkened Waters exhibit and provide as a traveling exhibit through 2009. Provide funds to develop an EVOSTC specific section addressing restoration, update and repair the existing panels, and for transportation. *Note: the exhibit was originally produced by the Pratt Museum.*
 2. If not cost prohibitive: reproduce sections or condensed version that can be used throughout 2009 at key locations; adapt site specific exhibits to reflect local conditions such as habitat acquisitions; develop on-line virtual tour.
 3. An option to above is to produce updated panels for existing free standing display units.
 - Film

Produce a 12 minute version using existing footage for use at Visitor Centers and other high traffic contact points. Discuss production of longer, high quality film in the future.

2009 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET

Deadline	Item	Cost
Oct 31 Nov 20 Jan 1	Prepare updates written for the general public on each injured species and service. Contract with PI's as needed. Draft text Final text Post on web	\$10,000
Sept 1 Now -Dec 1 March 1	Web 1. Develop on-line clearinghouse & forum for collaboration across communities (share information, resources & materials). 2. Update TC website and enhance public accessibility of information. Costs for graphic design.	\$2,500
Jan 1	Publications: 1. 20 th anniversary edition of the TC annual status report. Costs for graphic design and layout, and printing. 2. Family of products. No additional cost. 3. "Mission Without a Map," downloadable from web and printed hardcopies.	15,000
Jan 19-23 Feb 3-6 March	Community presentations: 1. Alaska Marine Science Symposium (costs already covered). 2. Alaska Forum on the Environment. TC Sponsorship (sponsorship incurred in fiscal year 2008). 3. Speakers Bureau for local community events.	\$15,000
Now-March	Media Outreach (costs covered above).	-
Jan 1	Exhibit: 1. Darkened Waters traveling exhibit: transport & update. 2. Create condensed version or produce smaller display .	\$20,000
Feb 1	Film: production of 12 minute version and duplication of DVDs.	\$28,000
April	Development & distribution of interpretive materials (in advance of seasonal training).	
	Total	90,500