



COMMUNITY OIL-SPILL RESPONSE IN BERING AND ANADYR STRAITS

A TWO-DAY WORKSHOP (November 7th and 8th, 2013)

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA (specific location TBD)

“The Community-Based Oil Spill Response concept relies on community-based teams of citizens trained as first responders to protect areas – their own communities – subject to potentially large spills or spills by unregulated spillers”

Nuka, 2005¹

The Problem

- While prevention of oil spills is everyone’s goal, the probability of oil spills contacting coastal areas escalates with increasing vessel travel associated with development activities and increasing commercial shipping in the Arctic.
- Capacity to initiate oil-spill response in the Arctic will always be challenged by vast areas, cold conditions, limited logistical and communication capacity, and time lags to get equipment and people on site.
- Wildlife, critical habitats, and indigenous health, safety, and food security are all at risk from oil spills.
- Many critical wildlife areas are adjacent to indigenous communities, making local communities the most likely first responders.
- Currently, little is known about the costs, infrastructure, and strategies to best aid local communities in reducing the lag between an oil spill and a safe and effective first response.

Workshop Goals

1. Establish what tools can be safely and effectively deployed by Alaskan and Chukotkan hunters and other community members to combat both small oil spills and to engage as part of a collective response to large spills in select areas around the Bering Strait region (encompassing Bering and Anadyr straits). This includes both efforts to constrain or divert oil away from wildlife and key habitats, as well as diverting marine mammals and other fauna away from a spill.
2. Establish what training and local/regional capacity is required to sustain an ongoing safe and effective local spill response capacity.

¹ Nuka (Nuka Research and Planning Group, LLC.), 2005. Community Oil Spill Response Forum Final Report. Report to Prince William Sound RCAC and Cook Inlet RCAC.



3. Develop a budget and establish a strategy for maintaining a local grassroots spill response capacity in the Bering Strait region.
4. Develop a plan to train communities about existing response frameworks and tools.
5. Develop a communications plan to link communities and regional response planners, both as part of the direct response, and as part of the overall logistics where local knowledge can contribute to a safe and efficient response for everyone.

Background

Numerous factors are increasing the risk of oil spills in the Arctic. Oil and gas activities are rapidly moving offshore as technology and ice conditions facilitate new activities. Climate change and associated sea-ice reductions are facilitating increased Arctic commercial and tourism ship traffic through the northern sea routes. Onshore mining in areas requiring vessel access has escalated in some Arctic regions as a result of climbing mineral prices. Most of these activities carry risks of spills in remote areas that are often devoid of the infrastructure necessary to protect wildlife and subsistence communities from the impacts of a spill.

With an increased potential for oil spills, coastal communities of the Bering and Anadyr straits are seeking ways to protect their health and safety, as well as their long-term cultural practices and food security. This includes developing their capacity to act as first responders in the event of an accident. Currently, large response gaps are inevitable before larger, specialized spill response entities arrive at an incident location in the maritime Arctic (e.g., Oil Spill Response Organizations such as Chadux, Alaska Clean Seas, and SeaPro). Community leaders in the Bering and Anadyr straits want to better understand what community members – including experienced hunters – can do if they are given the proper equipment and training to safely and effectively protect their coastal environment and the wildlife that they have always relied upon.

Federal, state, and several international (e.g., Arctic Council) efforts have developed regional spill contingency plans and response agreements for sensitive coastal areas. However, it is widely acknowledged that a significant gap exists between what has been identified as important regionally and the resources available locally (i.e., available equipment, training and personnel) to accomplish successful on-water oil recovery and wildlife and shoreline protection. Any effective oil spill response in the Arctic will necessitate ongoing strategic engagements with trained and prepared indigenous hunters and community members close to potential spill sites to help close this response gap.

Increasing the capacity of communities to respond to oil spills in Alaska began after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in 1989. Since that time, the State of Alaska implemented several initiatives to help communities with response equipment, training, and funding (e.g., at Cordova). Since 1990, several communities have also established their own community spill response organizations, but numerous challenges have limited the success of these efforts. NOAA's Office of Restoration and Response has conducted two community workshops (Barrow and Kotzebue), which responded to the desire of Arctic communities to learn more about their role in a spill response. Each year the Alaskan and federal governments work with the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals to host a few community spill response trainings, but resources are not available for additional classes.



In 2005, the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council contracted with Nuka Research to hold a Community Oil Spill Forum. The final report¹ included several recommendations, but very limited follow up action has occurred since 2005. Many will attribute the limited action to the acknowledged costs and challenges of developing local capacity. However, from both a conservation and indigenous food security perspective, the *status-quo* of limited to nonexistent capacity in many communities is unacceptable. While local response will inevitably be a small component of what is needed in a large spill, the potential for hunters and community members to protect specific habitats and/or marine wildlife early in the response offers too great an opportunity to be ignored.

Local community involvement is also critical when a spill requires support from those outside the region. In these circumstances, local knowledge helps ensure the safety of the non-resident workforce by providing valuable input on weather and marine navigation. Furthermore, local knowledge and input can help minimize impacts to sensitive areas during the mobilization of a response.

Despite the lack of progress in developing local spill capacity in Arctic Alaska since the 2005 Nuka report, several events and activities offer opportunities for learning and building momentum toward the goal of a well-trained local spill response capacity. These include efforts on the North Slope, Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet in Alaska, and Puget Sound in the Pacific Northwest. Activities in these areas vary, but include deployment of absorbent boom to protect specific areas of coastline, use of marine mammal scaring devices (to move animals away from contaminated areas), and shoreline cleanup operations.

This workshop will begin a dialog intended to both educate and support communities that seek to realize their desired role in oil spill response. Dr. Martin Robards (Wildlife Conservation Society), in collaboration with Joe Inslee (University of Washington) and Dr. Henry Huntington (Pew Environment Group), will host a workshop of spill response experts, local practitioners, hunters, and other stakeholders to discuss the viability of different local spill-response models in the Bering Strait region, and provide recommendations regarding the current needs, opportunities, and challenges to developing increased community oil spill response capacity on both sides of the political border. This workshop, with a focus on the Bering Strait region, will likely act as a model for what might be done elsewhere in the Arctic.



DRAFT AGENDA

DAY 1

Setting the Scene – What Communities Would Like to See in Place

- 09:00 – 10:00 Introductions and expectations
- Participant concerns about small and large oil spills
 - Hopes for the workshop
- 10:00 – 11:00 Perspectives from Bering and Anadyr straits on local interest and capacity to address small and large oil spills
- Community perspectives
 - Regional perspectives (Kawerak and ChAZTO)

Setting the Scene – Why Now?

- 11:00 – 12:00 Needs for capacity building (Bering/Anadyr straits as Arctic case study)
- Growing threats
 - Oceanographic connections between the Bering and Chukchi seas; how an oil spill in one place could impact the other
 - Vast areas that are in jeopardy and how community locations can facilitate access to wildlife aggregations
 - Health, safety, and food security of communities

Current Efforts to Implement Community Spill Response Elsewhere and Lessons Learned

- 12:00 – 13:00 Summarize current state and federal efforts to assist communities
- ADEC, USCG, NOAA Office of Response and Restoration, EPA Brownfield grants, ITEP trainings
- 13:00 – 14:00 Lunch
- 14:00 – 15:00 Lessons learned from existing community efforts
- Puget Sound (including hazing)
 - Cordova
 - Cook Inlet/Seldovia
 - North Slope (Village Response Teams)
- 15:00 – 15:30 Lessons on community involvement from the MV *Selendang Ayu*

Opportunities and Constraints on Closing the Response Gap

- 15:30 – 16:30 Key opportunities for communities to aid in a response
- 16:30– 17:30 Key challenges for communities to aid in a response (readdressed and expanding from the 2005 Nuka report)
- Funding of distributed community capacity
 - Maintaining required safety training of responders
 - Insurance coverage and costs
 - Maintaining responder base
 - Maintaining spill response equipment
 - Turnover of community leadership
 - Cyclical start and stop efforts
 - Policy/legal/regulatory constraints
 - Coordination between local and regional efforts



17:30 – 18:00 Open discussion about opportunities and constraints

DAY 2

What is Necessary to Move Forward in Bering and Anadyr Straits?

09:00 – 10:00 Establish the goals of community response in Bering and Anadyr straits
10:00 – 11:00 Assess role of community members as contractors of an Oil Spill Response Organization
11:00 – 13:00 Establish basic long-term funding/equipment/training needs
13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

How Can We Move Forward in Bering and Anadyr Straits, and Keep it Going?

14:00 – 17:00 Next steps to move towards implementation

- Ways to establish communication pathways between local liaisons and regional response planners
- Ways to improve communication between communities and agencies on these topics (e.g., Geographic Response Strategies)
- Existing forums or meetings that can facilitate discussion of this topic (e.g., Indian General Assistance Program or Brownfields calls)
- The value of a dedicated *ad hoc* group
- Long-term funding options



Invited Participants

INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS

- Inuit Circumpolar Council (Jimmy Stotz)
- Bering Straits Native Corporation (Matt Ganley)
- Native Village of Eyak (Ivy Patton)
- Representative from Villages and Boroughs: NW Arctic Borough (Noah Naylor or John Chase), St. Lawrence Island (Iver Campbell), North Slope Borough (Ray Atos)
- Arctic Marine Mammal Coalition (TBD)
- ChAZTO (Eduard Zdor)
- Native Village of Savoonga (Perry Pungowiyi)
- Native Village of Chaplino (TBD)
- Native Village of Point Lay (TBD)
- North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife (Robert Suydam, Raphaela Stimmelmayer)
- Bering Strait Alliance (Art Ivanoff, Nicole Johnston)
- Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association (Karen Pletnikoff)

STATE OF ALASKA

- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (Larry Iwamoto, Tom DeRuyter)
- Federal On-Scene Coordinators (Bob Whittier or Mary Goolie)

FEDERAL AGENCIES

- Environmental Protection Agency (TBD)
- Environmental Protection Agency - Brownfields (TBD)
- NOAA Sea Grant (Gay Sheffield)
- NOAA Office of Response and Restoration (Sarah Allen)
- U.S. Coast Guard (Captain James Houck)
- USFWS Marine Mammals Management (TBD)
- NMFS Protected Resources Division (Brad Smith)
- Chukot-TINRO (Russian Federation) (Anatoly Kochnev)
- National Park Service – Shared Heritage Beringia Program (Janis Kozlowski)

PRIVATE GROUPS

- Nuka Research (Mark Janes or Tim Robertson)
- Pearson Consulting (Leslie Pearson)
- Oil Spill Response Organizations: Alaska Clean Seas (Chris Hall), SeaPro (Dave Ownings), Chadux (TBD)
- San Juan Island Oil Spill Association (TBD)
- Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals (Jennifer Williams)
- Marine Exchange (Ed Page)
- Cook Inlet Keeper (Bob Shavelson)
- Cook Inlet RCAC (TBD)
- Oil Spill Research Institute (Scott Pegau)
- Global Research and Rescue (David Bain)



INDUSTRY

- BP (Bill Streever)
- Conoco-Phillips (Caryn Rea)
- Shell (Mike Macrander)

OBSERVERS

- Wildlife Conservation Society (Martin Robards, Amy McNamara)
- University of Washington (Joe Inslee)
- Pew Environment Group (Henry Huntington)
- Russian Coastguard (invitation via USCG)
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (Kate Barnes)
- Oak Foundation (Anne Henshaw)
- World Wildlife Fund (Margaret Williams)

TRANSLATORS

- National Park Service (Katerina Wessels)