

“The mission of the Council is to represent the citizens of Cook Inlet in promoting environmentally safe marine transportation and oil facility operations in Cook Inlet”

Tesoro Brings New Assist Tug to Cook Inlet

Tesoro Alaska Company took a major step to improve oil spill prevention in Cook Inlet recently when it contracted with Crowley Maritime Corporation for the construction a new tractor tug, the first permanent vessel of its kind for the region. Cook Inlet RCAC received news from Tesoro Alaska that the new assist tug, the M/V Vigilant, arrived in Homer on March 25, 2008. While in Homer, a few minor adjustments will be made to the vessel before it is permanently stationed in Nikiski.



The M/V Protector and the M/V Vigilant at the Homer Dock

Cook Inlet RCAC has long advocated for a full-time tug to serve in Nikiski as an added precaution to winter-time berthing and un-berthing operations of crude oil tankers. Currently, however, U.S. Coast Guard and Alaska regulations do not require the presence of an assist tug at the Nikiski dock.

“Tesoro should be applauded for their commitment to navigational safety by bringing this tug into Cook Inlet,” said Executive Director Michael Munger. “It’s a rare but welcomed occurrence for a corporation to go above and beyond regulatory compliance.”

The M/V Protector, the tug currently stationed in Nikiski, was brought into service in January 2007 when heavy ice conditions in the Inlet threatened tanker moorings. The 6,700 horsepower Vigilant will replace the 5,500 horsepower Protector and will be operated for Tesoro by Crowley Maritime Corporation.

With steel plate ice belting above and below the water line, under-deck heaters, and immersion heaters for ballast tanks, the Vigilant will be even better equipped than the Protector to operate in the harsh ice-laden winter waters of Cook Inlet. The Vigilant is equipped with atwin “Z-Drive” system—a propulsion system that has allowed tugs to effectively operate in icy Scandinavian waters and in the extreme ice and tide conditions at the Port of Anchorage.

A small delay in early November occurred when the ship yard responsible for fabricating the new tug *Vigilant*, Nichols Brothers Boat Builders, Inc. of Langley, Washington, shut their doors and filed for bankruptcy. At that time, Crowley indicated that the *Vigilant* was ninety-percent complete and the christening goal, originally slated for early January 2008, was going to be delayed by two months and possibly longer. The construction later resumed in early December.

According to a Crowley press release, Crowley took delivery of the *Vigilant*, which is being chartered from BayDelta Maritime, Inc., on February 27, 2008. The vessel departed Washington on March 17, 2008 and made its 9-day maiden voyage to Alaska.

Cook Inlet RAC Annual Meeting Awards

The Cook Inlet RCAC recently held its annual meeting including board elections in Kenai on March 28, 2008. The results of the election seated several new members at the meeting. Members new to the Council were:

- Tommy Johnson, Jr. – Alaska Native Interest
- Jay Stinson – Commercial Fishing Interest
- Liz Chilton – Kodiak Island Borough



John Douglas (left) and Bob Shavelson hold the plaque as co-recipients of the Captain Glen Glenzer Memorial Volunteer of the Year award.

Bob Shavelson was re-elected to represent Environmental Interest groups and Grace Merkes was reappointed by the Kenai Peninsula Borough. New officers were also elected during the meeting: Molly McCammon (Municipality of Anchorage), President; Gary Fandrei (Aquaculture Interest groups) Vice-president; and John Douglas (City of Kenai) was re-seated as Secretary/Treasurer.

Additionally, Cook Inlet RCAC recognized several individuals for their outstanding contributions over the past year. Those council and public members who received “Member of the Year” honors were:

- Mary Jacobs – Protocol Committee
- Jerry Brookman – PROPS Committee
- Liz Chilton – EMC Committee
- Rob Lindsey – Board of Directors

Several of our council and public members celebrated milestones for their involvement with Cook Inlet RCAC and were honored at the recent meeting. Grace Merkes and Jerry Brookman received recognition for ten years of service, while James Showalter, Liz Chilton, and Craig Valentine were honored for five years of service. Rounding out the honors were the recipients of the “Captain Glen Glenzer Memorial Volunteer of the Year” award. This distinction is named in honor of the late Captain Glenzer who helped pioneer Cook Inlet RCAC and was the first Volunteer of the Year recipient. This year’s winners were council members John Douglas and Bob Shavelson.

CISPRI Broken Ice Deployment

Cook Inlet RCAC and representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Mineral Management Service, Oil Spill Recovery Institute, and Alaska National Insurance company had an opportunity to observe Cook Inlet Spill Prevention and Response, Inc (CISPRI) during a broken ice response and recovery tactic training deployment held on March 10, 2008.



A CISPRI spill technician washes ice with a fire monitor, as the V.A.B oil skimmer simulates pulling oil from the water

After a brief safety orientation aboard the Seabulk Nevada, the observers were given a tour of the vessel and an explanation of the deployment procedure. Because the Inlet was virtually ice free, the crew traveled to the Westside of the Inlet before locating enough ice to deploy the response equipment.

The deployment went smoothly as the CISPRI crew positioned the collection skirt along with an eight-rope, vertical adhesion band (V.A.B.) foxtail oil skimmer into the water. Once the set up was complete, the crew began to simulate collecting oil, by using the fire monitor to wash and roll ice collected in the skirt. As the “oil” was washed from the ice, the eight-rope V.A.B oil skimmer pulled it from the water. From the upper decks of the Nevada, the observers were able to watch CISPRI employ these tactics.



Observers study the V.A.B. oil skimmer on the deck of the Seabulk Nevada.

“We feel strongly that increased knowledge gained by the oversight organizations about our response tactics will result in positive benefits during a contingency plan evaluation or for operations planning during a spill.” commented CISPRI General Manger, Doug Lentsch

Once the equipment was deployed the guests were allowed into the simulated Hot Zone (HAZWOPER term for work area) to ask questions and view the operation. Later in the day, the equipment was removed from the water and placed on deck, giving everyone a chance to see the equipment up close and to ask questions about the exercise.

Zaliv America

The tank vessel Zaliv Amerika arrived in Cook Inlet February 24, where she anchored in Kachemak Bay while the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) conducted its initial winter guidelines boarding. USCG boarding officers rode along to observe the vessel in transit from Kachemak Bay to mooring at Kenai Pipeline (KPL) dock. While at KPL, the tanker was loaded in compliance with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation response planning standard regulation.



The T/V Zalive America docked during ice-free conditions at KPL.

The February arrival was the first visit to Cook Inlet for the new tanker. The vessel, weighing 104,535 deadweight tons and measuring 774.5 ft in length, is larger than the Seabulk vessels operating within Cook Inlet and has a reinforced hull specifically designed for ice duty. The new vessel, owned by the Russian company Primorsk Shipping Corporation and operated by the Tesoro Far East Maritime Company, was commissioned in January of 2008.

Prior to arriving in Cook Inlet, Zaliv Amerika made her first U.S. port call in Honolulu, Hawaii on her maiden voyage from Russia. There she received her first USCG boarding to verify all the vessel's documents and equipment status.



The T/V Zalive America dwarfs the assist tug Vigilant while docked at KPL