



Council Briefs

Newsletter of the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council

October 2009

“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”

Message from the Executive Director

Since Cook Inlet Pipe Line Company has reopened the Drift River Oil Terminal Facility, it is time to take a moment and reflect on the response efforts undertaken to evade the threat of a potential oil spill into Cook Inlet.

As we know, the risk of Mount Redoubt eruptions affecting the Drift River Oil Terminal is not a novel concept. The volcano caused damage and flooding at the terminal nearly twenty years ago. That incident generated an intensive amount of planning and engineering resulting in a system designed to protect the terminal from flooding caused by subsequent eruptions.

It's the culmination of these safeguards and proper planning, including the use of a unified command that played a major role in the success of this latest response. The unified command allows agencies with different responsibilities to work together effectively, and share responsibility for managing a response from a single command post.



Michael Munger, Executive Director

Only in recent times has this coordinated, effective way of managing a response become common practice. Many recall the confusion that the Exxon Valdez oil spill spawned in 1989. At that time, there was nothing set up to manage an incident of that magnitude, and inaction and misinformation ran rampant. In the recent situation with Mount Redoubt and the Drift River Oil Terminal, the unified command worked exactly the way it was intended, resulting in a successful response to the volcanic mudflow threatening the facility. As a result, no people were injured and no oil was spilled.

Those critical of the recent handling of the threat to the Drift River Facility have called the averted disaster “luck.” They suggest that it was luck that the terminal's protective dike system diverted a significant amount of water running down Drift River from impacting the terminal; and it was luck that the containment system held back the substantial flooding.

Well, I certainly agree that we were lucky – lucky that we had the level of dedication exhibited by the men and women working on the incident management team and of those working at the terminal. It was their quick thinking and hard work prior to and throughout the eruption of the volcano that undoubtedly helped keep oil in the tanks.

Due to my professional background I have been involved in many incidents and spill responses. During this incident, I witnessed an impressive display I would label “doing the

right thing.” I was impressed by the decision by Cook Inlet Pipe Line Co. to suspend operations solely over concerns of the safety of the employees at the terminal. As it should be, the concerns of worker safety trumped everything, including economics. I sincerely believe the driving force behind this response was worker safety.

The response managers should be commended for their efforts to keep the community informed. Our council, the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council representing the citizens of Cook Inlet, provided a conduit between the response managers and the public. The community was updated through press releases and conferences along with the response managers participating in several community meetings hosted by Cook Inlet RCAC. Also, Cook Inlet RCAC staff worked with the incident management team and was, in essence, representing the public. I would attest that Cook Inlet Pipe Line, the United States Coast Guard, and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, who formed the unified command, did the right thing and went to great lengths to keep our council and the community apprised of the situation.

While I believe that this response was a success, I also understand that any operation is not perfect. Cook Inlet RCAC is currently reviewing many aspects of this response to find areas that can be improved upon. We appreciate the cooperation from all involved in the response during this review as we work together to make improvements and adjustments where it is deemed necessary.

Sector Anchorage Welcomes New Captain

Captain Jason Fosdick has relieved Captain John Kenyon as Sector Anchor Commander. Captain Kenyon will return to his position as Coast Guard District 17 Chief of Prevention in Juneau.

Captain Fosdick arrives from Coast Guard Sector Corpus Christi, Texas, where he served as deputy sector commander. His prior assignments include deck watch officer on the Coast Guard Cutter Cowslip in Portsmouth, VA, marine inspector at Marine Safety Office, Hampton Roads, VA, Chief of New Vessel Construction and Chief of Port State Control at Marine Safety Office/Group Los Angeles/Long Beach, CA, data and computer analyst for the Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement Project at Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D.C., chief of the inspection department at Marine Safety Office, Mobile, AL, and chief of the prevention department at Sector Mobile, AL.



The captain holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the United States Coast Guard Academy and a Master of Science degree in Information Technology Management from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA. His military decorations include two Meritorious Service Medals, three Coast Guard Commendation Medals, and several other personal and unit awards.

Left to Right: Rear Admiral Christopher Colvin, Captain John Kenyon, Captain Jason Fosdick.
Photo Courtesy US Coast Guard

Pacific Energy Abandons Cook Inlet Assets

On September 11, 2009, Pacific Energy Resources, Ltd. (PERL) abandoned its Cook Inlet assets. While operations were turned over to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, most of the assets will return to the landowners - who not only include the state of Alaska, but also Cook Inlet Region, Inc. and Salamatof Native Association. Those properties and facilities abandoned by PERL include the West McArthur River field, the Redoubt Shoal field, the Osprey platform, the Kustatan onshore production facility, and the West Foreland field.

The Kustatan facility is located on property owned by PERL and it is unclear at this time what will happen with. The state of Alaska will take control of the Osprey platform as it is considered an improvement on a state lease.

There are still serious negotiations occurring with a potential purchaser for the onshore assets (Kustatan, West McArthur River, West Forelands field), but there are no immediate prospects for a private operator for the Redoubt Shoal field and the Osprey platform. The Osprey platform is now in unmanned “lighthouse” condition, and the onshore assets are shut-in, manned, and being winterized by crews of ex-Pacific Energy employees now working for the State of Alaska through contractors. There is a possibility that West McArthur River field may return to production in the near future.



The abandoned Osprey platform

Clean Pacific Conference and Exhibition

This September marked the second biennial Clean Pacific Conference and Exhibition held in Portland, Oregon. The event brings the best and most up to date information to the oil and hazardous material spill prevention, response, and technology industry in the Pacific Region. This year, Cook Inlet RCAC staff participated in the conference while Assistant Executive Director Karen Delaney operated the information booth on the exhibit floor.

Director of Public Outreach Trent Dodson demonstrated the updated Geographic Resource Information Network (GRIN) during the Citizen Advisory Accomplishments Session. GRIN is a web based tool that uses the GOOGLE™ map format and pictures to provide responders with a visual reference to locate resources in a specific community. Information in the GRIN is organized by community, so that incident personnel assigned to a specific community (or a number of communities within a larger geographic region) are able to access a broad range of community specific information in one central location. To view the GRIN demonstration site visit <http://dev.axiomalaska.com/GRIN>. Other presenters during this session were Linda Swiss of Prince William Sound RCAC and Jacqui Brown Miller of the former Washington Oil Spill Advisory Council.

The ShoreZone Mapping Session, was chaired and moderated by Executive Director Michael Munger and featured Director of Science and Research Susan Saupe who explained the importance of ShoreZone mapping as it relates to oil spill planning and response. John Harper of Coastal and Ocean Resources, Inc. and Mandy Lindeberg of NOAA Fisheries also provided information on ShoreZone development and the ShoreZone website, respectively. For more information on ShoreZone visit: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/maps/szintro.htm>



ShoreZone provides imagery and information about physical and biological nearshore environments across large geographic areas. Imagery from Shorezone is captured at low tide and can be used by responders who need to know what type of shoreline they will be dealing with during a response to an oil spill or a vessel in distress.



Dillon and Baker Slated for Dismantlement

Chevron Alaska has started the dismantlement, removal, and restoration (DR&R) process for the Dillon and Baker platforms, which are currently in “light house status”. The multi-year process begins with written plans that must be submitted to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) for approval, then a request for approval to plug and abandon all wells from the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (AOGCC).

DR&R is an aspect of the Cook Inlet oil industry that Cook Inlet RCAC takes very seriously. In 2005, Cook Inlet RCAC developed a white paper concerning the DR&R of Cook Inlet platforms and facilities. The final report, available at the Cook Inlet RCAC website library, includes a map of all facilities and associated pipeline infrastructure, a dossier on each offshore facility in Cook Inlet describing its site topography and geography, age, production status, lease stipulations, ownership history, and DR&R status. The white paper also reviews current state and federal regulations and suggests a course of action; reviews current lease stipulations and regulations to establish jurisdictional authority for DR&R; and identifies the permitting process for removal and a summary of potential significant impacts of infrastructure dismantlement, removal and restoration.



Baker platform

Some of the alternatives to full removal of the platforms that have been used elsewhere, such as the “rigs to reefs” programs in California and the Gulf of Mexico, may not be a viable alternative in the Cook Inlet. Other alternatives for the Dillon and Baker may be wind farming, marine research stations, or search and rescue stations. However, before any plan to leave the structure can be put into effect the state agency responsible for lease management must first assume all liability for the abandoned structure once the lease has been terminated, in the same way as the Osprey platform has been acquired in the recent bankruptcy of Pacific Energy Resources, Ltd.

While public review of the DR&R plan is not a state requirement, the Division of Oil and Gas (DO&G) has the discretion to authorize public review. DO&G have indicated they would provide for a public review period for the Dillon and the Baker.



Dillon Platform