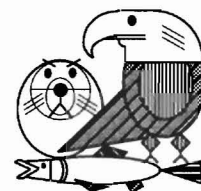


Restoration Update

March 1994

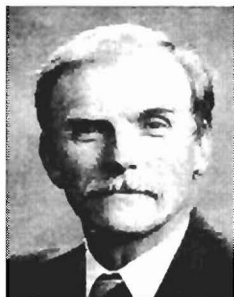
Volume 1 Number 2



A Trustee Reflects on the Anniversary of the Spill

By Steve Pennoyer
NMFS Alaska Director

I was attending a series of meetings in Seattle in March of 1989 when I learned that the tanker *Exxon Valdez* had run aground and a major oil spill was occurring in Prince William Sound. The enormity of the event took a while to sink in. I had only been Alaska Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service for three months and had no idea that the oil spill would become almost a career of its own.



Five years later I can report parts of the spill area are on their way to recovery, but many injuries persist. We now know certain effects of the spill will continue for some time.

I know that some members of the public believe the Trustee Council has been moving too slowly in making decisions. Others disagree with our approach thus far to spending the settlement money. However, each of the six Trustees, although we may have differing viewpoints, take our agency trustee responsibilities very seriously. We make our decisions carefully, keeping long-term consequences in mind.

Trustee activities are now entering a new phase. With litigation behind us, the major focus is now on restoration. Restoration actually consists of a menu of strategies. The Trustees have settled on a comprehensive approach which

includes direct restoration projects, research and monitoring, and habitat protection.

All three are essential elements of the plan that is embodied in the Draft Restoration Plan, now under review through the Environmental Impact Statement process. That plan purposefully does not prescribe a fixed allocation for each element. We as Trustees must exercise our best judgment, taking into account the advice of the public, to develop the proper proportions to ensure recovery.

Direct restoration projects are probably the most difficult to design. However, the Trustees will continue to support direct restoration projects that are found to be cost-effective in aiding recovery of injured species.

Much of the early research and monitoring focused on individual species. Now we are in the next stage: reviewing and synthesizing previous data and obtaining new information with the goal of understanding the underlying environmental factors which influence survival and reproduction of the bird, mammal and fish resources, all placed within the context of the *entire* marine ecosystem.

In 1994, ecosystem-based investigations will begin for the first time, starting in Prince William Sound. This is an exciting development from my perspective because, rather than simply measuring the *rate* of recovery, our research will help explain *why* some resources are or are not recovering. The residents of Cordova who worked on this project are

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Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Forum Five Years Later: What have we learned?

The *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council is sponsoring a free, public, half-day forum to update the public on the recovery of natural resources injured by the March 24, 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. The forum will take place on March 22, 1994, from 1:00 to 5:00 PM at the Regal Alaskan Hotel in Anchorage.

Scientists who have been studying the effects of the spill will present brief overviews on subjects ranging from the current status of birds, fish, marine mammals, subsistence resources, archaeo-



logical sites, the nearshore ecosystem and other related subjects.

Maps, photos, and other updated information about restoration of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill will be on display. A 1994 *Status Report* has been prepared and will be available at the forum, as well as other materials.

For more information, contact the Oil Spill Public Information Center, 645 G St., Anchorage, Alaska 99501 or call 907/278-8008, toll free within Alaska at 800/478-7745, outside Alaska at 800/283-7745

Restoration Plan: Update

Trustee Council staff are coordinating three major efforts related to the Draft Restoration Plan, which was released by the Trustees for public review on November 30, 1993. When final, the plan will be used to guide Trustee Council decision-making regarding restoration activities for the remainder of the Council's existence.

EIS Process

The first effort involves writing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Draft Restoration Plan. The Draft EIS will be available for public review in mid-June, and will examine the cumulative environmental impacts of the Restoration Plan. This is a programmatic, rather than a project-specific, EIS. The final EIS is expected to be completed by October 31 of this year.

Management Structure

With the concurrence of the Trustee Council, Executive Director Jim Ayers has embarked on the development of a management structure to implement the Draft Restoration Plan.

This involves organizing the Restoration Plan into clearly stated goals, objectives and strategies, in order to clarify the relationship between specific Trustee Council actions on projects and the overall restoration mission. The Draft Implementation Management Structure will be published as an appendix to the Restoration Plan, and will be subject to formal public comment through the EIS review process.

The Implementation Management Structure is being developed with

the active involvement of public representatives, scientists, agency members, and representatives from communities in the spill area. A draft is expected for release in mid-May.

FY95 Work Plan

Council staff are also developing a process and timeline for the FY95 Work Plan. This will be covered in more detail in a later issue of this newsletter, but will include a greater emphasis on competitive proposals, and is geared towards Trustee Council action after the final Restoration Plan is adopted in late October.

Habitat Protection Process Moving Forward

On January 31 the Trustee Council approved a resolution to proceed with a habitat protection program for those large parcels (1,000 acres or more) previously identified as having high value to aiding the recovery of species injured by the spill. The executive director and agency staff are working on several related tasks as necessary parts of this process. These include:

- Developing a standardized appraisal process to be used to appraise the large land parcels approved for possible acquisition or other protection strategies. A final draft of the acquisition specifications is still under review.
- Working with willing sellers of the high value large parcels to

identify proposed terms and conditions for habitat protection.

- Developing a recommended list of large parcels to be protected. This list includes analysis of (1) the degree of benefit which would be afforded injured resources and services if the parcel was protected from further development; (2) the balance of protection afforded throughout the spill area; (3) the cost associated with protecting the habitat; (4) the adequacy of the protection being proposed; and (5) the funds required to carry out the proposed restoration activities.

This effort is well underway and should be completed sometime this summer. A process for soliciting and analyzing small parcels is still under review.

Restoration Update

The *Restoration Update* is published approximately six times a year by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council. Its purpose is to update interested members of the public about actions, policies and plans of the Trustee Council to restore resources and related services injured by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

For more information, address correction or to request future articles on specific subjects, contact:

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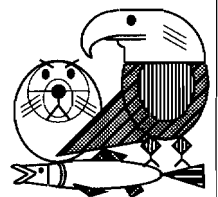
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Work Plan Approved by Trustee Council 1994 Program Targets Research On Fisheries

The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council on January 31 approved a 1994 work plan which included funding for \$14.6 million in restoration projects. A major focus of the 1994 program is on research to better understand the marine ecosystem injured by the 1989 oil spill.

"With this work plan, the Trustee Council is taking a comprehensive, balanced approach to restoration in the regions affected by the oil spill," Executive Director James R. Ayers said. "The Trustees' approach focuses on three components: (1) general restoration, (2) research and monitoring, and, (3) habitat protection. Each of these components is essential to the entire restoration process."

The Trustees approved nearly \$10 million in projects for study of injured fisheries and the marine ecosystem in the spill region and restoration of fisheries resources affected by the spill. This funding included a research project proposed by a group of Cordova scientists, fishermen and residents to better understand fisheries impacts and to further knowledge of aspects of the marine ecosystem which may be out of balance due to the spill. Other projects approved by the Trustees will address Kenai River sockeye salmon overescapement problems and restoration of salmon resources in



Brian Fadely of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game uses ultra sound equipment to assess the condition of a harbor seal prior to its return to Prince William Sound. The satellite-linked transmitter glued to its back in the spring of 1993 provided valuable information about the seal's movements throughout the summer and harmlessly fell off during its autumn molt. Approval was given to continue this study of harbor seals in 1994 by the Trustees at their January meeting. Photo by Lloyd Lowry, ADF&G.

other areas of the oil spill-affected region, including the Kenai.

The Trustees also approved a number of management and administrative efficiency changes proposed by the Executive Director. These include changes in the administrative structure to reduce costs by over 20% in fiscal year 1994, taking steps to involve the public at

a greater level in project planning and implementation, and increased fiscal oversight and reporting to the public.

The \$14.6 million authorized on January 31 for the 1994 work plan is in addition to approximately \$5 million already approved in November 1993 for time-critical projects for a total of about \$20 million.

Long-Term Restoration Reserve Established

The Trustees at the January 31 meeting approved setting aside \$12 million for a Restoration Reserve account.

These funds will be used by the Trustees to sustain restoration and research activities beyond the 2001 date when payments from Exxon will end. The Reserve concept has received a tremendous amount of support from citizens across the state, said Executive Director Jim Ayers.

Arliss Sturgulewski, a former state senator from Anchorage, has been one strong proponent of establishing such a reserve for the future.

"This is an issue I've worked on with the Trustee Council for over two years. I think it's very important that we leave a legacy for research that continues beyond the life of the settlement," Senator Sturgulewski said.

Trustees Approve Improvements to Institute of Marine Science

Anchorage - At the January 31 meeting the Trustee Council approved, in concept, financial support for infrastructure improvements at the Institute of Marine Science, or IMS, in Seward. The project would enhance the capabilities of the Trustee Council to carry out long-term research and monitoring in the area affected by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, particularly for restoring injured birds, marine mammals, and the northern Gulf of Alaska ecosystem.

Proposed improvements to the IMS facility would be located adjacent to the existing campus of the University of Alaska's Seward Marine Center. These improvements include laboratories, offices, a library, and support systems for the study and rehabilitation of marine mammals, marine birds, and other marine life as well as outdoor research areas and habitat for marine mammals and birds. A submersible research and support vessel would also be based at the facility, as well as public education facilities.

Overall, the total project capital budget as proposed would be approximately \$47 million, of which \$12.5 million from state criminal restitution funds has already been obtained. An additional \$25 million is being sought from *Exxon Valdez* oil spill-related funds. Funding for the public education and visitation components of the project will come from other sources. Revenue generated from public education and visitation would be used to defray operational costs of the research facility.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement is being prepared for the project by the Department of the Interior. Scoping meetings are being held in Seward on March 22 and Anchorage on March 24; public comments are requested by April 11. The Draft EIS should be available for public comment by late June, 1994.

Comments or questions about meetings, scoping or the EIS process, or requests to be added to the

mailing list should be directed to Nancy Swanton, EIS Project Manager for the Proposed Infrastructure Improvements to the IMS, 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 603, Anchorage, AK 99508-4302. You may call Ms. Swanton at 907/271-6622 (fax 907/271-6507) or Mr. Kim Sundberg, Project Coordinator, at 907/267-2334 (fax 907/349-1723) at any time during the planning process.

Documents Available

For more information or copies of Trustee Council documents, contact the Oil Spill Public Information Center at 645 G St., Anchorage 99501, or by calling 907/278-8008, toll free within Alaska at 1-800-478-7745, or toll free from outside Alaska at 1-800-283-7745.

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to be especially commended for their contributions to this effort.

The Trustee Council is also moving ahead with habitat protection. Last year the Trustees purchased inholdings in Kachemak Bay State Park lands and on Afognak Island in order to protect habitat critical to species injured by the spill. Agency staff are pursuing protection of other high value land parcels in Prince William Sound, the Kenai Peninsula, and the Kodiak/Afognak Archipelago, as well as putting in place a process for considering smaller parcels of important habitat for protection.

In addition, the Trustees have set aside \$12 million into a

reserve account for future research and monitoring activities because of growing evidence that injuries to some species will persist into the next century.

When I reflect on all that has happened since the spill, I wonder what long-term benefits will be gained from this massive effort. We want the northern Gulf of Alaska ecosystem to be healthy and productive so that the region's people and wildlife can thrive in a pristine environment. To help realize this goal the Trustee Council will continue to take positive actions to restore, protect and monitor natural resources injured by the spill.

But the Trustee Council members also have a responsibility for the

environment beyond the spill area. We must leave a legacy to help people be better prepared to tackle future environmental disasters. The *Exxon Valdez* oil spill has provided lessons about preventing, preparing for, and responding to oil spills, and continues to teach us about restoring the environment in the unfortunate event that a spill does occur. I hope what we learn here will benefit people far beyond Prince William Sound and Alaska who may someday also face the problems we confronted on March 24, 1989.

Steve Pennoyer is a federal member of the Trustee Council and Alaska Regional Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service, a division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.