

ALASKA REGIONAL RESPONSE TEAM

Meeting Summary

**0900–1630 Wednesday September 28, 2016
Nome Mini-Convention Center
Nome, Alaska**

Sign-in sheets can be viewed [here](#).

Copies of this meeting's presentations and handouts are available on the Alaska Regional Response Team website, under ARRT Meetings: <http://alaskarrt.org>

Safety Briefing, Introductions, Opening Remarks

Ms. Patricia Bower, Alaska Regional Response Team (ARRT) coordinator for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) and Joy Baker, Harbormaster with the City of Nome, welcomed the meeting attendees and conducted introductions. The ARRT co-chairs—CAPT Todd Styrwold, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG); Mr. Chris Field, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and Ms. Kristin Ryan, ADEC—welcomed all the attendees to the meeting and offered opening remarks.

Biennial Work Plan

CAPT Styrwold reviewed the ARRT Biennial Work Plan for 2016–2017. He noted that several of the ARRT committees, task forces, and work groups have been active and will be providing updates during this meeting. A copy of the updated Biennial Work Plan is available online [here](#).

WORKING GROUP/SUBCOMMITTEE/TASK FORCE REPORTS

Area Planning Initiative Task Force Update

Mr. Nick Knowles, EPA Planner and ARRT Coordinator, presented an overview of the Alaska Planning Initiative task force. This task force was formed to consider a proposal to revise the framework of area planning in Alaska. Currently, the task force is working to develop a conceptual model of four planning areas, each with a separate area contingency plan (ACP) (as per [40 CFR 300.210](#)), as well as a single regional contingency plan (RCP) that includes all of Alaska and adjacent waters. These would replace the existing Unified Plan and 10 Subarea Contingency Plans currently in use. This plan organization would make Alaska's plans more consistent with plans in other parts of the country, and with the National Contingency Plan. It would also help address the substantial planning effort required to maintain 10 subarea plans and the large area of responsibility for the primary planning agencies. A public outreach page has been launched on the ADEC website:

(http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/PPR/plans/regional_plan.htm). This web page shows the proposed planning boundaries and includes a frequently asked questions section, as well as a matrix outlining where information is currently located in the plans vs. where it would be under the proposed plan structure.

The task force is currently gathering input from all stakeholders, on an informal basis. The presentation may be viewed at http://private.alaskarrt.org/Files/Nome2016ARRT_AreaPlanning.pdf.pdf.

Mr. Knowles requested guiding direction from the tri-chairs for the way forward.

Mr. Field remarked that he felt this is still in a conceptual stage and that the March 2017 deadline should not be considered as a firm deadline. He stated that considerable input is still required from the OSCs, other federal agencies, and the public. Ms. Ryan agreed that the timeline is less important than making the changes correctly. She advised that at this point, plan changes should be limited to administrative changes and any changes necessary to make the plans functional. She stated that the more substantive, potentially controversial changes should be reserved for the Area Planning Committees and OSCs to address at a future date.

Committee Members: Nick Knowles (EPA), LCDR Matt Hobbie (USCG), and Steve Russell (ADEC)
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Science and Technology Committee Report

Ms. Catherine Berg (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; NOAA) provided an update on the status of the Science and Technology Committee (STC). She provided a slide presentation and detailed overview of the State-of-the-Science of Dispersants and Dispersed Oil Use in Arctic Waters project. This presentation is available at http://alaskarrt.org/Files/Nome2016ARRT_STC.pdf.

One of the STC's recent initiatives has been to address the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council's (PWSRCAC) Oil Spill Surrogate Exercise. The STC discussed with the PWSRCAC the use of oil surrogates during exercises. They received positive feedback from ARRT members regarding a plan to conduct an exercise using an oil surrogate. It was agreed that the surrogate would be peat moss and wood chips. Unfortunately, the exercise has not yet been conducted due to administrative challenges regarding indemnity insurance.

The STC is also working on a project assessing "realistic wildlife response in remote Alaska." In addition, the committee is planning to provide the OSCs with overviews of in situ burn (ISB) and natural resource damage assessment (NRDA). An Exxon Mobile ISB exercise will be held October 13–14, 2016. A NRDA workshop is scheduled for December 6, 2016.

Committee Members: Rick Bernhardt (ADEC), Marcia Combes (EPA), Matt Odom (USCG), Lori Verbrugge (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Catherine Berg (NOAA)

Food Safety Task Force Update

Ms. Berg also provided an update on the Food Safety Task Force. Currently, the task force is working on a phased approach to complete its work. Nationally, NOAA is focusing on Alaska due to its high level of subsistence activity and commercial fishing. Proposed next steps for the task force include producing a policy document that identifies the relevant State and federal laws and the policy gaps. In the longer term, the task force would like to sponsor a science of food safety workshop.

Endangered Species Act Compliance Task Force

Ms. Combes informed the ARRT of the status of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 Consultation for the Unified Plan. With the conclusion of the Biological Opinion, the task force's initial assignment is complete; however, the task force is still considering ongoing work. This includes developing a checklist for ESA compliance during a response and ongoing tracking of changes to the protection status of threatened and endangered species. Ms. Berg noted, however, that NOAA currently has an ESA checklist that may suit the ARRT's purposes. On September 30, NOAA and USCG Sector Anchorage will hold a training session on how to perform an ESA Section 7 consultation during a spill response, including the use of the ESA checklist.

At the National Response Team (NRT) level, there is a working group tasked with streamlining the ESA requirements as per the Memorandum Of Agreement (MOA) between response agencies and the Services. This work group is developing a template make consistent the ESA consultation process across different regions. The National Response Team is also looking to provide some guidance regarding the implementation of the ESA MOA.

ARRT Cultural Resources Committee

Dr. Philip Johnson (USDOJ) provided an update on the status of the ARRT Cultural Resources Committee. The committee has not met since the last ARRT meeting. Dr. Johnson and Ms. Judy Bittner, State Historic Preservation Officer, are continuing efforts to re-constitute the committee. Ongoing objectives are to identify appropriate committee members and train government historic property specialist to serve on behalf of the government, under the FOSC, during a response.

ARRT Wildlife Protection Committee

Dr. Johnson also provided an update on the status of the ARRT Wildlife Protection Committee. The committee has not met since the last ARRT meeting. The committee will be looking at the need to update the Alaska Wildlife Protection Guidelines in the Unified Plan.

On Scene Coordinator Reports

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Mr. Bob Whittier, EPA Federal On Scene Coordinator (FOSC), provided an overview of recent and upcoming activities of the Alaska EPA FOSCs. EPA has not responded to any Alaska spills since May 2016. Currently, EPA is working on several projects, including the Kenai Peninsula Vulnerability Assessment, an Oil Pipeline Jurisdictional Tool for the North Slope, and the Trans Alaska Pipeline spill scenario table-top exercise and gap analysis. In October, EPA will participate in an ExxonMobile spill response exercise that will include the use of In-Situ Burning of product. EPA will evaluate existing procedures to determine whether there exists a need to improve the ISB use checklist, or create an inland-specific checklist. EPA has also assisted in delivering outreach and training to rural Alaskans, which included an oil response and booming exercise in Nome in June, and an oil spill response course in Bethel, in August. The next oil spill response course is likely to be held in Dillingham or possibly Kodiak.

U.S. Coast Guard Western Alaska Captain of the Port (COTP) Zone

CAPT Paul Albertson, Commander of USCG Sector Anchorage, reviewed the recent spill responses and lessons learned in Western Alaska. The largest incident and source of a release was the Alaska Juris, which released approximately 87,000 gallons of diesel when it sank off the Aleutian Islands in the Bering Sea. CAPT Albertson offered thanks to Erick Blakely, Department of Defense representative to the ARRT, for helping to facilitate refueling of aircraft during the response. He also highlighted the sector's recent outreach efforts and drills, upcoming drills and exercises, and planning activities and initiatives. Public meetings on the Dispersant Pre-Authorization Avoidance Areas will be held October–December 2016. His presentation is available online [here](#).

U.S. Coast Guard Prince William Sound COTP Zone

CDR Joe Lally, MSU Valdez, presented on spills and responses in Prince William Sound since May 2016. He also reviewed recent and upcoming training and exercises and provided an overview of the activities of the Prince William Sound Subarea Committee. His presentation is available online [here](#).

U.S. Coast Guard Southeast COTP Zone

CDR Gina Freeman, Sector Juneau, reported on USCG's recent activities in Southeast Alaska. An event she highlighted was the M/V Big Red incident, in which a whale watching vessel with 18 passengers on board struck a submerged rock and sank. She spoke on recent environmental and tribal engagement activities, the Sitka Sound GRS Work Group, and the Transboundary Working Group. Her presentation is available online [here](#).

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

On behalf of the ADEC State OSCs, Ms. Lori Silfven provided an overview of recent major responses in the State. She also spoke of updates to State regulations, particularly regulation changes impacting underground storage tanks and the registration of "Class 2" (medium sized) tank facilities. Her presentation is available online [here](#).

GENERAL DISCUSSION TOPICS

Arctic Issues Update, Arctic Council and Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) Survey

CAPT Styrwold provided a big-picture overview for Arctic initiatives, designed for policy makers who might not necessarily be familiar with Alaska and the Arctic. It included a summary of the drills and exercises performed by the USCG directed at improving Arctic response, such as the Arctic Chinook full scale exercise in the Bering Strait near Kotzebue. A copy of his presentation is available [here](#).

Oiled Wildlife/ Bering Strait Response

Ms. Gay Sheffield, with the University of Alaska Fairbanks (Nome campus), Alaska Sea Grant program, presented on the Bering Strait and oiled wildlife. She provided an overview of the ecology and culture of the Bering Strait and issues of concern to residents of the Bering Strait region, on both sides. Her presentation is available on the ARRT website [here](#).

Fuel Vessel Traffic in Western Alaska

Ms. Sierra Fletcher with Nuka Research presented on a traffic study conducted for the Ocean Conservancy on shipping activity in the Bering Sea. Her presentation is available on the ARRT website [here](#).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Non-member meeting attendees were given the opportunity to offer public comments, and the following individuals did so.

- Matt Melton, Alaska Chadux
- Jack Bennett, Industrial Hemp Manufacturing LLC
- Rhonda Sparks, Defenders of Wildlife
- Mary Awalin, Cully Corporation
- Gay Sheffield, University of Alaska Fairbanks Sea Grant

Issues highlighted by the commenters included the importance of food safety and subsistence, high cost of living, new oil response materials, and new oil spill response connex locations.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND REMARKS

Mr. Field remarked on the ARRT Annual Strategy Session, scheduled for September 29 in Anchorage. All ARRT members are invited to attend this year. He reviewed the session agenda, and closed with his final comments and opened the floor to ARRT members and OSCs to offer their closing remarks. Ms. Ryan and CAPT Styrwold offered their closing remarks and adjourned the meeting.

Follow-up Subjects and Assignment of Tasks

- None Identified

Participant Summary:

Member Agencies Attendance

Member Agency	Present	Not Present
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation	●	
Department of Agriculture		●
Department of Commerce	●	
Department of Defense	●	
Department of Energy		●
Department of Health and Human Services		●
Department of Interior	●	
Department of Justice		●
Department of Labor		●
Department of Transportation	●	
Environmental Protection Agency	●	
Federal Emergency Management Agency	●	
General Services Agency		●
U.S. Coast Guard	●	

Federally Recognized Tribes

Nome Eskimo Community

Non-member Organizations in Attendance

Alaska Chadux Corporation
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Alaska Maritime Exchange
City of Nome, Nome Harbor
Cook Inlet Spill Prevention and Response, Inc.
Cully Corporation
Defenders of Wildlife
Department of Interior – Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
Department of Interior – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Kawerak, Inc.
Nome Nugget (newspaper)
Nuka Research
Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council
Sistnasuak Native Corporation
University of Alaska Fairbanks, Sea Grant Program