

# ALASKA REGIONAL RESPONSE TEAM

## Meeting Notes

**0830 – 1700 Wednesday, May 20, 2015**  
**Anchorage Federal Building, Annex – Conference Room A, B, C**  
**Anchorage, Alaska**

**Sign-in sheets can be viewed [here](#).**  
**The meeting agenda can be viewed [here](#).**

### Safety Briefing, Introductions, Opening Remarks

Mr. Nick Knowles, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) welcomed meeting attendees, gave a safety briefing, and conducted introductions.

The Alaska Regional Response Team (AART) co-chairs—Mr. Mark Everett, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG); Mr. Chris Field, (EPA); and Mr. Gary Folley, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)—welcomed all the attendees to the meeting and offered opening remarks. Mr. Folley commented on ADEC’s re-evaluation of the spill drill program in light of their reduced budget situation. He also spoke on the agency’s desire to see industry representation on the subarea committees, not just government agencies.

### Review of Actions since Last Meeting

Mr. Everett provided an overview of the recent activity related to the ARRT. Highlights included the following:

- USCG Sector Anchorage, Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) CAPT Paul Mehler will be leaving Sector Anchorage; CAPT Paul Albertson will be the new FOSC. He acknowledged the contributions and accomplishments of CAPT Mehler.
- Formal Endangered Species Act consultation on the Unified Plan with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service has been completed.
- A Food Safety & Security Policy Scoping Task Force has been established.
- Work of the Task Force to Prioritize Updates to the Unified Plan (aka Steering Committee)
- Mr. Everett provided a briefing on the ARRT, Arctic SONS Regional Exercise lessons learned, and Regional Stakeholder Committee policy at the Shell training exercise on May 12th.
- ARRT members participated in a Walrus Workshop, which was held to enhance the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s response to oiled walrus.
- The bilateral work with Russia on the Joint Contingency Plan remains on hold.

He also noted that it has been five years since the Deepwater Horizon spill. There have been multiple accomplishments by the ARRT and also at the national level as a result of the lessons learned from that response. Efforts continue toward reaching overarching national and regional goals.

## **ON-SCENE COORDINATOR REPORTS**

### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

Mr. Matt Carr, On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) with the EPA, reported on recent spills, including a produced water spill on the North Slope (Milne Point) due to pipeline corrosion. The Alaska Trucking Spill Management Workshop was led by ADEC, in response to the increase of truck shipping traffic to the North Slope. He also commented on the ongoing flooding in Prudhoe Bay area due to Sag River flooding; there are concerns about infrastructure damage to Endicott sales line. It is expected for flooding to persist and possibly increase for seven days

### **U.S. Coast Guard Western Alaska Captain of the Port Zone**

CDR Shane Montoya, USCG Sector Anchorage, reviewed the recent spill responses and lessons learned in Western Alaska. He noted that CAPT Mehler departs in July, and he will be leaving in mid-June.

### **U.S. Coast Guard Prince William Sound Captain of the Port Zone**

CDR Joe Lally, MSU Valdez, gave a presentation on spills and responses in Prince William Sound since October 2014. He provided an overview of planning efforts, training, and exercises. The Subarea Committee is currently working on a plan to complete and review Geographic Response Strategies. The next Subarea Committee meeting is August 20, 2015. He remarked on the BP exercise on September 28 to October 1, 2015, which was discussed in further detail as separate presentation by Mark Devries with BP Alaska.

### **U.S. Coast Guard Southeast Captain of the Port Zone**

CDR Patrick Hilbert, USCG Sector Juneau, gave a presentation on spill responses and notable lessons learned, as well as workgroups, trainings, exercises, tribal outreach, and meetings in Southeast Alaska.

## **WORKING GROUP/SUBCOMMITTEE/TASK FORCE REPORTS**

### **Unified Plan Update Steering Committee**

Dr. Rick Bernhardt (ADEC) provided a briefing on the status of the Unified Plan Update Steering Committee. The Steering Committee has drafted a revision to Annex D of the Unified Plan, which addresses the update process. Dr. Bernhardt provided a detailed overview of the update process as proposed by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee has submitted the revision for public comment; the public comment period is active through June 15, 2015. A copy of the Annex D revision can be viewed [here](#).

Dr. Bernhardt invited meeting attendees to offer comments or questions on the Annex D revision.

- Dr. Philip Johnson, U.S. Department of the Interior, commented that it was unclear at the time the Steering Committee concept was initially introduced that the Steering Committee would have decision making authority separate from the ARRT. He expressed his concern that this

removes decision making authority from the greater ARRT and removes the ARRT members from the process. Dr. Bernhardt responded that the Steering Committee would not be writing new policy but would just be managing the process. Workgroups would be established to draft policy revisions.

- Dr. John French commented that he has a number of concerns and will be submitting written comments. However, he expressed his concern that there is never a time that tribal consultation is not appropriate and also that the administrative change process can be abused. (Dr. French is a non-member meeting attendee.)

### **Endangered Species Act Compliance Task Force**

Ms. Marcia Combes, EPA, provided an update on the status of the Endangered Species Consultation on the Unified Plan. Formal Endangered Species Act, Section 7 Consultation has been completed. The Services have submitted their Biological Opinions. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service emphasized the importance of emergency consultation. The National Marine Fisheries Service identified reasonable and prudent measures to take to mitigate impacts to endangered species. Revisions to the proposed Unified Plan Dispersant Use Plan for Alaska have been identified. The Biological Assessment and Biological Opinions will be posted on the ARRT website. The Biological Opinions will likely be incorporated by reference into the Unified Plan, potentially as part of a new annex on environmental compliance.

### **Dispersant Working Group**

CDR Bo Stocklin, USCG D17, updated the ARRT on the status of the Dispersant Guidelines taskforce. The Biological Opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service was received only last week, and a thorough review has not yet been completed; however, based on drafts, additional changes to the proposed Dispersant Use Plan for Alaska will not be required. A minor modification to the language regarding short-tailed albatross critical habitat and the North Pacific right whales critical habitat has already been drafted.

The next steps to finalize the proposed Dispersant Use Plan for Alaska are as follows:

1. Draft comments and responses from the tribal consultation and public comment period will be submitted to the ARRT for review and then distributed to commenters. This is estimated to be completed in July 2015.
2. Issues identified by the ARRT will also be addressed and a final draft of the Dispersant Plan completed and submitted to the ARRT for approval.
3. The five signatory agencies will sign the final draft and publish the plan.
4. A 24-month period for subarea committees to designate areas to be excluded from the pre-authorized areas and for industry to come into compliance. The 24-month period for the identification of exclusion areas and industry compliance will begin with the signing of the Dispersant Plan, not a complete Unified Plan revision.

### **Food Safety Task Force**

Mr. Doug Helton, with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, introduced the new task force to address food safety and security policy issues as related to oil spills. Food sources being considered include fish, marine mammals, and plants. The issues being considered include awareness of

safety concerns, maintaining food safety, and addressing concerns if impacts to food sources are known or suspected. Currently, they are scoping a guidance document or plan, not drafting policy itself. They expect to have a proposed outline of this document at the next ARRT meeting in September 2015.

### **Executive Order 13650 Task Force and National Contingency Plan Subpart J Update**

Mr. Field reviewed the status of ongoing updates to Subpart J of the National Contingency Plan. The comment period ended on April 22, 2015. Approximately 600 individual comments and 80,000 mass mailing comments were received. Two teleconferences with tribes were conducted. It is expected to be at least a year before a final rule is produced.

Executive Order 13650, Chemical Facility Safety and Security was signed on August 1, 2013, with the objective to improve chemical safety. In Region 10, an interagency workgroup has been established; Mr. Field is a member and also serves as a liaison with the ARRT and Region 10 RRT. The tri-chairs are meeting monthly, and regional workshops have been held to finalize Standard Operating Procedures, due in July 2015. Mr. Field summarized the Region 10 activities, priorities, and objectives.

### **ARRT Cultural Resources and Wildlife Protection Committees**

Mr. Philip Johnson, Department of the Interior, provided an update on the status of the Wildlife Protection and Cultural Resources Committees. The committees have not met since the last ARRT meeting.

### **Science and Technology Committee**

Mr. Everett reported on the status of Science and Technology Committee (STC). The STC has been inactive, awaiting assignment of committee members. He requested that agencies with STC membership identify representatives to serve on the committee.

## **INDUSTRY REPORTS**

### **Royal Dutch Shell Chukchi Sea Exploration and Exercise**

Mr. Norman "Buddy" Custard provided a summary of Shell's summer 2015 Chukchi Sea exploration season. Two drilling rigs will be on site this year, approximately 12 miles apart and operating in 150 feet of water. He reviewed the well control risk management program.

Mr. Field inquired how often this presentation has been made to local communities and tribes, the regional, and village corporations, as well as the whaling and walrus commissions. Shell has signed conflict avoidance agreements with the communities.

### **BP Exercise in Prince William Sound**

Mr. Mark DeVries with BP Exploration Alaska presented a synopsis of the industry-led tabletop exercise, drilling a multi-day response, scheduled for September 28–30, 2015, in Valdez, Alaska. On June 16–18, 2015, there will also be a workshop, simulating an "hour 0–48" response. ARRT participation is anticipated for the September tabletop exercise. BP will advise what, if any, ARRT support is needed for June 2015 event.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION TOPICS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

### **Arctic Containment Dome and the Arctic Challenger**

Mr. Gary Folley presented on the Arctic Challenger, an oil spill response barge that has been acquired by Shell to house and potentially deploy the arctic containment dome for its Chukchi Sea exploration. The Arctic Challenger also has an oil and gas processing system to deal with contained and recovered sea water and oil. Oil and gas would be separated from the sea water and burned.

### **Report on Recent Herding Agent Demonstration**

Ms. Ashley Adamczak and Patrik Sartz with ADEC presented on the recent demonstrations of herding agents—mediated *in situ* burns held at the Poker Flat Research Range. The task was to look at the use of herders to facilitate *in situ* burns without the use of boom in ice. Herding agents are surfactants used to gather oil from a slick to a thicker, more consolidated formation. Ms. Adamczak and Mr. Sartz provided an overview of the methodology for the set-up and the demonstrations. They also discussed the additional actions proposed or planned to investigate this method further. This presentation was too large for posting on the ARRT website; contact Patrik Sartz of ADEC ([patrik.sartz@alaska.gov](mailto:patrik.sartz@alaska.gov)) to request information regarding this presentation.

### **Executive Order 13689 Status**

Mr. Everett spoke regarding the Executive Order 13689 regarding federal interagency coordination for arctic activities. The Arctic Executive Steering Committee (national level) has been established and met to ensure that the federal departments and agencies are coordinating with each other to implement the National Strategy for the Arctic Region (NSAR). He provided an overview of the task forces established by the Executive Steering Committee. In particular, the mandate for the Task Force to Strengthen the Nation's Ability to Prevent and Respond to Oil Spills in the Arctic is especially relevant to the ARRT. Mr. Everett will serve as ARRT POC and keep the team informed.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND REMARKS

An opportunity was made for non-member meeting attendees to offer public comments. Five people requested to make a comment. The comments included concerns on the proposed change to Annex D and Executive Steering Committee; an update of Alaska Chadux's recent equipment acquisitions and a new hub in Dutch Harbor; concern that the USCG's remote areas policy and lack of resources does not provide for equal protection of the law; concern about inadequate equipment for operations in extreme ocean conditions; and frustration regarding the alternative planning criteria and non-support of a cascade plan submitted to the USCG.

Representatives of the ARRT member agencies and the OSCs offered closing comments and remarks. The co-chairs closed the meeting by making their final remarks. Mr. Everett responded to some questions and concerns raised in the public comments. The co-chairs expressed their appreciation to the attendees for their participation, and the meeting was adjourned.

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## Upcoming Meetings

- Next ARRT Meeting September 24, 2015, at the CISPRI facility in Nikiski, AK (Kenai, AK)
- The FEMA Region X Regional Interagency Steering Committee is scheduled to be held in Anchorage, AK will be in September 1–2, 2015. The June 2015 meeting will be held in Boise, ID.
- Alyeska Pipeline Service Company Yukon River drill, a worst case discharge scenario will be July 21–22, 2015

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## Follow-up Subjects & Assignment of Tasks

- Agencies with STC membership are requested to identify representatives to serve on the committee.
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**Participant Summary:**

<b>Member Agencies Attendance</b>		
<b>Member Agency</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Not Present</b>
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation	●	
Department of Health and Human Services		●
Department of Commerce	●	
Department of Defense	●	
Department of Energy		●
Department of the Interior	●	
Department of Justice		●
Department of Labor		●
Department of Transportation		●
Environmental Protection Agency	●	
Federal Emergency Management Agency	●	
General Services Agency		●
U.S. Coast Guard	●	

**Non-member Organizations in Attendance**

- Alaska Chadux
- Alaska Response Co., LLC
- BP Exploration Alaska
- BP Shipping
- Cook Inlet RCAC
- Kenaitze Tribe (a federally recognized tribe)
- Prince William Sound RCAC
- Royal Dutch Shell
- The Response Group
- Witt O'Brien's