



# Soundkeeper

*Clean Water – Healthy Fisheries – Strong Communities*

Spring 2016

## Dear Soundkeepers,

For over 12 years Prince William Soundkeeper has been advocating for water quality and the ecosystem of Prince William Sound. We wouldn't be here without support from stakeholders, resource users, and lovers of the Sound like you. Thank you.

Last year's priority was the final litigation of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) Re-Opener Clause for Unknown Injury. Though State and Federal Government dropped the \$92 million plus interest claim, PWSK held a successful public awareness campaign that resulted in 5 strategic planning meetings with collaborators and helping to get 3 Resolutions supporting the Re-Opener Claim passed and submitted to the Governor. (City of Cordova, Village of Old Harbor, and the Chugach Regional Resources Comm.)

Despite the government's assurance that the Sound has recovered from the damage done by the oil spill and no further reparation dollars were necessary it's been 26 years and the

**Toxic Legacy of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill remains PWSK's main focus.**



**Citizen Advocacy** - Oil spill prevention & response – ensuring that Regional Stakeholders continue to have voice in planning and mitigation.

**Education & Outreach** - On the ~78 sites across PWS with lingering oil.

**Management & Oversight** - The problem of sub-surface resource rights development on EVOS 'protected' surface lands – the Port Gravina quarry and deep water dock.

**Port Gravina Update** – The proposed subsurface resource development in Port Gravina by Chugach Alaska Corp. is another kind of toxic legacy resulting from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill litigation. Though listed as EVOS Trustee Council protected lands, in reality these lands are not protected because the subsurface mineral rights were not also obtained. By law the surface owner must allow the subsurface owner access to their resource. And thus we have the problem of a 25-50 year gravel mine proposed for development in one of the last truly pristine spots in the Sound.

The Chugach National Forest has a limited scope of oversight in this instance; the Corp. of Engineers will play a greater role with more permitting and regulation of activities. PWSoundkeeper has submitted comments to both agencies with our concerns:

1. **WETLANDS & WATER QUALITY:** Section 10 and 404 Wetlands permitting authority. CAC is requesting 51 acres of wetlands fill, a significant amount, which will absolutely negatively impact the surrounding water quality and ecosystem.

2. **ENGINEERING:** The port construction proposes using the same sheet piling technology that has proven to fail in the Port of Anchorage and elsewhere, calling into question the whole engineering plan.

3. **ECOSYTEM:** The inter-tidal areas, estuaries and bays of Port Gravina are nurseries for young fish such as salmon, they contain herring spawning areas (an EVOSTC listed non-recovered resource), marine mammals, and sea birds. Disturbance by blasting, ship movements and other large development actions have been proven, at the least, to disrupt animal activities and at the worst to directly harm and kill marine mammals and fish.

4. **DISTRUPTION & EXCLUSION OF OTHER USERS:** A quarry and dock of this size and duration will disrupt and disturb the air, soundscape, and aesthetic quality for anyone wanting to utilize the nearby vicinity. Operations will undoubtedly cause other resource users to avoid the location, effectively depriving the public from an area much larger than the "less than 100 acre" proposed footprint physically holding the quarry and its associated operations.

5. **ECONOMIC VALUE:** PWSK believes that the recreational and fishery resource values far outweigh any potential economic benefit the region/state would gain from the operation of a gravel mine in eastern Prince William Sound. The public's economic opportunities are being pushed aside for private, corporate profit. Even with best reclamation techniques, the 'returned' lands will be forever altered and less ecologically productive than they were in their original state.

6. **CONFLICTING MANDATES:** The proposed development of Port Gravina violates the mandates of the Chugach National Forest Management Plan and the EVOS Restoration Plan.



*The Polar Bear* sits outside the Cordova harbor breakwater on City owned tidal lands. While it provides a scenic photo op, it is also an economic and environmental disaster waiting to happen.

**Derelict / Abandoned Vessels** are a problem across the US, but even more so in Alaska. Just about every port/harbor has its collection of old, abandoned and derelict boats on its beaches. Once it hits the beach, or the bottom, the expense to remove and dispose of becomes exponential. The boats often become sources of pollution from degrading tanks and mechanics, cause navigational hazards, and in the end, costs everyone in the form of cleanup, mitigation and damage to the environment.

There is little to no state or federal funding to deal with old boats so the cost of removal and disposal are often left to local communities which don't have the resources to handle the issue.

**Keep up with Prince William Soundkeeper daily on Facebook & Twitter!**

Our challenges continue to pile up like sea wrack behind the high tide line. Your continued support is needed to tackle these issues and to advocate on your behalf. Thank you for your tax deductible donation!

Sincerely,

Kate McLaughlin, President & Executive Director