

Skye Steritz

Dear Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation,

I am a small business owner and a concerned, year-round resident of Eyak/Cordova. At 28 years old, I am a member of the generation that is rising to take on the responsibilities of oil spill prevention and response in the region, as well as inheriting the challenges caused by immense reliance on fossil fuel extraction in general. I am a volunteer committee member on Prince William Sound Regional Citizen Advisory Council (PWSRCAC) Oil Spill Prevention and Response Committee. I am dedicated to making sure that the Alaska Regional Contingency Plan maintains all the integrity and wisdom that community members, advocates, and PWSRCAC have worked hard to instill since the tragedy of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill in 1989.

It is extremely important to maintain the Regional Stakeholder Committee (RSC) as key to the oil spill prevention and response procedures. The local affected stakeholder groups are the voices that the government needs to hear. These impacted stakeholders offer valuable suggestions and firsthand knowledge to solve problems. Stakeholders need opportunities to raise concerns with those running oil spill response. This is irreplaceable. Agency officials simply cannot fill the same role.

A Multiagency Coordination (MAC) Group is insufficient and would exclude many of the affected stakeholders included in an RSC. The RSC should be retained in contingency plans and be clearly stated as the standalone approach in Alaska for engaging affected groups during a spill response.

The effective RSC approach evolved in Alaska to provide more formal structure and a clear mechanism to engage affected stakeholders. Alaskans need a clearly defined mechanism by which to communicate with decision-makers during a response. The RSC has a defined process for diverse groups to engage, already practiced in large spill response exercises with job aids and other support materials currently in place. If the proposed changes move forward, it could create confusion and inconsistency, or even reduce or eliminate input from affected Alaskans.

For the sake of our waters and all life forms, please maintain the same RSC system within the Alaska Regional Contingency Plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
Skye Steritz