

BACKGROUND: PART ONE – SUPPORT INFORMATION

A. SUBAREA PLAN

This Subarea Contingency Plan (SCP) supplements the Alaska Federal/State Preparedness Plan for Response to Oil and Hazardous Substance Discharges/Releases (the **Unified Plan**). The SCP in conjunction with the Unified Plan describes the strategy for a coordinated federal, state and local response to a discharge or substantial threat of discharge of oil or a release of a hazardous substance from a vessel, offshore facility, or onshore facility operating within the boundaries of the Prince William Sound Subarea. For its planning process, the federal government has designated the entire state of Alaska as a planning “region” and the western half of the state as a planning “area.” The State of Alaska has divided the state into ten planning regions of which one is the “Prince William Sound Region.” As part of the Unified Plan, this SCP addresses this Prince William Sound Region or, to avoid confusion with federal terms, Subarea.

The SCP shall be used as a framework for response mechanisms and as a pre-incident guide to identify weaknesses and to evaluate shortfalls in the response structure before an incident. The plan also offers parameters for vessel and facility response plans under OPA 90. Any review for consistency between government and industry plans should address the recognition of economically and environmentally sensitive areas and the related protection strategies, as well as a look at the response personnel and equipment (quantity and type) available within the area (including federal, state, and local government and industry) in comparison to probable need during a response.

As defined by Alaska regulations, the Prince William Sound Subarea is the area of the state south of 63E 30' North latitude, west of 142E West longitude, and east of the Cook Inlet Subarea (which is that area encompassed by the boundaries of the Kenai Peninsula Borough, the Municipality of Anchorage, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough) including adjacent shorelines and state waters, and having as its seaward boundary a line drawn in such a manner that each point on it is 200 nautical miles from which the territorial sea is measured. (18 AAC 75.495)

B. SUBAREA DESCRIPTION

Prince William Sound is an extensive body of water with an area of about 2,500 square miles and 3,500 miles of shoreline. The entrance to the Sound is 58 miles across and extends from Cape Puget to Point Whittshed. The entrance is also protected by a series of islands: Montague (which experienced as much as 35 feet of uplift during the 1964 earthquake), Hinchinbrook, and Hawkins Islands. Most of the islands and peninsulas are tree-covered with rocky and sometimes precipitous shorelines. Located next to the entrance on the eastern part of the Sound is the Copper River Delta which has extensive tidal flats that support a variety of wildlife.

The Prince William Sound region is characterized by isolated coastal and inland communities. Valdez, Whittier and Cordova are the major communities along the coastline. The Glenn, Richardson, and Edgerton Highways transect the region. Several inland communities plus Valdez are connected to this interior highway network which provides transportation routes to the larger communities of Fairbanks and Anchorage.

The town of Valdez is located at the northeastern end of Port Valdez, a body of water approximately 12 miles long and 2.5 miles wide, located in northeast Prince William Sound. The port is a natural deep water fjord, virtually surrounded by mountains, and the most northerly ice-free port in Alaska. From Port Valdez the water route proceeds southwest through Valdez Narrows to Valdez Arm and into Prince

William Sound. The shoreline is dominated by steeply inclined rock walls with occasional sloping, rocky beaches and gravel deltas.

Extensive sand-silt-rock tidal flats are found east of Valdez at the mouths of the Lowe River and Mineral Creek. The Port itself has a maximum depth of 810 feet, a shallow sill of 390 feet, and an average depth of 675 feet. Tidal currents within the port are not strong, generally less than .75 knots. Wind-driven currents dominate surface movement during high wind periods but waves rarely exceed 3 feet.

The city of Cordova sits on the east side of Orca Inlet which is located in southeast Prince William Sound. The two most prominent features are Mount Eyak and Mount Eccles which are directly above the town. Due to the 1964 earthquake, as much as 6.3 feet of uplift was experienced in Orca Inlet. The average flood tide is approximately 1.8 knots and the average ebbtide is approximately 1.0 knot.

The town of Whittier is located at the end of Passage Canal, a fjord on the northwestern side of Prince William Sound, and has rail connection to Anchorage and the highway system. This port serves as one of the major ocean vessel-railroad transfer points for the State of Alaska.

Industrial facilities within the subarea include the Trans Alaska Pipeline system (TAPS) and Valdez Marine Terminal located in Valdez, and a number of seafood processing facilities, the majority in Cordova and Valdez.

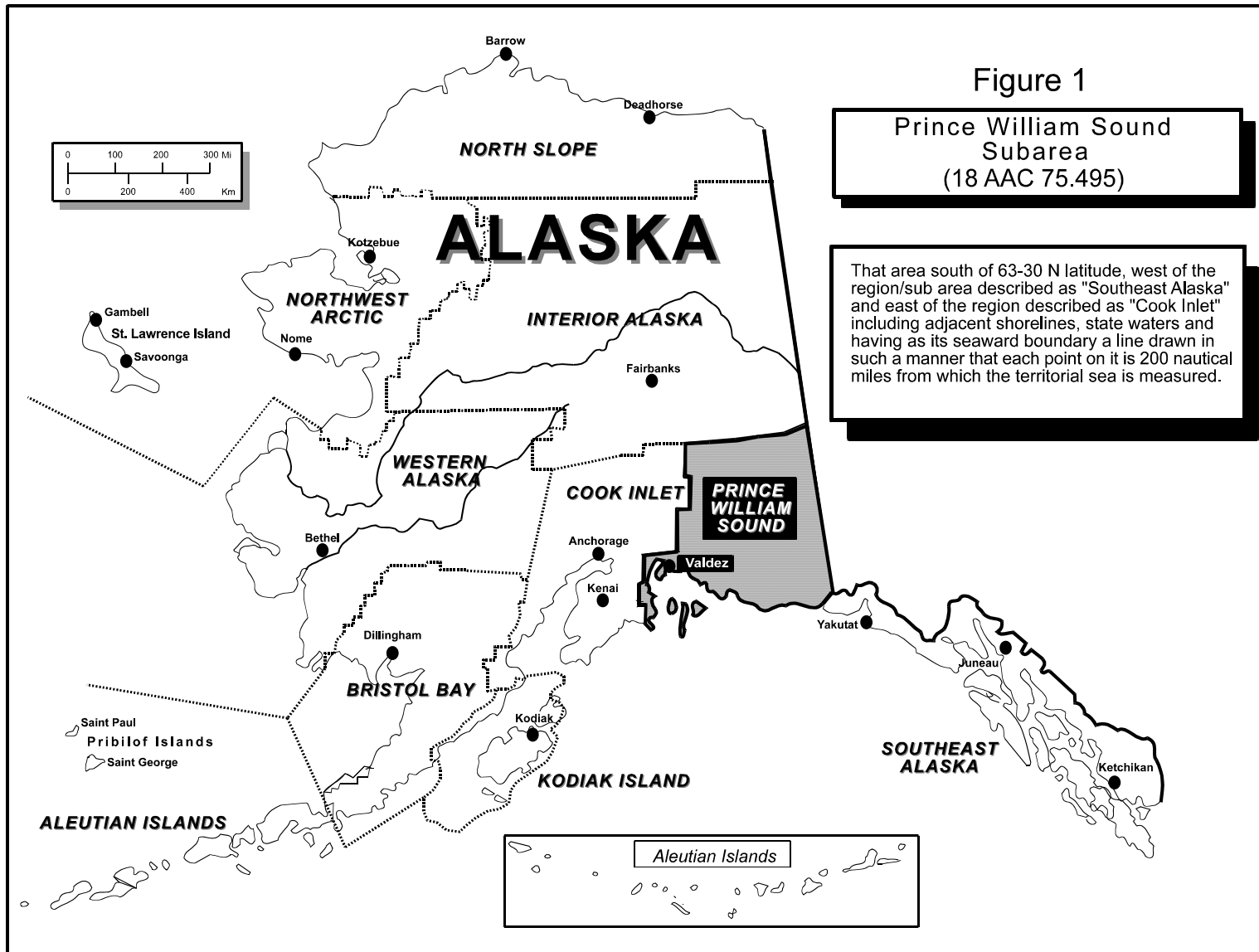


Figure E-2: PWS Detailed Subarea Map

