

**PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND
SUBAREA CONTINGENCY PLAN**

**SENSITIVE AREAS
SECTION**

INTRODUCTION.....		D-1
PART ONE	Initial Contacts.....	D-3
PART TWO	Areas of Environmental Concern.....	D-11
	A. Background/Criteria.....	D-11
	B. Areas of Major Concern.....	D-12
	C. Areas of Moderate Concern	D-12
	D. Areas of Lesser Concern	D-13
PART THREE	Resource Sensitivity	D-15
PART FOUR	Background Information	D-27
	Introduction.....	D-27
	Land Management Maps	D-29
	A. Land Management Designations	D-34
	B. Habitat Types	D-36
	C. Biological Resources	D-41
	1. Fish and Wildlife	D-41
	2. Vegetation	D-66
	3. Biologically Sensitive Areas	D-69
	D. Human Use Resources	D-78
	1. Fish Hatcheries and Associated Ocean Net Pens	D-78
	2. Aquaculture Sites	D-80
	3. Historic Properties	D-89
	4. Subsistence and Personal Use Harvests	D-89
	5. Commercial Fishing	D-90
	6. Sport Fishing and Hunting	D-92
	7. Recreational Sites and Facilities	D-92
	8. Commercial Tourism	D-101
	9. Marinas and Ports	D-101
	10. Fish Processing	D-101
	11. Logging Facilities	D-102
	12. Water Intake/Use	D-103
PART FIVE	Areas of Local Concern	D-105
PART SIX	Key References	D-107
ATTACHMENT ONE	Water Intake/Use.....	D-109
ATTACHMENT TWO	Salmon Escapement Tables.....	D-113
ATTACHMENT THREE	Harbor Seal and Sea Lion Sites.....	D-135

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SENSITIVE AREAS: INTRODUCTION

This section is intended for use by the On-Scene Coordinators during the initial phase of a spill event to assist in ascertaining the location and presence of spill-sensitive biological and cultural resources, services and users in the Prince William Sound Subarea. This information is specific to Prince William Sound. No attempt has been made to duplicate information contained in easily accessible existing documents. This section, therefore, must be used in conjunction with the referenced materials and informational contacts identified herein. More detailed and current information should be available from on-scene resource experts when they become engaged in the response. This information is geared toward early response. If appropriate, natural resources trustees may be conducting natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) activities in conjunction with response activities. Information regarding NRDA activities should be directed to the natural resources trustees or to their appointed NRDA Liaison.

Often, the most detailed, up-to-date biological and resource use information will come from people who live and work in the impacted area. People from the local community are often knowledgeable sources for information related to fishing, hunting, non-consumptive outdoor sports, and subsistence use. They may also have a good idea of which spill response techniques (especially exclusion and diversion booming) are practicable under prevailing weather and current conditions.

The Alaska Regional Response Team (ARRT) has adopted several documents (see the *Alaska Federal/State Contingency Plan for Response to Oil & Hazardous Substance Discharges/Releases (Unified Plan)*) that address decision making to help protect sensitive areas and resources. These documents (and their location) include:

- RRT Oil Dispersant Guidelines for Alaska (see *Unified Plan* Annex F, Appendix 1)
- *In Situ* Burning Guidelines for Alaska (see *Unified Plan* Annex F, Appendix 2)
- Wildlife Protection Guidelines for Alaska (see *Unified Plan* Annex G, Appendix 1)
- Inter-agency Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Oil Spill Planning and Response Activities Under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan and the Endangered Species Act Consultation on threatened and endangered species (see *Unified Plan* Annex G, Appendix 2)
- Alaska Implementation Guidelines for Federal On-Scene Coordinators for the Programmatic Agreement on Protection of Historic Properties during Emergency Response under the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan Protection of Historic Properties (see *Unified Plan* Annex M)

In addition, Annex N of the *Unified Plan* includes *Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment Guidelines*, which provide helpful information on clean-up options by shoreline type.

Section G of the Subarea Contingency Plan contains site-specific Geographic Response Strategies (GRSs) for use by responders in protecting key sensitive areas. In addition, Environmental Sensitivity Index (ESI) maps have been produced that illustrate selected sensitive resources and shoreline types.

This section and the guidelines in the Unified Plan are also intended for use by facility/vessel operators in developing industry oil spill prevention and contingency plans. For an operator's facility or area of operation, industry contingency plans describe: (a) environmentally sensitive areas and areas of public concern; (b) how sensitive areas would be prioritized during a spill event; and (c) response strategies to protect sensitive areas at risk. This information within industry plans should be consistent with the subarea plan.

The definition of sensitive resources and their geographic locations requires use of field observations and data available from published and non-published materials or through additional field work. With the limited time and funds available for Subarea Contingency Plan development (there are ten such plans covering the state of Alaska), not all the detailed information necessary to adequately complete the Sensitive Areas Section was compiled. Identifying relative priorities among resources and resource uses takes considerable coordination and discussion among resource management agencies.

Many of the maps presented in this section are available on-line through the Internet at:

<http://www.asgdc.state.ak.us/maps/cplans/subareas.html>

A substantial effort to develop and refine a sensitive areas database has been undertaken by Alyeska Pipeline Service Company (Alyeska). This information has undergone extensive federal and state agency review and is incorporated, by reference, into this section (with the permission of Alyeska). The Alyeska information is available on a data diskette, termed the Graphical Resource Database, as part of the Prince William Sound Tanker Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan Supplemental Information Document (SID) #13, and is not duplicated herein.

The Subarea Contingency Plan for this subarea is scheduled to be updated periodically. Much can be done in these updates to improve the data and its presentation, such as:

- Establish a continuing interagency mechanism to review, update and maintain sensitivity information and priorities.
- Fund staff/materials to compile data and prepare materials for presentation in the Subarea Contingency Plans.
- Continue to subdivide the subarea into smaller geographic sites and identify more specific sensitive seasonal biological and other resource locations.
- Expand and further detail sensitive resources and initial response tactics for the most likely spill scenarios.

Suggestions, comments, and more current information are requested. Please contact either:

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