

Alaska Regional Response Team

Spring 2026 Newsletter

USCG

EPA

DEC



Fishing Vessel Great Pacific - MSU Valdez

On October 29, 2025, the Fishing Vessel GREAT PACIFIC, carrying over 10,000 gallons of fuel, lost propulsion while transiting the Gulf of Alaska. With the vessel powerless in treacherous seas and unsafe weather conditions, the crew was successfully rescued, leaving the ship adrift. Marine Safety Unit (MSU) Valdez immediately initiated a multi-agency response, collaborating with partners from the Alaska Regional Response Team to coordinate the complex tracking of the unmanned vessel. This critical effort continued until November 2, when the vessel

was successfully brought under tow by Alaska Marine Response. Following comprehensive seaworthiness surveys and the approval of a detailed tow plan, the GREAT PACIFIC was safely towed to Washington State for repairs, bringing a potentially hazardous situation to a successful resolution.



USCG Sector Western Alaska and SUPSALV Joint Training

With a significant move to bolster emergency preparedness in the Arctic, U.S. Coast Guard Sector Western Alaska and the U.S. Navy's Supervisor of Salvage and Diving (SUPSALV) conducted a joint training exercise in February. The training centered on the deployment of advanced Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs), which are unmanned, submersible robots equipped with high-resolution cameras and powerful sonar. This technology provides operators with the critical ability to search beneath thick ice, navigate frigid waters, and generate detailed images, allowing for thorough inspection of sunken vessels for contaminants and other hazardous materials from the safety of a surface vessel. The collaboration is vital for ensuring a swift and effective response to maritime incidents in the uniquely challenging Arctic environment. By mastering ROV deployment, these specialized teams enhanced their capability to conduct complex under-ice searches, rapidly assess potential pollution threats from wrecks, and support complex salvage operations.



Saying Goodbye - Beth Sheldrake

Beth Sheldrake began her career at EPA Region 10 as a “Stay in School” intern in 1989 working in Human Resources before landing a permanent job in Superfund in 1990. Within a year of her joining the Superfund program, she had found a place working as a Remedial Project Manager (RPM) on the Bunker Hill Superfund site where she contributed to Records of Decision (RODs), the negotiations for Consent Decrees and a settlement valued at over \$50 million. These milestones would lead the way for the next decade of cleanup.

In 1994, Beth joined the Region’s Emergency Response program, becoming the first female On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) in Region 10 and one of the first in the country. Beth led a variety of high-profile regional responses while also contributing to national responses including Hurricane Katrina and the Columbia Space Shuttle disaster. Parallel with her response work, Beth led planning and preparedness work that implemented the changes set in motion by the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill and the subsequent 1990 Oil Pollution Act. Beth’s years-long effort on planning helped pattern response plans after the revised National Contingency Plan, and – in partnership with Washington Department of Ecology – create Geographic Response Plans, now viewed as critical response tools that are in use across the country. She also served as an international specialist working with the government of Thailand on development of an emergency preparedness and response program. Before wrapping up her first stint in the ER program, Beth was also part of an select group of national leaders that established OSC Readiness; training for OSCs by OSCs, which still serves as the flagship training event for OSCs at EPA. She also led national policy development to bring all regions to a new national preparedness standard known as the Core Emergency Response Initiative.

In 2007, Beth was selected to supervise the Region 10 Office of Environmental Cleanup’s Program Management Unit, which among other responsibilities, oversaw management of all the Region’s cleanup contracts. In 2012, Beth took a position overseeing a section of RPMs working on some of the highest priority remedial cleanups in Region 10, including Wyckoff and Bunker Hill. In this role she supported site teams working through complex issues including the need to fundamentally change the cleanup strategy at the site.

Beth served as the interim Remedial Branch Manager before rejoining in 2017 what is now the Emergency Management Site Assessment and Removal Branch, this time as a supervisor. Two years after her return to Emergency Response, Beth was promoted to the position of Emergency Response Branch Manager in 2019, where she helped lead an effort to properly staff and organize the branch to better support the diverse programs it serves while also integrating the staff from the Site Assessment program into the branch. As part of this integration, Beth supported the effort to get several sites listed on the National Priorities List (NPL) including Upper Columbia River, JH Baxter, and Bradford Island, which was the first Region 10 federal facility added to the NPL in 15 years.

During her tenure as Emergency Response Branch Manager, Beth was also instrumental in developing a new national workload model that resulted in Region 10 gaining the largest number of resources of any region in the country.

Along with her profound contributions in response, contingency planning, training, contracting, legal settlements, listing, and cleaning up Superfund sites, the final part of Beth’s legacy can be seen through the development of staff. Beth took on opportunities to mentor young women starting careers in emergency response, including participating in the Women Pioneers in Emergency Response forum in 2021. Beth was also instrumental in establishing a culture of career development in her early years in the Emergency Response program that set the stage to help launch the careers of dozens of individuals working in the program, many of whom are now in positions of leadership serving in various EPA programs and regions across the country.

In 2022 Beth was selected to be the first recipient of the Eric Mosher Leadership Award, a national award established in memory of Eric Mosher to recognize greatness in emergency management and leadership.

In summary, Beth has spent the entirety of her 36-year career demonstrating a tireless work ethic, vision, and leadership that has and will continue to have an impact on the protection of human health and the environment for years to come.

USCG	EPA	DEC
------	-----	-----

More Goodbyes

The USCG will be saying goodbye to all three of our FOSC: CAPT Christopher Culpepper, CAPT Stanley Fields and CDR Sarah Rousseau. The Alaska RRT thanks you for your support and dedication throughout the years.

MAY
2026

Saying Hello - Ray Reichl

Please join us in welcoming Mr. Ray Reichl as the new Southeast Alaska Area Secretary for Sector Southeast Alaska, as he officially assumes the duties previously held by LT Lindsay Wheeler. Mr. Reichl brings a wealth of knowledge and regional expertise to this position, having completed an extensive Coast Guard career with numerous afloat and ashore assignments throughout Alaska. As of this transition, please direct all future correspondence, inquiries, and Area Secretary matters to his attention.

Contact Information for Mr. Ray Reichl:

- Email: raymond.reichl@uscg.mil
- Phone: 206-820-0620

Preparedness Specialist Vacancy Valdez, Alaska

The position of Preparedness Specialist, formerly occupied by Mr. Watland, is vacant. For all matters pertaining to this role, please contact Mr. Bradley L. Ragan at Bradley.L.Ragan@USCG.mil.



Fourth Edition of the Tundra Treatment Guidelines

Tundra makes up an estimated 39% (143 million acres) of Alaska's landscape and is especially sensitive to oil and hazardous substance spills due to the underlying permafrost and short growing season. DEC's Division of Spill Prevention and Response is pleased to announce the publication of the fourth edition of our Tundra Treatment Guidelines to assist with the planning, cleanup, and recovery of spills to this fragile ecosystem. The two significant updates to the fourth addition include addressing spills of ore concentrate to the tundra and updated guidelines for the use of burning oily vegetation as a spill cleanup tactic.

DEC has three main objectives for any tundra cleanup:

- 1) minimizing damage to the tundra from the spilled material,
- 2) minimizing damage to the tundra from the response actions, and
- 3) minimizing the time period for tundra to recover.

The guidelines:

- Emphasize response strategies that will promote vegetation recovery, control risks to wildlife, aquatic, and human receptors, and protect tundra soils from physical damage and any thermal effects that can impact permafrost.
- Provides a menu of tactics for spills of crude oil, diesel fuel, gasoline, saline waters and other saline substances, drilling muds and fluids, synthetic fluids, and ore concentrate after initial response efforts have eliminated the threat of large-scale spill migration.

Visit <https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/ppr/response-resources/tundra-treatment/> to learn more.

USCG	EPA	DEC
------	-----	-----

New DEC Program Helps Homeowners Cover Heating Oil Spill Cleanup Costs

The Department of Environmental Conservation Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Program (PPR) launched a new program last fall to help eligible homeowners cover the cost of responding to home heating oil spills.

Home heating oil tanks are often located close to homes where families, children, and pets spend time, making quick and thorough cleanup especially important. Prompt response helps protect household safety and prevents fuel from spreading into soil, groundwater, or drinking water sources. To help homeowners act quickly, PPR is offering funding through a one-time state budget appropriation of \$450,000 to support home heating oil spill cleanup. The goal is to help as many homeowners as possible complete cleanup without delays caused by the cost of response.

Homeowners who discover a spill from their residential heating oil system on or after the program's launch date may be eligible for between \$13,000 and \$17,000 in department funding, depending on geographic location. Funding may also be available for older spills when the only remaining action needed to close the case is the transport and disposal of excavated contaminated soil.

Once a homeowner is approved, the PPR spill case manager can purchase specific items directly for the response. The funding can be used for response supplies such as sorbent pads and garbage bags, protective equipment like gloves, and to pay for the treatment, transport, and disposal of contaminated soil once it is excavated.

PPR has already begun putting the funding to work, using the first \$13,000 to assist a property owner in Nikiski following a spill in November, helping move the cleanup toward completion and property restoration. As of the end of January, PPR has awarded funding for a total of 15 spills including several to assist Alaskan's following spills that occurred during the heavy snow experienced in Southeast Alaska.

Learn more about the grant program, including access to the eligibility and application form, and general tools for home heating oil tank installation and maintenance, please visit HomeHeatingOilTanks.alaska.gov.



DEC ODPCP Notify Listserv

DEC introduced the dec.odpcp.notify listserv in 2023 as the sole way to receive notifications of oil discharge prevention and contingency plan (ODPCP) applications and plan reviews replacing the older manual email distribution process.

After signing up for the listserv, you'll get convenient notifications directly to your inbox when a plan is open for public comment, when a minor amendment application has been received and is being reviewed by DEC, and when the final version of an approved plan is available online.

Sign up today:

<https://list.state.ak.us/mailman/listinfo/dec.odpcp.notify>

Sector South East - Record Snowfall

In December 2025 and early January 2026, Southeast Alaska was hit by a series of historic winter storms and atmospheric rivers that broke several long-standing snowfall records. Juneau saw its snowiest December on record with 82.0 inches, surpassing the 1964 record. This included a new 5-day snowfall record of 49.0 inches and an all-time snow depth record of 50 inches on December 31, 2025. The month's total snowfall was the second-highest for any month in the city's history. The extreme weather also brought record-breaking cold, with the temperature at Juneau Airport dropping to -10°F on December 22. The heavy snowfall had significant consequences, as it led to collapsed roofs, blocked storm drains, damaged home heating oil tanks, and sunken vessels. Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation responded to 19 home heating oil tank fuel spills and continues to work with homeowners on cleanup efforts. Many of these spills occurred when snow shoveled from rooftops landed on tanks, breaking piping and fittings and releasing significant amounts of fuel. Sector Southeast Alaska also responded to 17 vessels sinking or becoming compromised across Southeast Alaska. Sector Southeast Alaska responded and federalized four of the most severe cases with a total ceiling of \$495,000 and addressing a potential discharge of over 3,600 gallons of pollutants. The team successfully removed 564 gallons of petroleum products from the affected vessels, preventing further environmental harm. During this record-breaking event Sector responders worked alongside the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the City & Borough of Juneau Harbor Master to coordinate all fuel spill and vessel removal operations.

A Word from the Alaska RRT

The Alaska RRT extends heartfelt gratitude to everyone for your adaptability this year. We have encountered numerous unexpected challenges, including the government shutdown, appropriation lapses, and funding issues. We recognize that these circumstances impact not only our organizations but also affect all our partners and the community at large. We look forward to seeing everyone again Sept 10, 2026 back at our original venue at UAA- Gorsch Commons.

Area Committee Point of Contact:

- DEC Area Planner: Julie Liford-Parker julie.parker@alaska.gov
- AWA Area Committee USCG Secretary: LCDR Amanda Faulkner amanda.k.faulkner@uscg.mil
- Southeast Alaska Area Committee USCG Secretary: LT Lindsay Wheeler lindsay.m.wheeler@uscg.mil
- Prince William Sound Area Committee USCG Secretary: LT Bradley Ragan bradley.l.ragan@uscg.mil
- EPA Area Planner: Stephen Nguyen nguyen.stephen@epa.gov

Alaska RRT

More information about the Alaska RRT can be found on our website:

alaskarrt.org

USCG RRT COORDINATOR: ANGELLA GEBERT	EPA RRT COORDINATOR: STEPHEN NGUYEN	DEC RRT COORDINATOR: YTAMAR RODRIGUEZ
--	---	---