Alaska Clean Seas 2021 Annual Report

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Message from President and General Manager





Lacking an Instapot, lately I sit quietly while new owners of the modern version of a pressure cooker frequently rave about how great and indispensable this cooking appliance is – seems to be the Traeger of the Year. Reflecting on 2021, ACS spent most of the year in another high-pressure environment, coming up with a recipe and blending just the right ingredients to succeed in the face of the constant threats and changes of COVID and the Delta variant. Continuing to employ often emulated approaches to business continuity such as MS Teams, distancing, and achieving a high vaccination rate (over 70%), the ACS team met the unique challenges through flexibility, innovation, and commitment to caring for one another. Without question, there were plenty of rough, tough days in 2021 – as the routine work continued while adding all the extra work to focus on prevention, the acquisition of emerging/accurate knowledge, and the management of responses when faced with positive cases either at work or at home, for our employees and their family members.

As the year ends, so do the stellar ACS careers of three long-term teammates of the ACS family. Lead Technician Lance Douglas transitions to a well-deserved next stage of his life after 27 years with us and Marine Supervisor Walt Henry can stop looking over his shoulder for hungry polar bears after 26 years. Lastly, Gary Seims, after more than 14 years, chooses a much more enjoyable commute in warmer waters. Like Bud Forbing, ACS' longest serving employee, who retired earlier this year after almost 40 years, they will all certainly be missed. Between these four, you could easily overfill a mini barge full of their positive contributions based on their intelligence, wit, and dedication. Thankfully, when they made their announcements and we looked at the deep and wide talent pool, our problem wasn't searching for highly qualified replacements as much as it was selecting from a long list of names who were chomping at the bit for the opportunity to try and fill their shoes.

Having been exceptionally blessed to be surrounded with impressive now-retired leaders at all levels within ACS, (like Hocking, Vinnie, Lindy, Rhonda, Larry, Linda, Lance, Walt, Bud, Barron, and the list goes on and on), it is also time I followed their example. Early in 2022, I'll hopefully discover what a person does who often likes to start their day around 5 am, when my mental to-do list doesn't contain a robust calendar of ACS work, phone calls, and changing travel plans. I appreciate the ACS Board of Directors as they manage the process to select the next General Manager and President of ACS. Likewise, I'm looking forward to supporting the transition, having been truly honored and often amazed at what fills our days - supporting the people to accomplish the missions, the consistent stellar and often innovative performance of the ACS Team. I know I'll miss the camaraderie of the ACS Family most of all.

We hope you enjoy the updated format for the 2021 Annual Report. While it has been streamlined and slimmed down, it does contain some impressive accomplishments, offer some amazing photos, and describes in concise terms what involved contributions, innovation, and our hallmark commitment to safety to move from concept to completion – be it spill responses, an improved Safe Action Recognition Program, or the many more examples of the greatness of the ACS Team!

Read on and Bon Voyage in 2022...





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2021 By The Numbers

Focus Areas

- Responder readiness
- Training
- Equipment maintenance
- Readiness confirmation exercises & audits
- Actual events



8 Regulatory audits 184

Internal audits **3100** Preventative maintenance inspections 4782

Personnel trained 558 Training courses delivered

59 NPREP deployments documented

Readiness, Exercises and Training

Mutual Aid Drill

A winter Mutual Aid Drill was conducted in April 2021 (postponed from 2020 due to COVID-19). A total of 57 ACS and North Slope Spill Response Team responders participated in the day-long field deployment. The scenario simulated a tank falling from a rolligon trailer while transiting across the ice at the Put 27 Mine Site. While source control was not specifically exercised during the field deployment, the presence of a large tank prop and approved dye as an oil simulant on the ice gave a sense of realism to the exercise and clearly identified the source and extent of the hot zone. The large patch of dye created a realistic "spill" pattern on the surface of the ice and indicated that the contents of the tank had all been released. Safety personnel were able to conduct simulated atmospheric testing prior to personnel entering the hot zone. In addition, given the still-present threat of the COVID-19 virus, all personnel were required to be tested within a day prior to attending the exercise, practice social distancing and enhanced cleaning, and wear masks when indoors (warm up and restroom facilities) to mitigate the potential spread of the virus (vaccines had only just begun in Alaska at the time). Teams from the NSSRT (who arrive from different areas of the field and follow protocols of five separate companies) were arranged in Task Forces by area; personnel from different areas of the field were not commingled. ACS and Hilcorp Safety personnel assessed the site and developed a Site Safety Plan to address the conditions of the simulated release and the safe and effective response tactics to employ. A Tracking, Delineation and Surveillance Task Force was established to use Tactics T-1 Delineation of Oiled Snow and Tundra, T-2 Mapping and Surveillance of Spill on Land, and T-3 Detection and Delineation of Under-Ice Oil. Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), employing Tactic T-4 Discharge Tracking Using Manned and Unmanned Aircraft, were used to maintain a big picture view of the entire response. The recently upgraded North Slope Digital Oil Spill Radio network was used for communications at the site. Additionally, a microwave relay was set up from the site back to ACS Base to facilitate the UAS live-streaming. This system, which was developed to be portable and deployed anywhere on the North Slope, was tested during this exercise for the first time. Use of the secure, password-protected live-stream was critical to Hilcorp and regulatory agency personnel who were unable to see the site in person. This continual overview proved very effective in maintaining situational awareness for safety and site conditions, and a common operating picture for all parties.

Auxiliary Contract Response Team Training

Two ACRT Training events were conducted in 2021. The first was training in late-season ice to practice winter tactics and equipment proficiency checks. The three-day training course included a mix of classroom topics, training with skimmers in oil in the Annex test tanks, and winter recovery tactics. The training class was the first to use the pond and boat ramp access behind ACS Base as the field site, enabling efficient use of time and removing the need for field access and long travel times. Four U.S. Coast Guard personnel attended to evaluate the course structure and content to develop an Arctic response advanced specialty school for Coast Guard Marine Science Technicians. A second ACRT Marine Operations class was conducted in the early summer at the start of open water season. This class was a train-the-trainer course for the Marine Captains to improve their confidence and familiarity with the Vessel Operator course curriculum.

North Slope Spill Reponse Team Training

Combinations of in-person, hybrid and virtual venues were used by each of the NSSRTs. Equipment and tactics employed in the April U.S. Army under ice exercise were further practiced by NSSRT personnel. Summer operations training at West Dock enabled many team members to become familiar with the capabilities of the new Pt. McIntyre landing craft. The Heliskimmer was deployed at the ACS boat ramp to perform modified R-20 and R-32a skimming tactics, enabling team members to become familiar with less-often deployed equipment.



Year in Review



Incident Management Team Exercises

Incident management team exercises were conducted as in-person events, virtually, and a hybrid mix of the two, due to the continuing response to COVID-19. Member Company IMTs refined their virtual procedures using Microsoft Teams to include personnel from multiple locations in the US supporting a reduced in-person staff in the Incident Command Post. As a result of their success, hybrid exercises are anticipated to continue in 2022.

U.S. Army Exercise Vigilant Shield

In the spring of 2021, ACS supported U.S. Army Exercise Vigilant Shield. This exercise was a huge success and proved extremely beneficial to both ACS and the 10th Special Forces Group personnel who participated. Between February and April 2021, advance team members made three visits to the North Slope to select an appropriate site and practice the tactics necessary to remove thick, late-season ice blocks. Due to the nature of their proposed operation (under-ice diving), it was imperative that the blocks be extracted in single, clean pieces. The final visit culminated in their deployment exercise and ice dives.





U.S. Naval Academy Support

In the summer of 2021, ACS hosted U.S. Naval Academy researchers on two field projects consisting of stream flow measurements and aerial mapping with unmanned aircraft. We identified other mutually beneficial projects for collaboration in the future, including shallow water river drift buoys, better nearshore modeling data, improved UAS operations, and river current flow measurement. Several commercially available river drift buoys were compared with units fabricated by ACS and the Navy personnel.







NPREP Deployments

The National Preparedness for Response Exercise Program (NPREP) reports for 2021 represented a wide variety of incidents and deployment exercises. A total of 59 reports were completed with almost 20% from actual events. Many unique lessons were captured, such as methods to remove oil without damaging a gravel runway surface; practicing moving ATVs to remote beach sites for shoreline cleanup; recording the noise levels from UAS at altitudes; operation of the Heliskimmer system; and improvements in field-wide oil spill communications. These reports are stored in a shared location to benefit the entire organization.



Learn to Return Training

2021 marked the return of the very popular Learn to Return courses to the North Slope. Two outstanding classes were conducted: Wilderness Medicine and Swift Water Survival. Wilderness Medicine presented the students with realistic scenarios to learn medical training for remote operations. Swift Water Survival gave the students an opportunity to practice critical skills for safely operating in remote river environments.



New Vessel Training and Break-In

During the 2021 open water season, many training events were conducted to learn the vessel's capabilities. Several NPREP reports were completed by employees documenting different tactics and valuable lessons learned about the vessel. Tactics exercised included R-20 (U-boom arms with open apex) and R-32A (free skimming) to become comfortable with the boat's handling characteristics. The vessel proved to be extremely maneuverable and capable. Minor additions and modifications are planned that will make the skimmer and boom deployment easier and streamline the securing of the minibarges.



2022 and Beyond

Vessel Replacement Program

With the support of the Member Companies, ACS has begun construction of Hull #2, the second in the Point Class Munson 48' Landing Craft. Building and sea trials will continue through 2022, with the anticipated delivery after the end of open-water season in October 2022.

UAS Program Goals and BVLOS

ACS' unmanned aircraft program continues to improve and add capabilities. In the spring of 2021, we acquired a FoxTech Great Shark 3-meter fixed-wing VTOL aircraft with a 30x zoom camera.

The Great Shark was selected for its high payload and long duration capability, both of which are necessary for Beyond Visual Line of Sight operation. This year we formed a great partnership with Kansas State University, which operates five Great Sharks in their UAS program. In November 2021, the Training and Communications Specialists traveled to Salina, KS, for a one-week intensive training class on operating the Great Shark.





Transitions and Rebuilding

ACS and the NSSRT are currently in a growth and rebuilding period. This year marks the beginning of an anticipated steady transition of ACS employees and longtime members of the NSSRT. By investing in our people through employee professional development training, internal promotions, and NSSRT recruiting efforts, we are preparing the next generation of North Slope spill responders to seamlessly transition and carry us forward.





Professional Development

Several types of Professional Development training classes were held in 2021 to prepare for anticipated employee transitions in the next few years. Managers and Supervisors developed content related to ACS business, including: Cost Sharing Principles; Mutual Aid Agreement; Membership, Boards and Committees; Agency Interactions; C-Plan Development; Equipment Replacement and Budgeting; Market Analysis Best Practices; and HSE Manual and Program Overview. Diane Decker Coaching was hired to conduct several professional development and soft skills classes. *Everything DiSC Workshops* were made available to all employees to learn more about their individual work style and approaches to interacting with others. The Employee Engagement Discussions were broadened to reach more employees in every department. Current and future staffing levels are being evaluated for each department to help match company needs with employee goals.

Safety and Environmental Innovations

ACS rolled out Safe Actions Recognition Program (SARP) 2.0! Developed by the Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Committee, it is an improvement to the SARP which was introduced 16 years ago. SARP 2.0 recognizes that many ACS personnel are lone workers and have nobody available to observe or assist them. The new program allows self-reporting of Safe Actions. In addition, the program was broadened to include Health, Safety and Environmental topics and innovations. Following the roll out, this program was introduced to one of the Member Company operating fields who adopted its format to improve their own employee safety and involvement efforts. Additional safety and health innovations included improved traction devices and anti-fogging safety glasses, which are critical for all employees who need to wear face masks for COVID-19 protection and safety glasses while driving or operating equipment. The HSE Committee continues to work with the employees to find and test protective equipment and other tools to enhance safety both at work and at home.

Continued Participation in Regulatory and Resource Agency Activities

A variety of in-person, virtual and hybrid meetings were conducted in 2021, including Wildlife Protection Guidelines (WPG) training; North Slope Marine Mammal Response Working Group Meeting; Alaska Regional Response Team Meeting; Arctic and Western Alaska (AWA) Area Committee Meeting; and the AWA Training and Geographic Response Strategies Subcommittees. ACS worked with Alaska Department of Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to include the new WPG into Revision 15 of the Technical Manual. Area Familiarization visits were held with Alaska Marine Exchange, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, and member company representatives.





WILDLIFE PROTECTION **GUIDELINES** FOR OIL SPILL RESPONSE IN ALASKA



Alaska Regional Response Tea lildlife Protection Con

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