

# Communities brace for effects of oil Spill changes lives

by Jennifer Gordon

Tundra Times reporter

As the first signs of oil from the *Exxon Valdez* come to shore on Kodiak Island and the Kenai Peninsula, residents of the area are looking at communities already hit and bracing for the worst.

David Wakefield, city clerk for Port Lions on Kodiak Island, said the people in the village have already built two 750-foot sections of log boom to protect a cove where most of the area's red salmon spawn. Wakefield said residents plan to build a second boom 3,000 feet in length to protect Settler's Cove.

People from the city of Kodiak came to Port Lions to show them how to staple the logs together to make the booms, but Wakefield said he hadn't seen any state or oil company officials come in to the town.

Andy Anderson, president of the Ouzinkie Native Corp., said he is upset that he hasn't seen any officials

(Continued on Page Four)

# • Leaders say few officials visit villages

(Continued from Page One)

in Ouzinkie either. He said all the Exxon, VECO and Alaska Department of Fish and Game officials are stationed in the city of Kodiak, and even though the distance between the two communities is only about 20 air miles, the only contact with officials has been over the phone.

Anderson said that Ouzinkie was almost ready for the oil. Now, he said, it is a matter of waiting for someone to give them further instructions. He said that so far he has been bumped from one contact person to another to get instructions. The new contact person is located in Anchorage.

"We don't know what to think anymore," he said.

Signs of the oil have already been spotted on Ouzinkie's shores. A dead, oil covered duck was found in the area early last week, and Anderson said that at least one tar ball had washed to shore.

Anderson said he is convinced there is oil in Marmot Bay, which separates Kodiak Island from Afognak Island. But Anderson added that weather has kept officials from confirming the reports.

The biggest problem in Ouzinkie, Anderson said, is that boats in the area don't have insurance to cover oil spill cleanup. The owners of the boats who work on the spill will pay out of their pockets if the boats are damaged, he said.

"We've never been in this situation before," said Anderson.

Bud Cassidy, Kodiak borough resource manager, said Kodiak has prioritized the areas of most concern because of the limited amount of

boom. He said an Emergency Management Team was set up, including the Kodiak city mayor, the city manager, the borough manager and a Coast Guard representative. There are no representatives of Port Lions and Ouzinkie in the Emergency Management Team, he said.

Cassidy said federal and state officials had taken over much of the operation in Kodiak. Absorbent booms were put on boats located between high priority areas around Kodiak Island, he said, and helicopters are flying above the area to spot any incoming oil.

Cassidy said Shuyak Island, just north of Afognak Island, had already gotten oil mousse on its beaches, but that it was fairly easy to clean up. The mousse is wind-blown oil, whipped into a foamy consistency.

In Tatitlek, about 35 miles south of Valdez, shock is turning into anger as questions go unanswered. Gary Kompkoff, president of the Tatitlek Indian Reorganization Act council, said he is not satisfied with the amount of attention the village has had since the spill.

Kompkoff said many of the mussels, clams and starfish under the dock and on the beaches are dying, but ADF&G officials told him the shellfish died from the extreme cold this winter. (See related story by Frances Lambert-Durkik, page one.)

Kompkoff said ADF&G told villagers not to harvest any sea life until test results had come back. He said, however, that seeing all the marine life dying had stopped harvests anyway.

"They can come in all day and say

---

*In Tatitlek, about 35 miles south of Valdez, shock is turning into anger as questions go unanswered.*

---



# Villagers just want to get back to normal

(Continued from Page Four)

it is OK, but they aren't the ones using it."

Kompkoff said villagers in Tatitlek were asked to file claims for loss of their subsistence foods, but money could not replace their way of life.

"How do you put a monetary amount on a lifestyle?" he asked. "This will change our lives for a few years — maybe longer."

Kompkoff said he wouldn't be satisfied until an in-depth study was done on Tatitlek's shores. Only then, he said, will villagers be certain that their resources are safe.

"Getting back to normal — that's all we want," he said.

Paul Costello, land manager for Tatitlek, said the enormity of the situation didn't hit the village until the herring started to spawn off Tatitlek's beach. He said the fish looked clean, but people were afraid to harvest it.

The herring harvest is important for Tatitlek as a subsistence food and because many of the people commercial fish.

Costello said that for people living in the city, the situation would be similar to the aspirin scare a few years ago.

"It is like a mad man hit every store in Fairbanks with strychnine and we knew that it was poisoned," he said, adding that people would have to look elsewhere for food.

In Chenega Bay, on Evans Island south of Whittier in Prince William Sound, things have quieted down a bit, said Darrell Totemoff, administrative assistant for the Chenega Bay Village Council. The village still has many more people than its normal size of 80 residents, however.

Totemoff said most of the attention in the area has been focused on the San Juan Fishery, located in Sawmill Bay on Evans Island. He said the booms protect the village quite a bit, but small tar balls have been found on the beach.

One of the changes from the spill that Totemoff said he had noticed is an increasing amount of mail. He said the village has received letters ranging from a beautiful card with seals on the front and sympathy inside, to one from a man who said the villagers should dump barrels of dead fish on Exxon stations to prove their point.

Totemoff said he had heard about Exxon's plan to clean the shores with high pressure water by the end of summer. He said it looks pretty tough, but he wished them the best of luck.

Chenega Bay has also noticed dead shellfish in the area. Totemoff said that mussels are falling off the dock at the fishery. He said a friend of his walked on the beach at low tide and noticed that the clams, which usually squirt a stream of water as people walk past, are motionless.

Subsistence food has become a precious commodity in the village, said Totemoff. Pulling a halibut steak out of the freezer used to be a normal routine, he said, but now, most people are using the food that has been shipped in and storing traditional foods for special occasions.

Totemoff said that VECO Inc. has signed on some of the people in the village, but it didn't seem that many received jobs. He said the big boats are hired out, but not many of the little skiffs.

Dr. Wayne Donaldson, an ADF&G biologist who studies shellfish in the sound, said he believes the shellfish that have been seen dead are a result of the severe cold this winter. He said the ones on the docks, which are exposed at low tide, don't get any pro-

tection from the cold. The mussels and clams in the sand are more insulated, he said.

A similar situation, Donaldson said, was noticed on Kodiak Island before the spill occurred.

Dr. Stan "Jeep" Rice, coordinator of fisheries impact for ADF&G, said the department hopes to allay some of the fear that has arisen since the spill.

"Everyone is looking for bad things right now," he said.

Rice also said the mussels from Tatitlek's dock looked like winter kill. He said the insides were clean and looked as though they had been empty for some time.

ADF&G is receiving a number of dead animals, Rice said, and some of them have not been killed by the oil. He said sometimes it is hard to tell if the animal died from the oil or natural causes.

A chemical analysis can show how much toxicity the animal received, but sometimes, Rice said, it is still hard to tell if the amount of toxicity was enough to kill the animal.

---

*'How do you put a monetary amount on a lifestyle? This will change our lives for a few years — maybe longer.'*

---

—Gary Kompkoff

---