

Attracting visitors to the scenic wonders of Prince William Sound

The northernmost waters of Prince William Sound provide some of the most spectacular images available to the Alaskan traveler.

Formed in 1985, the Prince William Sound Tourism Coalition promotes the sound with the nation's traveling public. The immediate objective of the coalition was to launch a nationwide television and radio campaign.

The coalition has 73 members, a membership made up mainly of tour and charter boat operators, lodge, hotel and

recovering from the lingering economic impact resulting from the spill. It immediately provided a marketing mechanism as well as a vehicle for educating its membership on the damage being continually wrought by a disaster that wouldn't go away.

Today the coalition continues to provide tangible assistance to its members by fulfilling the need for cooperative marketing efforts. No undertaking is out of the question. Recently, the coalition accompanied travel writers on forays into the region. One effort meant tagging along by kayak with a travel writer for Power and Motor Yacht Magazine to a birthday party on a remote island to meet the mayor of Cordova.

Members know intuitively that they must organize to promote their unique travel destination. But just as strong is their concern for the preservation of the sound's world-class marine environs.

In addition to other promotional efforts, the group produces a



Cordova, located on the east side of Prince William Sound, is an Alaskan post card and home to a large fishing fleet that harvests the sound's abundant seafood.

gether and learn about matters important to the visitor industry and to the region. In fact, many participants of this annual meeting represent PWSCORE (Prince William Sound Communities Organized to Restore the Sound), the PWS Recreation Project, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the PWS Economic Development Council, among others.

This year's convention will highlight Cordova and the theme is "Owners and Users Working Together in the Sound." Fees are \$275 (\$295 after 9/24) for members and \$325 (\$355 after 9/24) for non-members. Costs for berths are additional and they range from \$38 to \$54. Railroad and ferry costs are included in registration fees, as are meals.

Those traveling from Anchorage will depart via Gray Line of Alaska motorcoach at 6 AM on Thursday, October 14 from the Alaska Railroad Depot and will return Saturday, October 16 on the Alaska Railroad at 7 PM. Earlier return arrangements are possible.

Some highlights of note at this year's annual meeting will be presentations by Chuck Totemoff of the Chenega Corporation, Susan Rutherford of the Prince William Sound Land Managers Recreation Planning Group, the Whittier Access Project, and Jack Sinclair of the Prince William Sound Marine Park Plan.

A large feather in the

coalition's cap is the new Prince William Sound Visitor Center which opened for business on August 6. Sponsored by the coalition, the program created three new jobs in the region and provides a comprehensive source of information about the sound. The visitor center will be open until September 15 and then will reopen on May 15, coinciding with the summer train schedule.

Coalition members place their business' informational brochures at the visitor center. The coalition also sells videos, baseball caps, T-shirts and books.

For further information regarding the activities of the Prince William Sound Tourism Coalition, please write to **Karen Kroon**, Executive Director, P. O. Box 243044, Anchorage, Alaska 99524-3044 or you can call her at 344-1693. ■



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other business owners; Native corporations; municipalities; and civic-minded individuals. Activities of the coalition are overseen by a 14-member board of directors. Two board seats are dedicated to each of the three communities of Cordova, Whittier and Valdez. Additionally, two director seats are reserved for the Alaska Native corporations in the sound. The remaining six seats are at-large and represent a broad cross-section of those businesses with an interest in maintaining the economic viability of the visitor industry in the region. Those directors holding at-large board seats typically represent tour and travel companies, as well as hotels, doing business in the sound.

The coalition launched a national awareness campaign to let the traveling public know that only 10% of the sound was oiled during the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. For the most part Alaskans were aware of this, but this fact was clouded elsewhere by the unending negative images sent worldwide. The coalition has worked diligently to counter the unparalleled public relations battering the region received in the spill's aftermath.

Fulfilling the mission of the coalition became a rallying point for many business owners bent on



Prince William Sound Tourism Coalition photo

travel guide and organizes an annual regatta in late spring that has proven to be a major success (see related article.) Eagle Quality Centers is the major sponsor of the regatta. Eagle Quality Centers was joined by Pepsi in meeting the expenses of this ambitious, but effective, effort.

The coalition will be hosting its annual convention October 14 - 16 on board the state's MV Tustumena. The convention is held in a different location within the sound every year. This annual gathering is viewed as an opportunity to get to



Prince William Sound Tourism Coalition photo

Passengers view spectacular glacier scenery in College Fjord on day cruises from Whittier aboard the high-speed catamaran Klondike. Oil from the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill never penetrated into the frigid fjord waters. (Post oil spill photo)



Sue Miller, Visitor Center employee and Karen Kroon, executive director of Prince William Sound Coalition, in front of the new Visitor Center.

