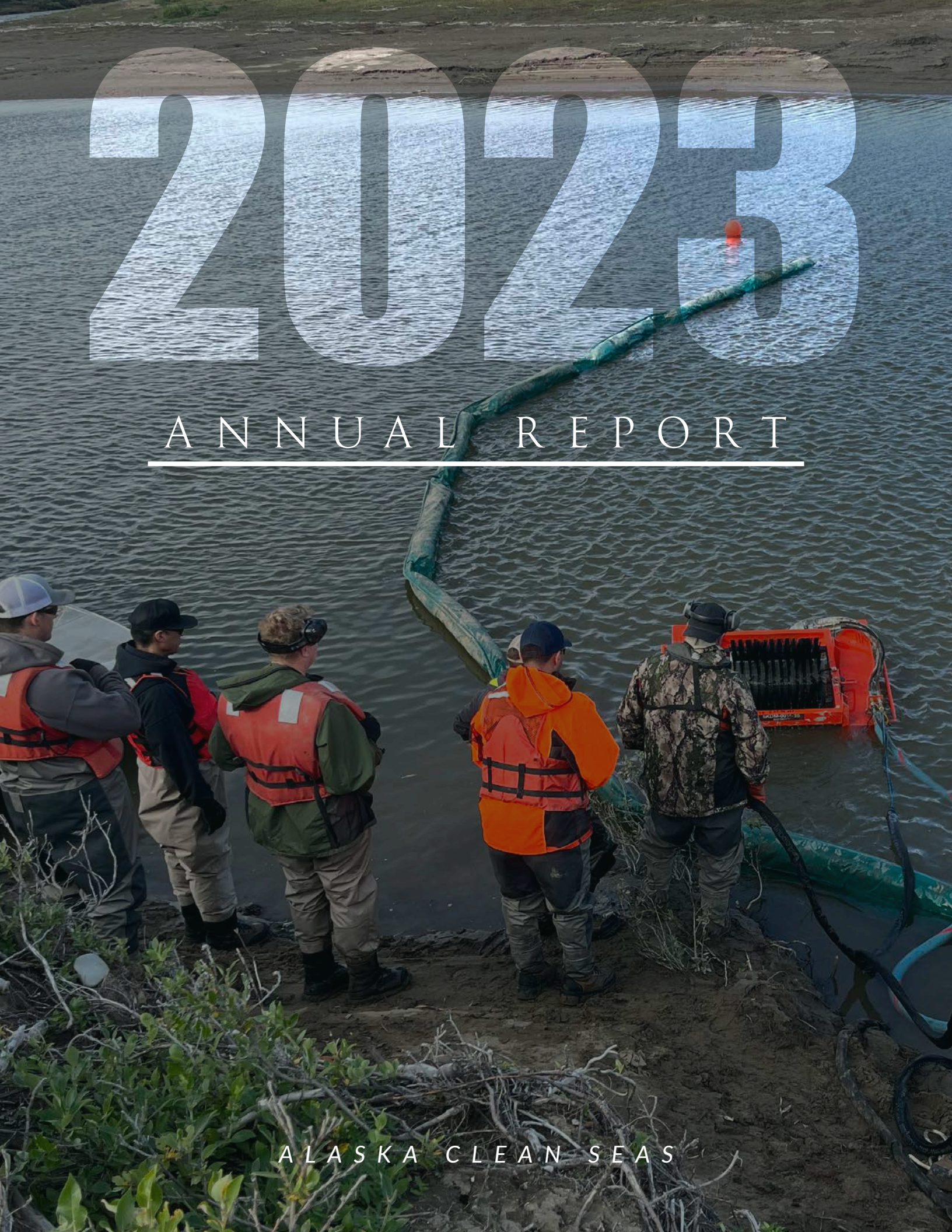

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

ALASKA CLEAN SEAS

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Photo: The Underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) is a versatile tool capable of tracking and delineating oil under ice or on the seafloor. Additionally, it can manipulate containment and recovery equipment subsurface.

YEAR IN REVIEW: TRAINING

WILDERNESS MEDICINE

We work in a remote area and must rely on the resources at hand. Learn To Return traveled to Prudhoe Bay to provide a Wilderness Medicine course. This training prepares field personnel for managing trauma and sickness in remote work locations where help is significantly delayed.

North Slope Spill Response Team (NSSRT) members trained for two days to respond to incidents such as bear attacks, helicopter crashes, snowmachine impacts and vehicle rollovers.

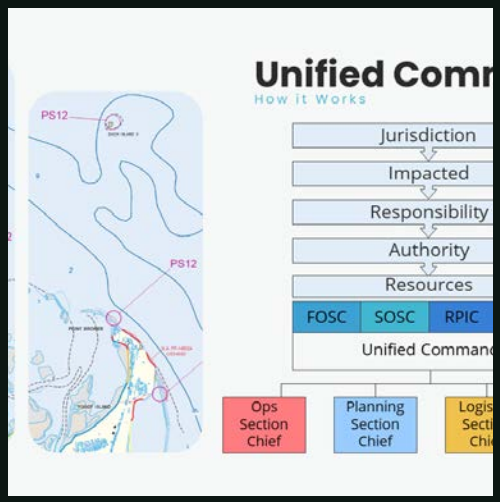
ACS ICS-300 COURSE

ACS supports member company Incident Management Teams during a response and with Incident Command System training prior to an incident. ACS developed an ICS-300 course whose scenarios are based in Prudhoe Bay in an effort to offer a course that addresses the unique environment of the North Slope. The course prepares our members for success by including the ACS Technical Manual, North Slope resource ordering considerations, Mutual Aid, and other unique environmental operational requirements.

ACRT TRAINING

Summer Auxiliary Contract Response Team (ACRT) training occurred over four days in August. Personnel from the ACRT, Alaska Chadux Network, and the United States Coast Guard (USCG) learned about spill site safety, operated skimmers in oil, trained on bear deterrence and wildlife reconnaissance and learned basic spill response tactics.

The training included multiple hands-on practical field deployments on land, river, and near shore response equipment and tactics.



YEAR IN REVIEW: WILDLIFE

AK ZOO

Representatives from the Alaska Zoo, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and ACS conducted training in Prudhoe Bay on deploying the polar bear holding module, trap, and washing station. The deployment of this equipment is complex and requires coordination.

Following the exercise, the team engaged in discussions regarding ideas and techniques for potentially capturing polar bears while they are swimming.

INTERNATIONAL BIRD RESCUE

In 2023, experts from IBR returned to conduct Bird Capture and Stabilization training for ACS employees, NSSRT personnel, and member company representatives.

This one-day course offers a comprehensive overview of an oiled wildlife rehabilitation program and provides participants with hands-on experience deploying the Wildlife Stabilization Center. The training also includes practical exercises in bird capture, intake procedures, and documentation techniques.

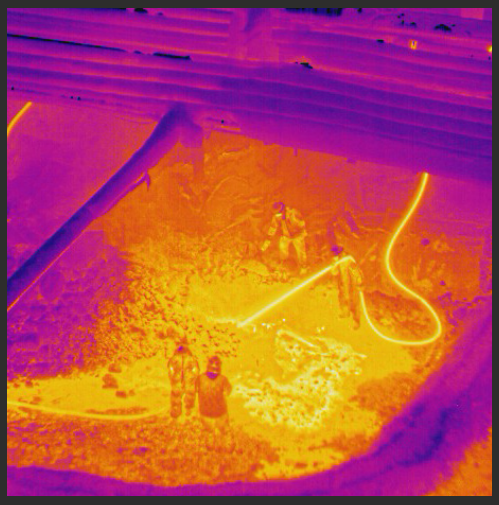
POLAR BEAR DEN SURVEY

Eni Petroleum and the Wildlife Conservation Society collaborated on a research project to establish the noise impact of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) on denning polar bears. Currently, crewed fixed-wing propeller aircraft are employed for conducting polar bear den overflight surveys. UAVs mitigate risks to personnel while minimizing potential noise disturbance to denning polar bears caused by overflying aircraft. This research is proposed to continue in 2024.

YEAR IN REVIEW: EVENTS

BSEE DRILL

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) conducted an unannounced exercise for Eni Nikaitchuq, simulating a subsea pipeline rupture under the sea ice between Spy Island Drillsite and Oliktok Point. Eni, NSSRT, and ACS responders executed tactics to meet detection, containment, recovery, and wildlife response objectives. Steam devices developed by ACS following BSEE R&D Project 1082 were employed to enhance recovery tactics.



FLIR ON SPILLS

Forward Looking Infrared imaging or FLIR is an important tool in the ACS response toolbox. FLIR may be used to detect and assess the extent of released fluids and determine the effectiveness of cleanup activities on a spill.

FLIR has a wide range of applications, including wildlife reconnaissance, polar bear den detection, delineation of spills on tundra and snow, and inspections of infrastructure and equipment.

MILNE POINT

The Milne Point, our second Point Class vessel, was completed this year. ACS personnel performed sea trials with Munson in early summer.

Following the sea trials, Munson made a few minor adjustments before the vessel was transported on a barge to Prudhoe Bay. The Point McIntyre and the Milne Point are versatile nearshore landing craft that will significantly enhance ACS's marine response capabilities.

INNOVATIONS

GOVERNOR'S SAFETY CONFERENCE

Mechanics from ACS Base and the Marine Department attended the 41st Annual Alaska Governor's Safety and Health Conference, where they were honored with two Governor's Innovation Awards.

The awards were given for the design and fabrication of a vessel guardrail system, which enables vessel repairs during the off-season without requiring scaffolding, and a snow dump trailer that eliminates heavy lifting for responders during a spill.

VESSEL GUARDRAIL SYSTEM

During the winter season, vessel maintenance and modifications take place at A4W1. The vessels' height when on their trailers typically necessitates the construction of scaffolding, increasing both time and expenses for the job.

To address this issue, the Marine Department has designed an OSHA-compliant guardrail system that can be directly installed on the vessel as needed. This enables work to be conducted safely and in a more cost-effective manner.

SNOW-DUMP TRAILER

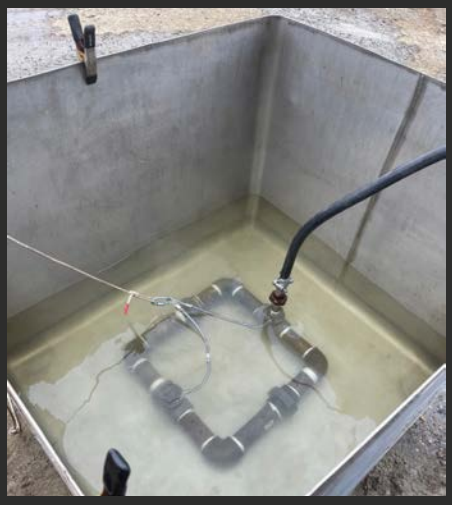
ACS employs ski-equipped trailers to recover contaminated snow in areas that larger equipment cannot access. Earlier versions of these trailers required multiple individuals to lift a snow-filled bin and manually dump it, posing a risk of injury to our responders.

To address this, a custom snow-dump trailer was designed and fabricated. Featuring a spring-assisted hinged dump mechanism, this trailer can be operated by a single person.

TACTICS & EQUIPMENT DEVELOPMENT

Our ACS team members consistently develop solutions that improve the effectiveness, capabilities, and safe operation of our tactics and equipment.

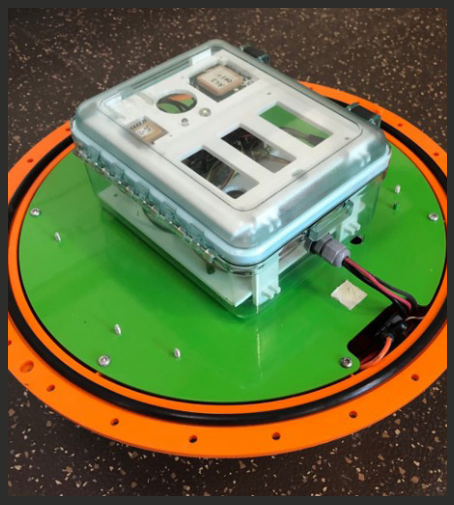
The Tactics and Equipment Development Committee was established to capture innovative ideas and provide the necessary support and structure to translate them into operational response improvements.



Snow melters play a crucial role in processing large volumes of contaminated snow for disposal. Traditionally, these units have been large and require heavy equipment for transportation and support.

To address this, the committee is developing smaller, portable units that can be easily deployed to remote locations for smaller cleanup operations.

In cold weather response, we face constant challenges due to low temperatures. ACS is developing steam attachments for our small portable skimmers to maintain the efficiency of their oleophilic surfaces. Additionally, we are working on steam frames that can be positioned at or below the waterline in sumps or pits in the ice to enhance the recovery of oil under ice.



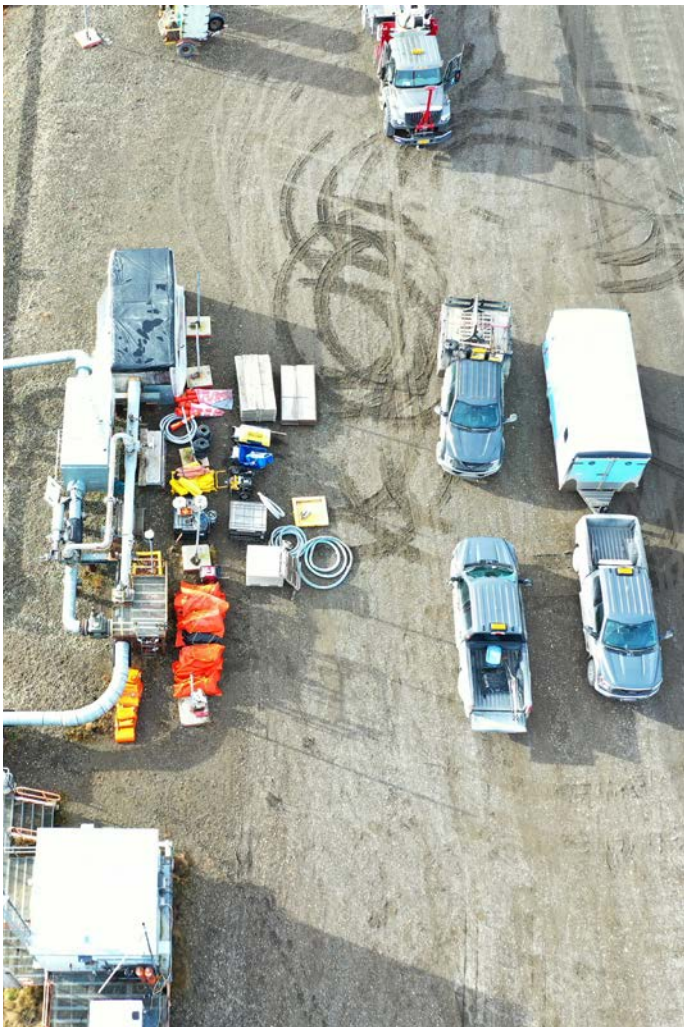
We recently began developing improved oil spill tracking buoys. As part of this effort, we have upgraded our current buoys with advanced electronics capable of supporting additional sensors and cameras. These upgraded buoys can now be maintained in-house, leading to increased efficiency and significant cost savings compared to the maintenance and upkeep of the previous buoy designs.

MUTUAL AID DRILL

This year's Mutual Aid Drill (MAD) was located at RTU-3 where the Badami pipeline ties into the Endicott pipeline. The drill simulated a 1000 barrel crude oil spill from the Pig Trap. ACS personnel and NSSRT members from Badami, Endicott, PBE, PBW, Alyeska, Kuparuk, Milne Point, and Nikaitchuq participated in the exercise, mobilizing personnel and equipment to the RTU-3 pad for staging and deployment. Additional personnel from IBR, ADEC, the US Coast Guard, and Savant Alaska LLC also participated in the event. Containment and recovery groups utilized shore seal boom and skimmers to recover spilled oil, operating from plywood sheets and Mobi-Mats to minimize tundra impact. The wildlife group established the Wildlife Stabilization Center and conducted reconnaissance and hazing activities, along with simulating intake and triage for the birds brought to the Stabilization Center.

Hosted by
Savant Alaska LLC

The remote location of Savant Alaska LLC's Badami field makes it essential to utilize mutual aid for any off-site events.



2024 AND BEYOND

Partnerships are crucial for a successful response community. Utilizing the knowledge and resources of the entire community is essential for our collective success.

In 2024 and beyond, ACS will work to partner with organizations across our industry to enhance effectiveness and achieve cost savings.

The nearshore water depths at the North Slope, particularly between the shoreline and the barrier islands, are extremely shallow and challenging for larger spill response vessels to navigate. Accessing these shorelines for response operations would prove challenging in certain conditions. ACS will work with experts to identify existing charting and remote sensing tools to safely navigate these dynamic waters.

Several OSROs operate in Alaska, each with unique expertise and resource capabilities. Additionally, government agencies and other organizations possess valuable knowledge and could play critical roles in future response efforts. ACS will seek opportunities to share knowledge and training with these organizations. A joint training with US Navy SupSalv has already taken place in early 2024.

Increasing exploration and development activities across the North Slope, coupled with personnel transitions, present ACS with an opportunity to train our future leaders. ACS will prioritize employee development to ensure we continue to provide the best qualified people for the mission.

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