



2023 Oil Spill Task Force Legacy Awardees

(alphabetical by surname)

Catherine Berg, Scientific Support Coordinator (retired), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Response and Restoration

Catherine Berg is a wildlife biologist who joined the Emergency Response Division of NOAA’s Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) in 2013 as the Scientific Support Coordinator (SSC) for Alaska. In that capacity, she served as NOAA’s principal technical adviser to the federal on-scene coordinator during oil and hazmat responses. Catherine was the lead NOAA SSC for 190 incidents since 2013, and also provided support for many incidents outside of Alaska (e.g., Refugio oil spill in California, the *Golden Ray* response in Georgia, several hurricanes in the Caribbean, and the *Argo* in the Great Lakes).

Catherine has also been a strong contributor to the next generation of spill responders, providing training through various NOAA classes (e.g., Science of Oil Spills, Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment Technique), as well as through preparedness exercises and contingency planning activities, including with Canada and Russia.

Prior to joining OR&R, Catherine worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska for 30 years, serving much of that time in the Environmental Contaminants Division, focusing on wildlife response, natural resource damage assessment, and oil spill response issues. In March 2023, on the 24th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez disaster—the first oil spill that Catherine responded to—NOAA and the Alaska response community bade farewell to Catherine as she retired after 40 years of exemplary federal service. As USCG Capt. Leanne Lusk summarized: “Throughout the years, [Catherine] was integral in training thousands of Coast Guard members on a myriad of preparedness activities and response tactics. Her efforts made a significant impact on the Coast Guard’s readiness in Alaska and throughout the United States as Coast Guard members transferred to other units with the skills they learned. Ms. Berg truly left her mark on our service and for that, we will be forever grateful.”

On the personal side, as someone who loves the Alaska outdoor lifestyle in all seasons, Catherine enjoys cross-country skiing, hiking, fishing, hunting, kayaking, and running—and has recently taken up the game of golf.

Kevin Gardner, President, Western Canada Marina Response

Kevin Gardner has led Western Canada Marine Response (WCMRC) as its president since 2001. Under Mr. Gardner's leadership, WCMRC recently completed the largest-ever expansion of spill response capacity in Canada. The voluntary enhancements include: (a) reduced response times in the Port of Vancouver, now a maximum of two hours, and the Juan de Fuca Strait, now a maximum of six hours, (b) an increase in oil recovery capacity, with completed delivery of 20,000 tonnes of capacity within 36 hours of activation, (c) an increase of shoreline capabilities to treat up to 3,000 m of shoreline/day from the requirement of 500m per day, and lastly, (d) the creation of over 900 Geographic Response Strategies across the coast of British Columbia.

Throughout his work, Kevin has conducted himself with the values of collaboration, leadership, service, and building and sharing knowledge. Kevin has created meaningful avenues for communities to contribute traditional and local knowledge and build upon local preparedness capacity through training and resources provided by WCMRC. The planning, development, and implementation of this enhancement program has spanned more than a decade and would not have been possible without Kevin's commitment to best practices, and commitment to support communities and the environment.

Tim Robertson, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

Tim Robertson emerged as a local leader in advocating on behalf of affected communities in the years following the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. Tim had not set out to create a career in oil spill prevention and response. As the oil from the *Exxon Valdez* spill left Prince William Sound and moved closer to his home in Seldovia, Alaska, he was in the process of launching a new ecotourism business when, instead, he became a spill responder. As a founding board member of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, Tim represented the organization in the negotiated rulemaking following the passage of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. He helped establish the Seldovia Oil Spill (SOS) Team and remains an active volunteer to this day. Tim went on to provide technical expertise and facilitation to a diverse array of clients in Alaska and beyond until his retirement from Nuka Research, which he co-founded in 2004, at the end of last year.

Tim's contributions included developing the first geographic response strategies in Alaska (including the stakeholder-driven approach then used for years), developing methods for analyzing the impact of weather conditions on the ability to respond, estimating the likelihood of saving a drifting ship depending on different wind and wave conditions, and applying response capacity estimates to various response systems.

Currently, Tim serves as a public member of the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council's Environmental Monitoring Committee. Through all his projects, Tim has been a trusted advisor, technical expert, attentive listener, and passionate advocate for the voices of coastal communities.

Liz Wainright, Executive Director, Merchant's Exchange

As Executive Director for the Merchants Exchange for 27 years, Liz provided exceptional leadership in guiding the Exchange and its association membership organizations. In 1998, Liz helped establish the VITALS (Vessel Information Tracking) database, an improvement to an earlier database to help vessel operators meet state standards. In 2022, she oversaw the combination of VITALS with Maritime Fire & Safety Association (MFSA)'s Vessel enrollment form to launch the Marine Activity Reporting & Vessel Information Network (MARVIN), creating a unified database online. Under her leadership, the Exchange maintained strong relationships within the maritime community. She engaged on Columbia River area maritime committees, boards, and workgroups, including, the Lower Columbia River Harbor Safety Committee, the USCG Sector Columbia River Area Maritime Security Advisory Committee, and the Maritime Information Services of North America. She established the Merchant's Exchange Scholarship Fund in 2004, which has since awarded more than \$80,000 in scholarships to students for education in the maritime industry.

As the Executive Director of MFSA, Liz was instrumental in ensuring the delivery of response services by the only combined fire and oil spill response organization in the U.S. She led projects to improve MFSA's VHF Radio Communication System and provide training for the Fire Protection Agencies Advisory Council (FPAAC). She guided MFSA to overcome issues while developing their Master Vessel Oil Spill Response Plan. Liz coordinated with Clean Rivers to obtain grants, enabling the purchase of needed spill response equipment. Collaborating with International Bird Rescue, Clean Rivers, and Oregon agencies, Liz worked to create MFSA's Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Trailer program.

Liz's lifelong dedication and outstanding service to the maritime community has greatly improved both the Pacific Northwest's and our nation's preparedness and response posture for years to come.