

GoAK 2009 PWS/Gore Point Preliminary Cleanup Report

86 volunteers joined GoAK for a 3-day volunteer cleanup from May 15 through 17, removing MD from 50 miles of shoreline in western Prince William Sound from Lighthouse Point in Nellie Juan Bay south to Granite Bay. The volunteers collected 4 tons of marine debris, primarily consisting of discarded fishing nets and other gear. The GoAK crew also participated in the volunteer cleanup and loaded and transported the collected debris as the volunteers gathered it. Altogether, with the later GoAK crew cleanup combined with the volunteer cleanup included, approximately 61 miles of PWS shoreline were cleaned in the summer of 2009.

After the 3-day volunteer cleanup, the 2009 GoAK crew cleanup project focused on the northern shoreline of Montague Island in Zaikof and Rocky Bays. The Montague Island project occurred in two phases. For 13 days, from May 18 through May 30, the GoAK crew cleaned beaches in Zaikof Bay, removing 25 tons of marine debris. From August 14 through August 21, the GoAK crew cleaned beaches along the western shore of Rocky Bay, removing an additional 6 tons of marine debris. Altogether, 31 tons of MD were removed from approximately 11 miles of shoreline in Zaikof and Rocky Bays. Including the volunteer cleanup, approximately 35 tons of marine debris were removed from 61 miles of Prince William Sound beaches, shipped to Whittier, transferred to 40-yard dumpsters, and then trucked to the Anchorage landfill for disposal. Reusable floats, buoys, and fenders were placed in Whittier storage bins and given to the public and commercial fishermen for reuse. In that way, approximately 5% of the total collected PWS marine debris was recycled. Recycling marine debris in Alaska continues to be a difficult and expensive problem.

MD deposits in portions of Zaikof and Rocky Bays averaged nearly 3 tons per mile of shoreline. Debris deposits on the west-central shoreline of PWS were generally much lighter, but unfortunately, there are many illegal net dumps in this area. Removing all the net dumps was beyond the scope of the volunteer cleanup. The net dumps are mostly comprised of discarded setnet gear such as old gillnets, lines, floats, and anchors (see Western PWS Volunteer Cleanup Chart for setnet dump locations). It is likely that 10-15 tons of discarded nets remain along this coast, particularly along the 15 miles of shoreline between Lighthouse Point and Eshamy Bay.

In addition to the Prince William Sound MD cleanup, GoAK, along with volunteers, conducted over 200 miles of marine-debris surveys in northern and eastern Prince William Sound. 500 hours of volunteer time were donated to the MD survey. GoAK and volunteers also visited 12 marine-debris monitoring sites scattered throughout PWS, re-cleaning all of them and cataloging the accumulated marine debris by quantity, type, and photo in an ongoing study of marine-debris accumulation rates. Over 320 volunteer hours were spent on the monitoring project. In total, volunteers contributed 3780 hours to the Prince William Sound portion of the 2009 cleanup and 300 hours supporting the Gore Point cleanup. GoAK board members volunteered an additional 1600 hours.

It appears from 4 years of PWS monitoring data that the composition of newly arriving debris is changing from predominantly commercial fishing debris to a mixture of more common household and industrial plastic debris. Much, if not most, of the newly arriving MD in PWS is oceanic drift from western Pacific countries and is not locally-generated debris.

Gore Point Region

The Gore Point phase of the 2009 marine debris cleanup project started June 6 and continued until July 30. The GoAK crew cleaned approximately 50 miles of beaches along Nuka Passage and on Nuka Island north of Gore Point. They also cleaned 35 miles of exceedingly dirty beaches west of Gore Point from Chugach Bay to the southern entrance of Port Chatham. In addition they cleaned accessible beaches around Perl, Elizabeth and East Chugach Islands. Several beaches on these islands were not completed because of weather and wave conditions, or because the site was so fouled with MD that it could not be completed in the time available. One site on Elizabeth Island in a tidally influenced lake is estimated to have approximately 10 tons of debris in it. In total, 40 tons of MD were removed from 85 miles of shoreline in the Gore Point area. Debris in this area is highly concentrated into dense pockets often being driven hundreds of feet into the surrounding forest. GoAK also re-cleaned the East, West and North Gore Point beaches, while collecting data regarding the composition and accumulation rate of marine debris deposited in the past year.

This entire region directly abuts the Gulf of Alaska and is heavily fouled with commercial fishing debris, particularly heavy nets. In this area, between 50 and 80% of the marine debris by weight and volume removed from beaches during their original cleaning is commercial gear such as nets, lines, floats, buoys and fish totes. The collected MD was hauled to Seward and Homer for ultimate disposal in the Kenai Peninsula Borough landfill. The GoAK crew sorted this debris and recycled useable floats, buoys, fenders, and other gear. In this way, approximately 5% of the total volume of marine debris was recycled by giving it to local artists, commercial fishermen and others that had uses for it.

In addition to MCAF and NOAA funding, Princess Tours, BP, Alyeska Pipeline Company, and dozens of private individuals donated funds to the Gore Point and PWS cleanup projects. Non-federal cash donations in 2009 totaled \$12,300. In-kind cash donations in 2009 were substantial. The Kenai Peninsula Borough, the Cities of Whittier, Homer and Seward all facilitated the cleanup by donating \$6,500 worth of parking, slip fees, wharfage, and launch fees. The Kenai Borough waived landfill fees of \$1,500. Seward, Homer, and Whittier donated harbor facilities and waived fees. Through the course of the summer, 104 volunteers and GoAK members donated over 5380 hours of labor. Volunteers donated \$4,400 worth of food and GoAK donated \$550 worth of food. In addition, 9 charter and private vessels were donated for a total of 82 vessel days worth \$96,000 to transport volunteers, provide support, assist in monitoring projects and survey work, and to haul marine debris. Volunteers donated \$1,200 in parking and tunnel fees.