

GULF RESEARCH PROGRAM

Gulf Alaska Knowledge Exchange: Oil Spill Response, Transformative Recovery, and Proactive Preparedness

Speaker Biographies



Lauren Alexander Augustine

Executive Director, Gulf Research Program, NASEM

Dr. Lauren Alexander Augustine is responsible for overseeing all aspects of management and use of the criminal settlement funds from the Deepwater Horizon disaster that were entrusted with the National Academies by the federal government. Since her tenure at the National Academies began in 2002, Augustine has gained experience working in a variety of roles on a broad range of topics pertaining to water, natural disasters, and resilience. Prior to joining the Gulf Research Program in 2018, she served as director of the Resilient America Program, which supports communities' efforts to build resilience to extreme events using science and diverse stakeholder engagement. In addition, she has formerly served as country director for the African Science Academy Development Initiative, a decade-long program that built scientific capacity in national academies across Africa; as director of the Disasters Roundtable; and as a study director for the Water Science and Technology Board.

Outside of her work at the National Academies, Augustine has served on the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Risk and Resilience; was a member of the Advisory Board for the American Geophysical Union's Thriving Earth Exchange program; and was a juror for two resilience competitions, Rebuild by Design for recovery after Hurricane Sandy and Resilience by Design in San Francisco. She is also a NATO expert for the Civil Protection Group. Augustine earned her B.S. in applied mathematics and systems engineering and her M.S. in environmental planning and policy from the University of Virginia, and her Ph.D. in an interdisciplinary program that combined physical hydrology, geomorphology, and ecology from Harvard University.



Jereme Altendorf

*Associate Director for Arctic Programs and Strategy
Implementation, University of Alaska Anchorage*

U.S. Coast Guard—Retired

Jereme M. Altendorf joined the University of Alaska Anchorage in October 2024 as the Associate Director for Arctic Programs and Strategy Implementation within the Office of Research. In this role, he oversees critical initiatives aimed at advancing research and strategic engagement in the Arctic, fostering collaborative solutions to regional security and environmental challenges, and supporting sustainable development in Alaska and beyond.

Before joining UAA, Mr. Altendorf served at the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies as Chief of the Director's Action Team, where he led cross-functional teams in support of Arctic security policy and strategic initiatives. His experience includes a six-year tenure with U.S. Coast Guard Sector Anchorage as Program Manager for Arctic Operations, where he managed a \$1.2 million annual budget, ensuring regulatory missions were effectively carried out across Alaska's rural areas. He is widely recognized for his expertise in marine environmental protection, specializing in oil and chemical spill planning, preparedness, and response.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Altendorf coordinated U.S. Coast Guard maritime security efforts for major national events, including the 2017 Presidential Inauguration and the 2016 Democratic National Convention. His federal service also includes roles as Training Officer for the Coast Guard's National Strike Force and Hazardous Substance Response Specialist, managing responses to oil and chemical spills in diverse aquatic environments across the United States.

Mr. Altendorf holds a B.S. in Chemistry and Environmental Science from Creighton University, an M.S. in Engineering with a focus on Environmental Engineering from the University of Missouri, and an M.B.A. from George Washington University. He is certified as a Hazardous Material Manager (CHMM) and Project Management Professional (PMP). His career spans over 28 years with various federal agencies, including the U.S. Coast Guard, EPA, and Department of the Interior, where he has contributed to significant environmental projects, policy development, and regulatory enforcement efforts.



Vice Admiral Tom Barrett

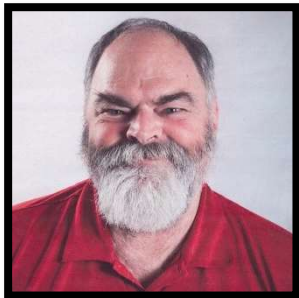
U.S. Coast Guard–Retired

Tom Barrett is former President of the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, operator of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS). He served previously as Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Dept. of Transportation and was the first Administrator of the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. He served 35 years in the U.S. Coast Guard where he commanded Coast Guard operations in Alaska and the North Pacific, later rising to the rank of Vice Admiral and position of Vice Commandant. Vice Admiral Barrett holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology from LeMoyne College and a Juris Doctor with honors from George Washington University. He is a graduate of the Army War College in Carlisle Pennsylvania and Vietnam veteran. He lives in Anchorage, Alaska with his wife Sheila and currently serves as Vice Chair of the Board of the Alaska Community Foundation, and as a Director on the Boards of First National Bank Alaska, Providence Alaska, Commonwealth North, Institute of the North and Alaska USO.



Adriana Bejarano
Environmental Scientist

Dr. Bejarano was previously a Senior Ecotoxicologist at Shell Oil Company and at Research Planning, Inc. She is a scientist with broad experience in computational toxicology, environmental modeling, environmental statistics, and applied eco-toxicology. She has studied the toxicological effects of organic pollutants on marine and estuarine organisms at multiple levels of biological organization (i.e., from hormones to populations), and has worked on integrating scientific knowledge into tools for use in chemical and oil spill preparedness and response. She holds a Ph.D. in Environmental Health Sciences from the University of South Carolina, a M.S. in Marine Sciences from the University of South Carolina, and a B.S. in Marine Biology from the Universidad del Valle, Colombia.



Ken Castner
Former Mayor of Homer, Alaska

Ken. Castner has lived in Homer, Alaska, for 52 years. He recently concluded his third term as the City's mayor. A recognized life-long-learner, he has served on a variety of boards, commissions, and task forces. His vocational involvement in the Alaskan commercial fisheries, and bent towards advocacy, led to his lobbying issues with state and federal governments and agencies.

His work in the field of oil spill prevention and response began with the introduction of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and carried on for many years as a member of one of the two councils that were mandated by the Act. His experience as a "Covid mayor", that served with the memories of living in a spill-affected town, will shape his participation in these workshops.



Tom Coolbaugh
Founder, Coolbaugh Associates, Virginia
ExxonMobil-Retired

Dr. Tom Coolbaugh is a leading expert in oil spill response technology, with over three decades of experience. He retired from ExxonMobil after a 32-year career as Technology and Advocacy Advisor in Emergency Preparedness and Response. His work advanced spill response tools, including dispersants, in-situ burning, and remote sensing technologies. In 2020, Dr. Coolbaugh joined Applied Research Associates, Inc. (ARA) as Program and Facility Manager for Ohmsett – The National Oil Spill Response Research & Renewable Energy Test Facility. He oversaw operations, maintenance, and testing, ensuring high standards for research and training. Dr. Coolbaugh holds a B.A. in Chemistry from Amherst College, a Ph.D. in Chemistry from the California Institute of Technology, and an M.S. in the Management of Technology from NYU. His expertise in chemical technology and oil spill response, combined with his time in leadership at Ohmsett, make him a sought-after expert on oil spill response, marine conservation, and environmental safety.



Karolien Debusschere

Deputy Oil Spill Coordinator, Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office

Karolien Debusschere is the Deputy Coordinator at the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office. She obtained a B.S. in Geography from the University of Ghent, Belgium and a Doctorate Degree in Geomorphology from Louisiana State University. She has over 35 years of experience working on oil spills, starting with the 1989 spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska. She currently chairs the RRT6 Preparedness Committee and has been heavily involved with drafting policy and planning documents dealing with dispersants, in situ burn, bioremediation, and surface washing agents to name a few.



Mike Drieu

Emergency Preparedness and Response Manager, Occidental Petroleum

Mike Drieu is Emergency Preparedness and Response Manager for Occidental Petroleum for technical and management expertise concerning subsea source control, spill response, and natural disaster key resources, procedures, planning, and response technical resources to clarify regulations, expectations, incident response, and management plans and processes. Mike was previously Manager of Response Preparedness – Well CONTAINED for Wild Well Control, Inc., specializing in worldwide firefighting, well control and related engineering, marine engineering, and training services. His expanded position included developing subsea well control procedures and exercises, managing subsea containment equipment for 16 oil and gas operators, and managing the removal of platforms and plugging wells damaged by Hurricanes Rita, Katrina, Ivan, and Ike. Mike retired from the US Coast Guard with 21 years of service, serving as a Commanding Officer of two, including the Pacific Strike Team and Marine Safety Unit Savannah. Mike successfully created a US patent for subsea dispersant injection. Mike has served on the Clean Gulf Associates Technical Operations Group for 17 years, on the Marine Preservation Association Board, and co-chaired the Offshore Operator Committee Risk Based Discharge Work Group. Mike has published 20+ papers throughout his career on various spill-related topics, from exercises to spill research. Mike received his Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in 1984.



Melissa Finucane

Vice President of Science & Innovation, Union of Concerned Scientists

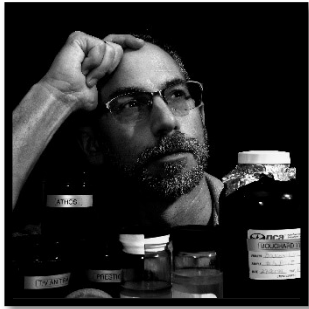
Melissa Finucane is Vice President of Science & Innovation at the Union of Concerned Scientists. In her role, she ensures UCS positions and solutions are informed by robust, independent, and equity-informed scientific analysis, and works to identify leading-edge research opportunities that contribute to the organization's mission. Prior to joining UCS, Dr. Finucane was a senior social and behavioral scientist at the RAND Corporation, where her research focused on understanding the human dimensions of environmental health risks and designing policies that take them into account. She also directed the Consortium for Resilient Gulf Communities, which aims to assess and address community impacts from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.



Ann Hayward Walker

Founder, SEA Consulting Group

Ann Hayward Walker's 40+ year career began as a coastal zone planner – managing coastal areas to balance environmental, economic, human health, and human activities. In 1983, she founded SEA Consulting Group. She has responded to over 200 oil and hazmat incidents, in addition to project work on contingency planning, training, risk communication, incident command system (ICS) for government and other clients. During the Exxon Valdez oil spill (EVOS), as a NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator, she coordinated an expert panel assessment of EVOS oil on subsistence seafood with affected native communities. During the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil spill under subcontract to BP, she provided scientific coordination, risk communication and stakeholder engagement support for aerial dispersants in Houma and New Orleans incident command posts. She was the PI for oil spill-specific risk communication research projects following EVOS and DWH. In 2017, she chaired the National Academies' committee for "Preparing for a Rapid Response to Major Offshore Oil and Gas Spills: A Workshop on Research Needs to Protect the Health and Well-being of Communities" and in 2021 co-authored the research synthesis on "Human Health and Socioeconomic Effects of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico", funded by the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GOMRI). She holds an MBA from Golden Gate University and a BFA in Architecture/Environmental Planning from the University of Hawaii.

**ED Levine**

Science Support Coordinator, NOAA–Retired

Founder, SS&C, LLC

Committee Chair, Gulf-Alaska Knowledge Exchange

Mr. Edwin “ED” Levine currently operates his own consulting company providing training and crisis response. He retired from NOAA after 33 years with the Emergency Response Division. He has participated locally, nationally, and internationally in hundreds of incidents involving oil spills, chemical releases, and many other various emergency responses including the Exxon Valdez and Deepwater Horizon oil spills. He provided planning and preparedness activities including training and participation on numerous committees at all levels of government, industry, and academia. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the International Spill Control Organization (ISCO). Among his many recognitions Mr. Levine received the NOAA Distinguished Career Award, three USCG Meritorious Team Commendations, and the USCG Commander’s Award for Civilian Service. He received a Master of Science degree from the University of Puerto Rico in Marine Sciences and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Boston University in Coastal Environmental Sciences. Most recently he was the Vice-chair of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine publication *Oil in the Sea IV: Inputs, Fates, and Effects* (2022).

**Maureen Lichtveld**

Dean, School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Maureen Lichtveld, a member and Vice Chair of the Council of the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), is Dean of the School of Public Health, the Jonas Salk Chair in Population Health, and Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health at the University of Pittsburgh with over 35 years of expertise in environmental health. As Dean, Dr. Lichtveld oversees seven academic departments, 1,200 students, 165 faculty and 320 staff. Her research focuses on environmentally induced disease, community-engaged environmental epidemiology studies, health disparities, climate and health, environmental health policy, disaster preparedness, public health systems and community resilience. Her expertise in climate and health is locally, nationally, and globally recognized. She is actively involved in Caribbean-wide climate and health research and research training examining the impact of climate change and associated contamination of seafood as a food safety and security issue, and climate adaptation associated with the impact of coastal erosion on forced migration of indigenous nations, including pregnant women with minimal access to health services. She provides technical expertise to several NAM and NASEM committees, including the NAM Grand Challenge in Climate and Health, HMD Boards, Roundtables, and Committees. She is a member of the National Research Council. Dean Lichtveld is the past-Chair of the Consortium of Universities for Global Health. She has co-authored the textbook on Environmental Policy and Public Health. Honors include Johns Hopkins University Society of Scholars, CDC Environmental Health Scientist of the Year, and Woman of the Year of the City of New Orleans for contributions to science.



Gabrielle McGrath

Spill Response Specialist, RPS—Tetrattech

U.S. Coast Guard—Retired

Gabrielle McGrath is a Portfolio Manager and Spill Response Specialist at RPS Ocean Science/TetraTech (ROS) in South Kingstown, Rhode Island. Gabrielle acts as Technical Lead and Project Manager for all response services projects and as Project Manager for the International Projects Group numerical modeling projects. Some project examples include developing Tactical Response Plans and Safety and Security Plans for Deep Water Port applications, acting as Coach, as Evaluator, and as Simulation Cell Member in large industry and government-led full-scale exercises, acting as Response expert for a European Maritime Safety Agency project to assess the oil spill response capabilities in the European Union, led a multi-year project for the US Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) to develop offshore response information for Area Contingency Plans in the Gulf of Mexico, Pacific, and Alaska, and developed numerous Oil Spill Response Plans (OSRP), including the first OSRP approved by BSEE. Gabrielle earned her BS in Biological and Physical Oceanography from the United States Coast Guard Academy and her MS in Physical Oceanography from the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography. Gabrielle served 26 years on Active Duty in the U.S. Coast Guard and retired in 2018 when she joined ROS. During her Coast Guard career, she responded to hundreds of oil spills and hazardous material releases all over the United States, including the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico and the large sunken shipwreck response off of San Francisco Bay, the SS JACOB LUCKENBACH. Gabrielle was a qualified Pollution Responder, Federal On-Scene Coordinator's Representative, Hazardous Materials Technician, Harbor Safety Officer, and Contingency Planning Specialist. She also developed and participated in hundreds of oil spill response and hazardous materials release exercises, ranging from tabletop and equipment deployment drills to full-scale exercises. She is certified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as a Master Exercise Planner. An expert 23-year Incident Command System instructor, Gabrielle is certified as a Type 1 Planning Section Chief, Type 1 Operations Section Chief, and Type 3 Incident Commander. Gabrielle also gained extensive experience in incident response planning as Chair of three Area Committees and led the development of full-scale revisions to the Area Contingency Plans in those areas.



Sandy Ha Nguyen

Founder and Executive Director, Coastal Communities Consulting, Inc.

Sandy Ha Nguyen has over 36 years of experience supporting coast-dependent businesses. As the daughter of a first-generation Vietnamese fisherman, she is fluent in Vietnamese and English and has deep roots in the fishing industry. In response to the 2010 BP Oil Spill, she co-founded Coastal Communities Consulting, Inc. (CCC) to extend and increase her work to provide small business and disaster assistance to commercial fishermen and related rural/coastal businesses across Southeast Louisiana, particularly immigrant and generational American fishermen with limited formal education.

Under her leadership, CCC has assisted over 2,200 clients, securing more than \$50 million in disaster recovery aid at no cost to them. A Tulane School of Business graduate and proud New Orleans East resident, Sandy has earned numerous accolades, including City Business Woman of the Year (2007), ASBDC State Star (2012), and the City of New Orleans “Notable Vietnamese Women” Award. Her most cherished honor was meeting President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama in recognition of her work during Hurricane Katrina.



Mây Nguyễn

Senior Philanthropic Advisor, East Bay Community Foundation

Ms. Mây Thi Nguyen serves as Senior Philanthropic Advisor at the East Bay Community Foundation, bringing two decades of experience in climate and disaster resilience as a community organizer, attorney, and nonprofit leader. She has testified on the Oil Pollution Act before a US Senate Energy Subcommittee, appeared on NBC, NPR, and Louisiana media outlets, and co-authored a BP Oil Spill white paper for the White House Initiative on AAPI. In her community work, Mây authored an environmental law and policy advocacy guide, taught undergraduate courses, and trained over a thousand community members and local officials in environmental protection. Her transformative organizing work with Black, Indigenous, and immigrant fishing communities—which secured recognition and damages for traditional fishing practices—earned UCLA School of Public Policy's Rishwain Social Justice Entrepreneurship Award. Mây holds a JD with a Public Interest Law and Policy certificate from UCLA School of Law, a BA in Political Science from Amherst College, and an MA in International Economics and Southeast Asia Studies from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies.



Kristina Peterson

Cofounder, Lowlander Center

Kristina Peterson co-created the Lowlander Center with coastal communities to address the complex social and environmental impacts of a changing coast. The inclusion of local communities and their vast knowledges is critical for robust collaboration and problem solving. "Think globally, act locally" for just and sustainable future is a guiding principle of her work. As an applied social scientist who has spent her life as a community activist for sustainable just communities mostly through long-term holistic community-based responses to disasters, she has helped create large scale networks of community/regional responses for large national disasters including technological-environmental, acts of racial violence, economic upheaval and weather events. Her years of work within the disaster mitigation field have contributed to the creation of and being a founding board member of both the National Hazards Mitigation Association and the Gender and Disaster Network. Her work includes multiple dimensions of safe, natural and built environments, holistic planning, adaptation and resettlement. She has been working on forms of land stewardship, climate adaptation land trusts and the rematriation of land. Peterson is an advocate for a federally created Department on Climate Adaptation similar to the 1934 Resettlement Administration which would have cabinet status. Peterson is part of the Rising Voices, Changing Coast-National Science Foundation Coastlines and People program, and continuing dialogue with the United Nations rapporteur on internal displacement and justice.



Liesel Ritchie

Professor, Virginia Tech

Dr. Liesel Ritchie is a Professor of Sociology and Coordinator of the Hub for Community Response to Crisis, Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention Community at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. During her career, Liesel has studied a range of disaster events, including the Exxon Valdez, BP Deepwater Horizon, and Wakashio oil spills. Since 2000, her focus has been on community resilience and the social impacts of disasters, with an emphasis on technological hazards and disasters, social capital, and rural renewable resource communities. From 2007 to 2018, Liesel was a researcher at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado Boulder where she served as Assistant Director from 2009 to 2018. She has more than 30 years of experience in research as PI or co-PI on more than 100 projects, working with agencies and organizations including NASA, NIST, NSF, USGS, FEMA, USDA, Feeding America, and NOAA. She has served as a National Institute of Standards and Technology Disaster Resilience Fellow (2014-2018), a member of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine Committee for Measuring Community Resilience (2016-2018), and an Advisory Board member for the National Academies Gulf Research Program (2014-2020).



Donna Schantz

Executive Director, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

Donna Schantz joined the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council's staff in 1999 and was appointed Executive Director in 2016. Prior to this appointment, she served as the organization's Director of Programs. Schantz works with citizens and community leaders to improve environmental protections and the socio-economic well-being of Alaskans, building and maintaining relationships with industry and regulatory representatives. Notable accomplishments include her work towards the passage of legislation for dual escorts in Prince William Sound in 2010, and recognition by the U.S. Coast Guard in 2015 for her professionalism, positive demeanor, open communications, and contributions in support of the Prince William Sound Subarea Committee. Schantz served as an elected member of the Valdez City Council from 2012 to 2014. She was born and raised in New York and graduated from Providence College in Rhode Island with a B.A. in fine arts.



Rich Sears

*Gamechanger, LeadingEnergyNow
Shell-Retired*

Richard A. Sears is a Gamechanger at LeadingEnergyNow. Previously, he was a professor in the Department of Energy Resources Engineering at Stanford University, teaching energy systems, economics, and oil and gas exploration technology. He served on the Ocean Energy Safety Advisory Committee for the U.S. Department of the Interior and chaired the Committee on the Application of Real-Time Monitoring of Offshore Oil and Gas Operations. He was also chief science and technology adviser to the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling. Mr. Sears had a 33-year career with Shell Oil Company and Royal Dutch Shell, gaining extensive domestic and international experience in the upstream oil and gas industry. His roles ranged from exploration geophysicist and economist to vice president for global deepwater technical services. From 2006 to 2009, he was Shell's external research coordinator and a visiting scientist at MIT, managing energy research collaborations and contributing to the MIT Energy Initiative. He has authored numerous publications and holds a BS in physics and an MS in geophysics from Stanford University.



Gary Shigenaka

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration–Retired

Gary Shigenaka is a distinguished marine biologist and former senior scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). With over four decades of experience in environmental science, he has played a pivotal role in the study of oil spill response, marine ecosystems, and coastal resource protection. During his tenure at NOAA, Mr. Shigenaka specialized in the assessment of oil spill impacts on marine life, working on high-profile incidents such as the Exxon Valdez and Deepwater Horizon spills. His research has been instrumental in advancing scientific understanding of how oil pollution affects sensitive habitats, including coral reefs, mangroves, and Arctic ecosystems. Beyond his technical expertise, Mr. Shigenaka is a respected science communicator, known for translating complex environmental challenges into accessible and engaging narratives. He has collaborated with government agencies, academic institutions, and industry leaders to improve preparedness and response strategies for environmental disasters.



Kevin Sligh

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement–Retired

Kevin Sligh was most recently the Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. He joined BSEE in 2022, and was responsible for promoting safety, protecting the environment, and conserving resources through the regulatory oversight and enforcement of energy operations on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf. The Director is supported by senior executives who manage national programs, policies, operations and budgets for regulated oil & gas and offshore wind industries. Most recently, Sligh served as Deputy Regional Administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region V. In this position, he provided oversight for operational aspects of preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities in support of the region's six Great Lakes states, as well as 34 federally recognized tribal nations. Prior to that, Sligh was Deputy Director of the Office of Marine Environmental Response Policy at U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters. There, he served as principal advisor to the Director and oversaw human resources, budget, and acquisitions; national spill response planning and policy; and industry, interagency, and international coordination. Sligh served a seven-month detail at the White House in 2017 as the Director for Response Policy within the National Security Council Resilience Directorate focusing on the Executive Office of the President response during Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. Additional assignments include Chief, Incident Management & Crisis Response Division at U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, and he also provided support to the Coast Guard's Office of Marine Environmental Response as the nation's Area Contingency Plan program manager and worked for Booz Allen Hamilton in support of USCG Headquarters from 2012-2013. Sligh concluded a 24-year active duty and reserve military career, where he gained extensive incident management and oil spill response experience, including serving as Deputy Incident Commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2011, as

well as holding key leadership roles in response to Hurricanes Katrina, Ike and Gustav, and several other various deployments.



Tim Steffek

Senior Policy Advisor, American Petroleum Institute

Timothy Steffek serves as a Senior Policy Advisor at the American Petroleum Institute (API), where he oversees policies, research, and communications related to Emergency Preparedness and Response across various hazards, with a particular focus on oil spill response. Since joining API in 2017, Mr. Steffek has addressed environmental challenges, including issues related to Per- and Poly-Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). His expertise extends to organizing and leading industry workshops, such as the dispersant workshop held at Ohmsett in June 2023, which aimed to enhance understanding of dispersant use among stakeholders. Mr. Steffek has also contributed to discussions on regulatory authorizations for subsea dispersant injection in the Gulf of Mexico, reflecting his commitment to advancing collaborative research and policy initiatives within the oil spill response community.



Elaina Thompson

Executive Director, Islands' Oil Spill Association

Elaina Thompson is the Executive Director of the Islands' Oil Spill Association (IOSA), a nonprofit, volunteer-powered organization dedicated to oil spill response in the remote San Juan Islands of Washington State. IOSA plays a vital role in providing the initial site assessment and immediate response actions needed to mitigate the damage of oil spills until larger resources are mobilized to the incident. In her role, Elaina curates and oversees volunteer response training, she manages and maintains response equipment caches, coordinates community education and prevention programs, and leads IOSA's local response efforts for approximately 15-20 reported pollution incidents each year.

Elaina holds a B.A. from Western Washington University and a U.S. Coast Guard 100 Ton Master License. She has over 20 years of experience in the maritime industry and a decade of expertise in nonprofit management. Her leadership style is influenced by her unique lifestyle as an off-grid caretaker on Vendovi Island Nature Preserve. For the past eight years, she and her husband, along with their now 3-year-old daughter, have thrived in this remote island environment as the only residents, gaining invaluable skills in self-sufficiency and resilience. Elaina began volunteering with IOSA in 2019 and served on the Board of Directors before assuming her current role as Executive Director. She is deeply grateful to lead such a unique nonprofit with such dedicated volunteers who exemplify community-driven environmental stewardship.



Fran Ulmer

Former Lieutenant Governor of Alaska

Associate Fellow, Harvard's Belfer Center

Ms. Frances Ulmer is an associate fellow at Harvard's Belfer Center. She has served in a variety of capacities, including: Chancellor of the University of Alaska Anchorage, Alaska's Lieutenant Governor, state legislator, mayor of Juneau Alaska, professor, lawyer, research director, special advisor to the State Department on the Arctic, Chair of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission and a member of the BP Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill Commission. She has undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Wisconsin, and has been a visiting professor at Stanford, and at Harvard's Institute of Politics. She has previous NAS volunteer service and she has lectured internationally on Arctic issues from Antarctica to the North Pole. Ms. Ulmer served on the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Special Legislative Committee 1989-1990.



Charlie Williams

Shell-Retired

Center for Offshore Safety-Retired

Executive Energy Consultant

Charlie Williams is currently an Executive Consultant - Energy and Safety Management. He retired from the Center for Offshore Safety after nine years as the Executive Director. This was preceded by his retirement from Shell after 40 years with a final position as Global Chief Scientist. He had other senior positions in Shell including VP of Global R&D. Charlie is an honors graduate of the University of Tennessee, an honors graduate of the US Army NCO Academy, and is a Registered Professional Engineer. He has had significant roles in post-Horizon response including the DOI FACA, the Technical Management Committee and Board of the Marine Well Containment Company, and testimony to and as a technical resource to the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon and other similar Committees. Charlie has also served on the NAS Marine Board, NAS GRP including the GOES Board, and other study teams and focused events. He is a career long member of SPE and is recipient of the SPE Robert Earl McConnell Award recognizing beneficial service to mankind by engineers, the SPE Region Award for distinguished contributions to HSE, and is a Distinguished Member of SPE. Charlie is also the recipient of the OTC Special Citation, the Offshore Energy Center – Industry Pioneer Award, and US Department of Interior Corporate Citizenship Award. His offshore hurricane recovery project has been awarded the NOIA "Safety in the Seas Award", the UK Energy Institute Award for Technology, and the Offshore Engineering Project of the Year.



Anne Zink

Senior Fellow, Yale School of Public Health

Dr. Anne Zink is a physician and public health leader known for her innovative healthcare strategies. She earned her medical degree from Stanford University and trained in emergency medicine at the University of Utah. Before entering public health, she served as the Emergency Department Medical Director at Mat-Su Regional Medical Center in Alaska. Appointed as Alaska's Chief Medical Officer in 2019, Dr. Zink led the state's COVID-19 response, achieving high vaccination rates and low mortality. She also played a key role in restructuring Alaska's health agencies and improving mental health services. In 2022, she became the 80th president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), focusing on health data integration. In 2024, Dr. Zink joined the Yale School of Public Health as a Lecturer and Senior Fellow in Health Policy and Management. She continues to practice emergency medicine, ensuring her policy work remains rooted in clinical care.