

## GULF RESEARCH PROGRAM

**Evaluating Socio-economic Impacts of Oil Spills,  
Advancing Transformative Recovery, and Enhancing Proactive Preparedness**

### Speaker Biographies



**Dr. Sarah Allan**  
*Toxicologist, NOAA*

Dr. Sarah Allan is a Toxicologist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Response and Restoration. She is the Alaska Regional Resource Coordinator for the NOAA Assessment and Restoration Division and leads Natural Resource Damage Assessments for oil and chemical spills and contaminated waste sites in Alaska and throughout the nation. Dr. Allan also leads research on oil chemistry and toxicology and works with a diversity of partners on initiatives aimed at improving preparedness for oil spill response, damage assessment, and restoration, with a focus on Arctic and sub-Arctic marine environments. Her technical background includes interdisciplinary primary research and applied science involving contaminant bioavailability, mixture toxicity, environmental and analytical chemistry, risk assessment, and aquatic ecotoxicology at contaminated sites and oil spills. She holds degrees in Marine Sciences and Marine Biology from the Universidad Católica del Norte in Chile and a Ph.D. in Toxicology from Oregon State University.



**Commander Jereme M. Altendorf**  
*Commander, US Coast Guard, Ret.*  
*Chief, Director's Action Team, Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies*

Commander Jereme M. Altendorf joined the Ted Stevens Center on November 15, 2023, as the Arctic Policy Implementation Specialist. Prior to coming to the Ted Stevens Center, he was assigned to Sector Anchorage where he was the program manager for Sector Anchorage's Arctic Operations where he managed a \$1.2M annual budget that ensured Coast Guard regulatory missions were completed throughout rural Alaska. CDR Altendorf is also a subject matter expert with regards marine environmental protection, specifically oil and chemical spill planning,

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preparedness, and response. Before his time in Alaska, CDR Altendorf coordinated the US Coast Guard's Maritime Security efforts for the 2017 58th Presidential Inauguration in Washington, DC, and the 2016 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, PA. He served as the Training Officer for the Coast Guard's National Strike Force Atlantic Strike Team, Hazardous Substance Response Specialist for the Strike Force Coordination Center, and Operations Officer for the Pacific Strike Team.

CDR Altendorf graduated from Creighton University with a B.S. in Chemistry and Environmental Science. He went on to get a Master's in Engineering, with an emphasis in Environmental Engineering, from the University of Missouri and a M.B.A. from George Washington University and is a Certified Hazardous Material Manager (CHMM) and Project Management Professional (PMP). He has spent over 20 years working for various agencies of the federal government (EPA, Coast Guard and Dept. of the Interior) regulating the actions of the public and private sector as it relates to the handling of hazardous waste, managed million-dollar environmental Superfund and oil spill cleanup projects, assisted in the investigation and prosecution of environmental civil and criminal cases, and responded to all types of oil and chemical spills in rivers, bays, and oceans.



**Torie Baker**

*Associate Professor and Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program,  
University of Alaska Fairbanks (retired)*

Torie Baker is a veteran Alaska commercial fisherman and a retired university fisheries extension educator. She has captained her own fishing vessel since 1995, and currently harvests halibut and black cod in the Gulf of Alaska. She arrived in Alaska in 1988, joining the herring fisheries in the small coastal community of Cordova where she resides today. Eight months later the Prince William Sound region were thrust into the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill aftermath. Baker spent 130 days on the cleanup, crewed aboard a pink salmon seiner and that September walked salmon streams enumerating spawning activity for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Post spill, Baker chaired a local stakeholder group for several years focused on multi-year ecological research of injured fisheries resources and helped secure \$14 million in funding from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Council. Baker served as vice president of Cordova District Fishermen United, was an Exxon Valdez litigant and represented commercial fishing on a variety of advisory councils throughout the PWS region. In 2003, she became faculty at the University of Alaska Fairbanks for 17 years focusing on marine safety training, fisheries business assistance and workforce health research. Baker also responded to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Gulf spill assisting Mississippi Alabama Sea Grant in their efforts to inform local communities, state agencies and policy makers regarding oil spill lessons learned. Today she continues as a long time participant and trainer for the PWS fishing vessel oil spill response network coordinated by Alyeska Pipeline oil shippers and the State of Alaska. She is a US Coast Guard certified marine safety instructor for the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association.

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**Sheri Buretta**

*Chairman of the Board, Chugach Alaska Corporation*

Sheri Buretta serves as the full time Chairman of the Board for the Chugach Alaska Corporation and has served on the Alaska Federation of Natives Board since 1998. Sheri is the Board Treasurer for the Tatitlek Corporation and is the Treasurer of the Russian Orthodox Sacred Sites in Alaska, Inc and a Vice Chairman and Director of the Nudlaghi Silver Salmon Camp, and alternate Director for the Native American Contractors Association. Previously, Sheri served as a regent and Chair for the University of Alaska and has served on the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Advisory Committee. She was also a Director for Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council from 1999 to 2012. Sheri was the Director for the ANSCA Regional Association, and she was President from 2004 to 2008.



**Dr. David Daniel**

*Division Committee Chair, Gulf Research Program, NASEM  
President Emeritus, The University of Texas at Dallas*

Dr. David Daniel is an engineering consultant in Dallas, Texas, is President Emeritus of The University of Texas at Dallas, and formerly served as Deputy Chancellor and Chief Operating Office of The University of Texas System. Previously, he was Dean of Engineering at the University of Illinois. Earlier, Dr. Daniel was L.B. Meaders Professor of Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin where he taught for 15 years. Dr. Daniel has conducted research in the area of geoenvironmental engineering, including research on drilling fluids, containment and management of wastes and fluids, and fluid pressure control in the subsurface. Dr. Daniel served as chair of the American Society of Civil Engineers' External Review Panel that evaluated the failure of the New Orleans levees from Hurricane Katrina, and served on the National Academies' Macondo Well Deepwater Horizon Blowout study committee. He also served as a member of the National Research Council's (NRC's) Nuclear and Radiation Studies Board, the Board on Energy and Environmental Systems, and the Geotechnical Board. Dr. Daniel received a Ph.D. in civil engineering from the University of Texas at Austin. He was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 2000 and served on its Council from 2013 - 2019.

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**Theresa Dardar**

*Board Member, First People's Conservation Council, Lowlander Center, and Gulf Organized in Solidarity & Hope*

Theresa Dardar is an advocate for the Gulf of Mexico ecosystems and Louisiana's coastal communities. A resident of Pointe-au Chien for 52 years, Theresa is a board member of First People's Conservation Council of Louisiana (FPCC), Lowlander Center and Gulf Organized in Solidarity & Hope (GO FISH). She retired April 2022 as the Diocesan American Indian liaison at the Catholic Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux. Her work now is to get her community protected and homes rebuilt. She also does volunteer work in and around her community



**Rev. Dr. Tyronne Edwards**

*Founder, Zion Travelers Cooperative*

Rev. Dr. Tyronne Edwards is a pastor at Zion Travelers Missionary Baptist Church and serves as the Elected District 1 Councilman & Port Commissioner of Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana. He has spent over forty years developing and running programs that benefit the community, lobbying, and community organizing. He directed and coordinated rebuilding of the southern East Bank of Plaquemines Parish after Hurricane Katrina. Coordinated the rehabilitation of homes and created an Affordable Housing Program that built new homes, recruited, trained, and coordinated thousands of volunteers from youth entrepreneurship and organized youth to develop community park/playgrounds. He received his Doctorate in Theology from Slidell Baptist Seminary and his Masters and Bachelor of Theology from Christian Bible College of Louisiana.



**Beth Gendler**

*President and CEO, Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism*

Beth Gendler, president and CEO of Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism, joined the destination marketing organization in September of 2002, serving as the Director of Sales and Vice President of Sales and Sports, before being named the second president and CEO of the organization in 2021. During Gendler's tenure at GSOBT she and her team were responsible for developing the meetings market along the Alabama Gulf Coast and establishing the Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Sports Commission (now Gulf Shores | Orange Beach Sports & Events). As CEO, she has continued to grow and build on the steady success of the CVB over the last 31 years.



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**Dr. Davin Holen**

*Coastal Community Resilience Specialist, Alaska Sea Grant  
Associate Professor, University of Alaska Fairbanks*

Dr. Davin Holen is an environmental and fisheries anthropologist who conducts extension and research for the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Davin facilitates workshops and other educational activities by building trusted collaborations to provide Alaskans with data and decision support tools to help them adapt to climate and environmental changes and build resilience and better community well-being. Davin's research examines societal and economic factors intertwined with climatic and ecological changes influencing subsistence economies that are important for culture in Alaskan communities. Davin developed and manages the website Adapt Alaska ([adaptalaska.org](http://adaptalaska.org)) hosted by Alaska Sea Grant. Since 2015, Davin has been a member of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council Scientific Advisory Committee. Davin led the 2019 National Academies Gulf Research Program-funded workshop in Alaska, *Setting Priorities for Health, Social, and Economic Disruptions from Spills in Alaska: Learning from the Past, Preparing for the Future*. Davin has spent a career researching the societal impacts of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound and has published several technical papers and articles on the topic.



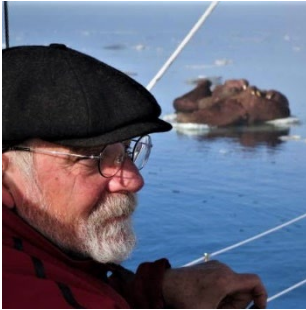
**Dave Kennedy**

*Commissioner, U.S. Arctic Research Commission*

Mr. Kennedy is currently a Commissioner for the U.S. Arctic Research Commission and has over 50 years of experience and leadership in science, research, environmental management, and development of legislation and national initiatives. He's currently a Global Fellow of the Wilson Center's Polar Institute, a Board Member of the Friends of the World Maritime University, and the Chairman of the External Advisory Board of the School of Marine Science and Ocean Engineering at the University of New Hampshire. Mr. Kennedy worked at the University of Alaska's Geophysical Institute in Fairbanks as the Research Facilities Director, and later the Director of the Spilled Oil Research Team focusing on Arctic pollution issues. This led to a 30-year career at the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), culminating as the Senior Policy Advisor for the Arctic region where he addressed policy goals, objectives, and programs until 2020. He played a significant role in the federal government's response to most of the major oil pollution events of the past three decades, including the Exxon Valdez and New Carissa oil spills, and international events such as the IXTOC I oil-well blowout, Galápagos Island, and Persian Gulf War spills. In addition, he was the NOAA Spill Response Coordinator for the Deep Water Horizon Spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

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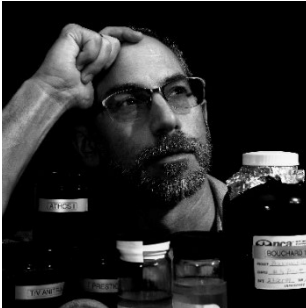
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**RJ Kopchak**

*Commercial Fisherman, Co-Founder; Prince William Sound Science Center*

R.J. was one of five original incorporators of the Science Center in 1989, where he served as the first board chairman and president while helping secure initial funding for the center's operations. He's also served the Science Center over the years in various capacities, including development, facilities, and program expansion. R.J.'s background includes being the director of the Ecotrust Copper River Program for seven years, where he worked on watershed scale approaches to better understanding wild salmon and their habitat. His efforts focused on creating regional partnerships to develop web-based information and educational maps and tools that incorporate multiple agency, academic, cultural, and institutional knowledge about Copper River and Bering Glacier watersheds. He has over 30 years of experience in nonprofit development and fundraising, ranging from youth and family services and mental health to fisherman co-ops and salmon marketing.



**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).

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**Jane Nguyen**

*Executive Director, BPSOS Gulf Coast AL-MS*

Jane Nguyen is the National Branch Manager and Executive Director for Boat People SOS Gulf Coast; that serves the coastal regions of AL and MS. BPSOS is the nation's largest Vietnamese American non-profit organization devoted to Vietnamese American civic and political activism. She has a background in Disaster and Emergency Management through her years at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Through assignments, she connected with BPSOS, and this was where she found and fostered her passion in advocating and empowering her community. Over the past decade, she has leveraged her personal cultural and linguistic competencies to plan and implement numerous appropriate services and programs to address the needs of the community including Disaster Case Management Services, Mental Health, Financial Literacy, Health Awareness and Education, Community Against Domestic Violence, and Climate Resiliency. She has been working with BPSOS locally and nationally in providing direct services and advocating to address social, economic and health inequities for the underserved and marginalized for the Vietnamese communities along the Gulf Coast.



**Donna Schantz**

*Executive Director, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council*

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.

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**Steve Sempier**

*Outreach and Deputy Director, Mississippi Alabama Sea Grant Consortium*

Dr. Sempier is the Outreach and Deputy Director at the Mississippi Alabama Sea Grant Consortium where he leads the program's extension, outreach and education team. During the past 17 years he has also led numerous Gulf-wide sea grant initiatives including developing the Gulf of Mexico research plan and implementing a community-based restoration program. After the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, he led a multi-disciplinary team of Sea Grant extension and communications specialists located across the five Gulf of Mexico states that addressed regional issues ranging from oil spill science to harmful algal blooms to marine microplastics. This team was awarded Sea Grant's Superior Outreach Programming award for their oil spill science outreach work. Steve currently serves as the chair of the Sea Grant extension assembly, which is comprised of the 34 Sea Grant extension leaders across the U.S. Prior to joining Sea Grant, he worked at Mississippi State University on an aquaculture risk management project and at Oregon State University on a USAID-supported program devoted to increasing food security in developing nations. Steve earned his B.S. in marine science at Eckerd College; M.S. in marine resource management at Oregon State University; and his Ph.D. in coastal sciences at the University of Southern Mississippi.



**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.



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**Dr. Francis Wiese**

*Senior Scholar, Gulf Research Program, NASEM*

Dr. Francis Wiese recently joined the GRP as the resident Senior Scholar. Dr. Wiese is an applied systems thinker and ecologist, and was Stantec's Science Director for Climate Solutions. He has 30 years' experience working around the world, designing, implementing, and managing large inter-disciplinary, multi-institutional science programs that address important socio-ecological issues related to climate change, the ocean, and its uses. He has extensively focused on climate change and other anthropogenic stressors on the environment, system science, adaptive management, resilience, and environmental policy. He is also a technical reviewer for over 20 international journals and serves on a variety of national and international science panels, committees, and working groups.