

Gulf of Alaska Keeper

4040 Twilight Lane
Anchorage, Alaska 99516

Updated Progress Report and Prospective Funding

Project Number: 14120116

Project Title: Gulf of Alaska Keeper Tsunami Debris Cleanup Project

PI Name: Chris Pallister

Time period covered: June 15 through August 2, 2014

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Report prepared by: Chris Pallister

Project website: goak.org

The 2014 Barren Islands marine debris cleanup project was scheduled to begin in mid-May and continue until the end of July. However, because of delays caused by permitting issues, the project did not begin until June 15, a month later than planned. We added 2 additional workers and another vessel to the project to expedite completion in order to avoid the typically nasty August northern Gulf of Alaska weather. All of the beaches targeted for cleanup in the Barren Islands were successfully cleaned despite the winds and high surf that plagued the project.

We had planned to transport all of the debris collected during this project to the Anchorage landfill. When we delivered first load to the Anchorage landfill...17 Super Sacks and a large pile of other debris...we were informed that the landfill would no longer accept marine debris unless all the lines in nets mixed with the debris were cut into sections less than 4-feet long. The landfill accepted that load, but stated no more would be accepted unless their conditions were met. Nearly half of the marine debris we remove is line and nets. It is a massive quantity with thousands of feet, if not miles, of line and large webs of netting. There isn't any mechanical equipment available that would work in the environment we clean that could chop the lines and nets into small lengths. The only option for reducing the lines and nets in the field would be to section them with serrated knives. We would need to double our crew size in order to accomplish that in the field. Segregating the lines and nets would be an option, but that would still be laborious and expensive. In addition, they would still need to be chopped into small sections later. The cost and labor needed to render the lines and nets into small pieces is absolutely prohibitive.

Primarily because of the huge influx of Japanese tsunami debris, no landfill facility within the general region of the Barren Islands will accept the debris collected there. Kodiak will no longer accept marine debris. Kenai Peninsula facilities will only accept debris from the Kenai Peninsula. Consequently, the debris collected on the Barren Islands has been stranded. It will likely need to be shipped to either a recycling facility in Seattle or a landfill in Astoria, Oregon. All of the debris on the Barren Islands has been consolidated into Super Sacks, or in the case of larger items, tied together in large bundles and ready for helicopter slinging. The consolidated debris piles have all been secured and are protected from surf and winds. In the summer of 2015, ADEC, NOAA, Waste Management and GoAK plan to remove all of the debris from multiple cleanup projects with one helicopter/barge removal project. Debris from the Barren Islands will be removed along with caches of marine debris from Kodiak, Afognak, Gore Point, Montague Island, Kayak Island, Okalee Spit, and several locations in Southeast Alaska. This removal project will be funded separately from the EVOSTC marine debris projects.

There are 115 Super Sacks and approximately 30% more bundled large debris items securely cached on the Barren Islands. That is approximately 60,000 pounds of plastic debris. Because of the large amount of Styrofoam, urethane, aquaculture buoys and other relatively lightweight tsunami debris, the collected debris approaches 300-cubic yards of material. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service...managers of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge of which the Barren Islands is part...has given GoAK permission to store the consolidated debris on the Barrens until it is removed next summer.

2015 Projects and Funding

In addition to the EVOSTC Barren Islands funding, GoAK received two ADEC grants from Japanese government gifted tsunami debris cleanup funds to re-clean Gore Point (\$20,000) and to continue cleaning the northeast Montague Island shoreline (\$200,000). We also used \$35,000 from a 2013 Alaska Legislative grant to continue cleanup work on northeast Montague Island in 2014. The Chugach Forest Service contributed \$25,000 to help defray fuel and disposal costs of the 2014 cleanup projects. We have reserved \$100,000 from the Legislative grant to help with the 2015 helicopter/barge debris removal project if necessary. If independent funding becomes available for the removal project, GoAK will utilize the reserved Legislative funds to continue marine debris cleanup projects.

Volunteers

Because of the remote nature of the Barren Island project, no volunteers assisted with that cleanup. However, 10 volunteers committed 950 hours to the northeast Montague cleanup. Six volunteers donated 380 hours to the annual PWS marine debris monitoring project.



Collected debris on the Barren Islands before consolidation in Super Sacks



Ushagat Island debris pile



Cleaning the log berm on Ushagat Island



Debris pile on Ushagat Island



Debris being transferred offshore



Super Sack cache on Ushagat Island



Super Sack caches on Ushagat Island



Inflatable loads of Barren Islands debris



Load of Barren Islands debris



Cleanup crew extracting large bundle of line from log berms