

### **Melanie Hollon, Co-worker Recognition Category**

Melanie became interested in food safety while working as an administrative assistant in the Soldotna office. She applied herself, took classes and eventually applied for and was hired into an Environmental Health officer position. Shortly after her hire, her supervisor resigned and she became the sole Soldotna contact for assisting the public calling emailing and walking into the office. Melanie exemplifies integrity in public service by providing training to operators to assist them in developing safe food practices, setting high weekly inspections goals for herself and utilizes great interpersonal skills. She dependably carries out the vision of the food safety program to work collaboratively with operators to ensure they come into compliance. Melanie is an outstanding model of customer service, internally and externally.

### **Brandi Reinhardt: Co-worker Recognition Category**

To say that Brandi Reinhardt exceeds the expectations among her peers would be an understatement. As an Environmental Health Technician, Brandi is the department's retail food permitting gate keeper. She has the task of issuing all restaurants, markets, food processor and other related permits for the entire state. Last year she issued over 4600 permits, working with all 40 staff members in 10 different offices. Her service has far exceeded the requirements of the job. She is positive and never lets a small issue fall through the cracks. She gets things resolved. In a kind and non-judgmental way, she helps to find solutions that work under the law. Brandi makes the difference between getting tasks done and making them fun. "Brandi is the epitome of great attitude", one of her co-workers said. "She inspires everyone around her with dedication and caring for her work and her co-workers".

### **Shannon DeWandel, Co-worker Recognition Category**

Shannon DeWandel is a knowledgeable and dependable Oil Spill Prevention & Contingency Plan (C-plan) reviewer for the Department of Environmental Conservation's Spill Prevention and Response division, in the Industry Preparedness Exploration, Production, and Refineries section. Shannon carries a heavy workload with many challenging assignments, yet she is always willing to take on another task or assist a co-worker with any duty. Shannon is cheerful, professional, and is respected for both her experience and integrity in the oil and gas industry by the industry representatives. One of Shannon's strengths is teaching. She has a natural way of helping people understand complex regulations and thereby fostering an excellent working relationship between the state and the operators. She is dedicated to excellent quality control and goes to great lengths to assure the integrity of her reports.

### **Donna Lee, P.E., Co-worker Recognition Category**

Donna Lee is an engineer with the Village Safe Water (VSW) program in the Division of Water. Donna's enthusiasm and expertise benefit the rural communities and projects that she manages. One example is the remote village of Quinhagak and the story of their water transmission line. Donna, as a relatively new VSW employee, recognized the impacts of a proposed delay in an upgrade to the line and pulled together a team for design and procurement and made a decision to use local labor to get the job done prior to winter. As it turns out, she and the team were successful in completed the upgrade just in the

nick of time, narrowly averting a water line failure due to freezing conditions. Donna's quick actions led to a completed project, under budget and avoiding freeze-up.

### **Shannon Miller, Crisis Responder Category**

Shannon is an Environmental Program Specialist in the Spill Prevention and Response Division of DEC tasked with communications during crisis events. During the recent Shell oil incident the Kulluk drill rig was set adrift near Kodiak when its tow line parted. A command post was established in Anchorage to handle the response efforts. Shannon worked endless hours for days to get accurate information out on the struggle with the rig, planning press conference, prepping State speakers and developing State messages. Shannon played an important dual role because she has knowledge of both Spill Prevention and Response and public relations and outreach. Shannon spent long hours away from her husband and three boys over the course of this incident. She is a model of dedication to the mission and commitment to the people of the State of Alaska.

### **Southeast Alaska Oil Spill Response Team, Crisis Responder Team Category**

Sarah Moore, Cheyenne Sanchez, Crystal Smith

This team of Spill Responders showed dedication, perseverance and innovative thinking during a three month long response to an oil pollution incident in Juneau. A report of oil sheen of unknown origin was reported in a creek on Douglas Island. The creek ultimately flows into Gastineau Channel. The first challenge was to locate the source. This involved numerous steps:

- Checking every tank in multiple apartment complexes and tanks on other possible locations
- Contacting previous owners for possible info on abandoned tanks
- Street drains opened and tested for oil
- City street plans reviewed and an old manhole cover located and odor found. Checked this 16 foot manhole with a camera; no evidence of oil
- Dye placed in suspect oil tanks. Eventually dye was detected in the creek and the source ID'd.

Next the oil had to be collected. This phase of the cleanup took three months and involved:

- Placing sorbent booms and pads in the creek to capture the flow of oil, hauling the oil-soaked pads from the creek every 2 to 3 days.
- Operations occurred in the creek and in a potential slide area. The flow of the creek on rainy dates turned in to a torrent; treacherous oily conditions with fumes (respirators were required)
- One heavy rain event caused a mud slide at the site and destroyed all the response materials

Ultimately, the team collected and transported about 2500 pounds of oil and oily waste out of the creek. They showed determination, skill and persistence in hazardous conditions for a successful result.

### **Marie Klingman, Customer Service Excellence Category**

Marie is a permit writer for the Domestic/Municipal Wastewater Program in Fairbanks. Marie has vast experience and institutional knowledge which she is an expert at sharing. Marie has developed great

relationships with the regulated public in Alaska and is well known and highly regarded in many areas of the state. Manpower shortages during the past year have tasked Marie with more than the usual number of assignments and responsibilities. Throughout this tenure, Marie has retained a positive attitude, and although always pressed for time, has continued to patiently avail herself to any request for assistance no matter how big or small. Marie's hard work and motivation for excellence credit the department and the State of Alaska as a whole.

### **Claire Fishwick, Customer Service Excellence Category**

The phone is ringing, people are beginning to assemble for a meeting, emails continue to stream in and there are four people hovering around in wait. For many people, such a scenario would cause furrowed brows, a spike in stress level and perhaps even a quick escape to the hallway. But, Claire Fishwick quickly answers the phone, greets the caller with her trademark lilting voice, sets up the teleconference, responds to an email and systematically answers the questions of those gathered around her desk.

Claire Fishwick is the Executive Secretary for the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation. She takes hundreds of calls directly from the public every year in addition to State departments, the governor's office and elected officials. She connects inquiries to personnel in our department, which means she has knowledge of the over 500 employees at DEC—no easy feat. Claire is the person you hope to meet on the other end of the line.

In addition to her duties Claire is the top administrative professional for DEC. She books the commissioner's meetings and travel, and ensures the commissioner has the proper documents and presentations he needs for every event. She also conducts customer service training for other administrative staff within DEC.

Claire is uniquely British and makes our workplace more entertaining through her distinct accent, exotic exclamations, love of strange food and ability to sprint to the phone at 55 mph!

### **Microbiology Rapid Methods Implementation Team, Customer Service Excellence Team Category**

John Cable, Jeff Jones, Joy McLaurin, Connor Murray, Elizabeth Turner, Erikka Viehman  
Brian Watts, Dr. Carol Jones

Food borne illnesses affect 1 in 6 Americans annually and are considered by health officials to be vastly underreported. During surveillance of a product entering commerce and responding to outbreak events, the response time for the result is critical for the health of our population.

Modernization of instruments at the DEC Environmental Health Lab in Anchorage was made available but making the change internally took time and commitment. Recently Dr. Carol Jones and her team focused on the implementation of "rapid" methods for Salmonella, Listeria, and E.coli in Ready to Eat (RTE) foods. Microbiologist Elizabeth Turner attended a two week FDA training course in usually reserved for FDA microbiologists. She brought that knowledge back and over time has trained other

microbiologists Erikka Viehmann, Joy McLaurin and Brian Watts as well as Laboratory Technicians Connor Murray, Jeff Jones and John Cable.

Rapid methods went live as part of our routine workflow in January 2012. This has reduced time to results for a positive sample from 2 weeks or more to less than a week. The ability to respond faster to testing requests is linked to food borne outbreak events and further participation in organizations such as the Food Emergency Response Network and is a deliverable in our five year FDA grant to achieve ISO 17025 accreditation. This team came together to learn, refine processes and implement better technology for the health of all Alaskans.

### **Shannon DeWandel, Exceptional Performance Individual Category**

Since joining the Exploration, Production and Refineries (EPR) Section in 2008, Shannon DeWandel has exhibited exceptional performance in every aspect of her job. Ms. Dewandel has represented DEC extremely well in some very high profile issues. The most publicly visible of all was the oil spill contingency plan review for the Drift River Oil Terminal. Due to the terminal's close proximity to the Mt. Redoubt Volcano, the oil spill contingency plan received an unprecedented amount of public interest.

Because DEC does not have a volcanologist on staff, Ms. Dewandel used a creative approach to coordinate the review of detailed scientific reports related to the area's volcanic activity with the Alaska Volcano Observatory. She coordinated these activities without incurring any costs, while ensuring that the document review was expedited in order to meet DEC's regulatory timeframes. She then drafted a 47 page decision document, effectively explaining the basis for each part of the decision and addressing all public comments. This document was so well written that no appeals were filed, saving DEC thousands of dollars.

Shannon's excellent product was produced while balancing her workload and other section priorities and deadlines.

### **Sarah Moore, Exceptional Performance Individual Category**

Sarah Moore is an Environmental Program Specialist in SPAR's Prevention and Emergency Response section. Sarah has excelled in many areas. These examples only partially illustrate her diverse skills, proactive ability to balance priorities, use resources well and solve problems on the spot. She has strong technical skills and the ability to rapidly respond to changing priorities. In addition, she excels at mentoring others. Here are a few examples of her achievements:

- Acted as State On Scene Coordinator (SOSC) for a CG response drill; when she noticed a shortage of responders, she marshaled state participants to assure sufficient responders and to provide a training opportunity to them
- Developed a new and improved PERP website
- Researched tablet computers for field use during spill responses, tested and tracks usage
- Assisted with outreach regarding Geographic Response Strategies ensured that all agencies, tribes and community organizations were aware and able to comment on the draft strategies

- Developed expertise GIS and has teamed with the DEC GIS specialist to produce interactive maps for use by unified commands.

Sarah excels as a spill responder and is asked for by name to work in the command post or in the field at major response operations. The division is lucky to have Sarah's strong technical skills as well as her ability to respond to rapidly changing priorities and to maintain a high level of performance during critical operations.

### **Sharon Morgan, Exceptional Performance Individual Category**

Sharon Morgan's tireless efforts on behalf of the Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (APDES) Program have been instrumental to the success of this program. Sharon has been involved with the effort to receive authority to administer this program since 2002. She was one of the first individuals hired to begin the legislatively mandated process of preparing the complex application necessary to request primacy from EPA. This has been a long and sometimes difficult process. Ms. Morgan's characteristic traits of problem-solving through win-win solutions, dedication to hard work and realizing objectives by both conventional and unconventional strategies allowed her to stay the course. Last fall, DEC received the past phase of the NPDES program from EPA, concluding the transfer of authority. It seems proper to recognize this individual whose persistent and dedicated efforts greatly contributed to the State of Alaska reaching this monumental goal.

### **Water Tech Assistance Term Contract Team: Exceptional Performance Team Category**

Melanie Helmick-Murphy, Sonja Love-Hestnes, Fran Tadda, Jennifer Pennington

The Water Quality Technical Assistance Term Contract is a four year, \$5.7 million contract with 12 contractors to provide an avenue to simplify the contract solicitation process in order to reduce the administrative burden and cost of contracting for the Division of Water (DOW). In April 2012, the contract Team was tasked with soliciting a Technical Services Contractor on short notice. The time that it normally takes to get a contract in place without any unforeseen delays is generally about four weeks. This particular solicitation began as a rush order to compress the time to get a contractor in place. However, due to the complexity of awarding the project, the solicitation became anything but routine.

The Contract team issued the first contract in two weeks; complexities surfaced resulting in a need to re-solicit the entire process to get another contractor through the award process and issue a contract to accomplish this work. This was done in less than six days and was accomplished during a particularly busy time of the year. It is a testament to the nominees' flexibility, creativity and determination that this rush contract was issued to meet the project's needs in addition to the full workload at the time.

### **Mobile Source Emission Inventory Team: Exceptional Performance Team Category**

Shareen Ali, Karin Landsberg

This nomination recognizes a team that developed and implemented EPA's new motor vehicle emission model in Alaska. Karin Landsberg and Shareen Ali learned this new model from scratch and were persistent in making multiple attempts to get the correct inputs and outputs. Their success in this

endeavor will make it much easier and cost-effective to generate and update emission estimates for motor vehicles in the future. They have clearly moved the Division of Air Quality forward toward our goal of providing improved and consistent services to our counterparts in transportation agencies in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

**EHL Paralytic Shellfish Toxin via HPLC PCOX Method Team: Exceptional Performance Team Category**

Emanuel Hignutt, John Cable, Jean Greco, Jeff Jones, Rebecca Kilfoyle, Jacqueline Knue, Connor Murphy, Chris Rivera, Vivianne Sawasaki, Rikki Stillman, Elizabeth Turner, Erikka Viehman, Brian Watts, Sonja Love-Hestnes

Deaths and illness from paralytic shellfish toxin continue to be an issue in Alaska and around the world. Accurate laboratory detection is a key component in ensuring Alaska's commercial shellfish are safe. In 2009 the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference approved the Post Column HPLC method as an alternative to the mouse bioassay for the analysis of paralytic shellfish toxin in shellfish that had been the standard for nearly 50 years. Realizing that this method would allow the Environmental Health Laboratory (EHL) to move away from live animal testing and increase capacity for testing, Emanuel Hignutt, the Chemistry Supervisor, started investigating the method and determined a priority within the division to move to this method. Emanuel now attended training in Seattle to learn directly from the Canadian researcher who had developed the method; this relationship with the Canadians continued.

The project implementation required new instruments which involved a complicated procurement accomplished by Jean Greco and Rikki Stillman. Then the instruments had to be calibrated and brought online. Jackie Knue and Annie Sawasaki ran hundreds of samples. This process involved extractions performed by lab techs Connor Murray, Jeff Jones and microbiologist Becky Kilfoyle. Then analyses were performed by microbiologists Erikka Viehmann, Liz Turner and Brian Watts. This was done while continuing to get same day results out to Alaska's commercial shellfish farmers so that their product could enter commerce.

The outcome has been the successful implementation of the new alternative to the mouse bio-assay method at the EHL. Alaska is now the FIRST state in the nation to implement this method. The FDA has requested a site visit so they can learn from us and other states have requested a monthly workgroup with us to assist them in their implementation. The project will not only affect the health of Alaskans but those in other states as well due to our willingness to take on the challenge of new technology.

**John Kuterbach, Leadership Category**

John Kuterbach is nominated by the Division of Air Quality for his exceptional leadership of the Air Permit Program. John is a leader in the truest sense of the word. He steers a group of 38 employees with diverse responsibilities, located in three different communities. He manages staff as though he is the conductor of a symphony, constantly directing, fine-tuning and listening to all interested parties. He acts as a technical and policy expert and guides his staff in making decisions that sit at a crossroad

between the state and federal regulations and the practical financial and technical limitations of our industrial clients needing air permits. John is known for his ability to consider complex regulatory interpretations with full attention to detail, innovation, time and energy while meeting the Divisions' goal of air quality protection. He is highly respected by our permit clients and air quality professionals.

John has a vision for the future of the Air Permit Program and has looked outside of governmental process to improve the efficiency and timely delivery of air permits. He has led the implementation of a Quality Management System, set standards for consistent and timely permits, organized to allow for mentoring of new employees and training of permit writers and empowers staff to focus on their tasks given limited resources. This excerpt from the nomination just touches on the accomplishments of this accomplished leader. The Division, the Department and the State of Alaska are incredibly lucky to have a man like John Kuterbach working on their behalf.

### **Larry Iwamoto, Leadership Category**

Larry Iwamoto has a history with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. He began in the spring of 1992 when he was hired as a college intern, became a graduate intern that fall and in December 1992 was hired as an Environmental Program Specialist III with the Division of Spill Prevention and Response. Larry continued his ascent until he reached his current position as the Preparedness Manager within the Prevention and Emergency Response Program in 2009. He works tirelessly on many State oil spill response preparedness plans and guides as well as The Unified Plan, which is the Alaska federal/state preparedness plan for response to oil and hazardous substance discharges.

Larry was also the State lead to develop and implement the Statewide Hazmat Response Team and Work Group. Originally developed in 1997, the group consisted of DEC and the Anchorage and Fairbanks hazmat teams team for the purpose of maintaining and expanding oil and hazardous substance spill response capabilities throughout Alaska. The work group has grown to 25-plus participating entities including State, Federal, military and industry hazmat response partners. Larry has been the primary coordinator and facilitator for meetings, training, exercises, and equipment needs of the Statewide Hazmat Response Teams.

What makes him a great leader is that he is unassuming, dedicated and a friend. He arrives early and leaves late; without complaint. He maintains an open-door policy and is always welcoming and happy to help when you bring to him a question or concern. I cannot speak further to the many accomplishments that he has made along his way because he is not the type to brag. What I can tell you is what I or my colleagues have witnessed. Larry has the uncanny ability to stay calm, focused and realistic even during times of extreme pressure and chaos. He has served in many capacities during countless emergency oil spill responses and drills. These are stressful events for many but Larry takes these moments as an opportunity to coach others. It is obvious to those of us around him that he wants to see us not only succeed at our duties but to excel at them. If he discovers a job-related interest of an employee, he encourages growth in that direction knowing that the employee's confidence and dedication will also grow. Larry notes our successes and celebrates them with us.

Larry has an outstanding rapport and working relationship with his peers and coworkers, as well as with other State agencies, Coast Guard, EPA, other federal, local tribal, private and industry groups.

This nomination is a collaborative effort of those of us lucky to work with him. One of my colleagues stated, "I have observed and noted with admiration, Larry's honesty, confidence, generosity, ethical and unselfish commitment to his work, his employees, his employer, and to the people of the State."

Larry Iwamoto retires this year and will leave us a legacy.

### **Point Thomson Permit Team**

DEC Members: Gary Mendivil, Wade Strickland, William Ashton

On March 29, 2012, the State of Alaska settled its litigation regarding the Point Thomson oil field on the North Slope – a field that holds an estimated 8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and hundreds of millions of barrels of oil and gas liquids. This significant step placed a heavy work load on the Point Thomson Permit Team to issue permits for this high priority resource development project.

On September 30, 2012, this team of 23 DEC, DNR and Department of Law employees met the rigorous deadline of issuing the necessary permits for the applicant to commence winter construction activity. They worked with multiple state and federal agencies to permit and adjudicate approximately 100 State permits and/or authorizations for the Point Thomson Project. The Team worked creatively to manage multiple priorities collaborated among a diverse team of state agency participants and collectively to troubleshoot conflicting processes and priorities among federal agencies,

The Point Thomson project is estimated to bring 600-700 local jobs to Alaska. It is a strategic investment for the State, which brings an estimated 10,000 barrel-per-day oil condensate to TAPS in 2015/2016, providing enormous benefits to the State and country and will lead to more jobs, significant revenue and enhanced energy security.