



**State of Alaska
Department of Environmental Conservation
Division of Spill Prevention and Response**

**Trip Summary of 9 March 2017 Aerial Overflight of Hilcorp Natural Gas Leak,
Cook Inlet**

In Attendance:

David Wilkins (Senior Vice President, Hilcorp Alaska, LLC)
Jacob Cunha (Habitat Biologist, ADF&G)
Josh Brekken (Habitat Biologist, ADF&G)
Erin Laughlin (Spill Prevention and Response, ADEC)
Travis Williamson (Environmental Crimes Unit, ADEC)
Craig Ziolkowski (Spill Prevention and Response, ADEC)
Travis (Pilot, Ross Aviation)
Brandon (Pilot, Ross Aviation)

Weather Conditions: During the survey period, surface air temperature at the Ted Stevens International Airport ranged from 20 to 25 F. Winds were from the North and ranged from 9 to 10 mph.

Tide: The tide was incoming, with high tide occurring at 2:49 pm with a height of 20.8 feet for Nikiski, Alaska.

Ice Concentrations: South of Kalgin Island, south of Boulder Point, and along the west side of Cook Inlet ice concentrations ranged from 0 to 2 tenths or (No Ice to Very Open Drift). In Chickaloon Bay as well as in the area of release, ice concentration were 9 to 10 tenths or (Very Close Pack to Compact). Ice was observed in multiple stages of development from new ice to first year thin ice. Ice forms ranged from fast and beach ice in Chickaloon Bay, to medium floe occurring in the area of release. Other ice forms observed included pancake ice, ice cakes, small flow, belts and strips.

Trip Summary: Prior to the flight, in discussion with Ross Aviation pilot, Travis, it was determined fish and wildlife survey would require a minimum altitude of 500 feet and airspeed of 90 knots while transit or non-wildlife survey could be performed at a 700-foot altitude and speed of 130 knots. Marine mammal sightings would require an altitude increase to 1500 feet prior to circling to avoid disturbance.

12:10 pm: Departed Ross Aviation and transited to Chickaloon Bay (Figure 1). From Chickaloon Bay the survey continued south following the eastern shoreline of Cook Inlet to the release area. Shoreline survey was undertaken at a distance of approximately 1/2 mile from shore.

12:19 to 12:26 pm: Surveyed the Chickaloon Bay area at 700 feet altitude and airspeed of 130 knots. Shore fast and beach ice was heavily concentrated throughout the mudflats with small open leads occurring in the channelized areas.

12:42 pm: Transited past East Foreland area and headed toward the release site. Upon arrival at the release area, the aircraft circled twice at an elevation of 500 feet and airspeed of 90 knots. The bubble field was unobservable as it was obscured by large pancakes of ice interspersed with brash ice.

1:02 pm: Arrived at Kalgin Island (north side) for shoreline survey, which was conducted counter clockwise around the circumference at a distance of approximately ½ mile from shore. Upon conclusion of this survey area, the aircraft transited southwest to Redoubt Bay to survey the west shoreline to the Little Susitna River.

1:25 pm: Observed aggregation of approximately 100 white birds on ice, with few individuals in water. Aircraft slowed to 90 knots and circled once to re-sight group.

1:36 pm: Arrived at south side of West Foreland area.

1:44 pm: Observed a group of shorebirds (>800) in flight, slowed to 90 knots. Aircraft circled back however the group was not re-sighted.

1:50 pm: Resumed west side shoreline survey at an altitude of 700 feet and airspeed of 130 knots.

2:00 pm: Observed 2 ducks flying along coast south of Tyonek, near Granite Point.

2:15 pm: Arrived at the Little Susitna River and concluded the west side survey.

2:25 pm: Arrived at Ted Stevens International Airport, taxi to terminal.

Observations: West-side Rivers, including: Beluga, McArthur, Little Susitna, and Theodore Rivers, are starting to exhibit broken ice in the primary channels within the delta areas. Figure 2 contains select photos.



Figure 1. 9 March 2017 Aerial Overflight Trackline

Figure 2, select photos from aerial overflight

Location: Upper Cook Inlet
Date Photos Taken: 9 March 2017

Photographers: Ziolkowski, C. and T. Williamson



Area of release.



Vessel transiting near area of release.



Aggregation of white birds on ice.



Ice belt and strips in open drift between Kalgin Island and Redoubt Bay.