

# DEC Denali Peak Performance Award Nominees 2010

## INDIVIDUAL NOMINATIONS

### **Elaine Bell, Spill Prevention & Response, Juneau - Co-Worker Recognition**

Elaine was nominated by thirteen of her co-workers who applaud that she routinely goes out of her way to find answers, solve problems and make sure that they have the resources they need to do their jobs effectively. Here are a few quotes: "She helps make SPAR the best division at DEC". She is "always cheerful even when working through a difficult issue." "She is patient with our mistakes (and there have been many!)." "Elaine is one of PERP's most valuable assets."

### **Mike Downs, Division of Administrative Services, Anchorage – Customer Service:**

Mike has a long history of meeting the IT needs of DEC's complex, diverse communication challenges in a "user friendly" and outstanding manner, working many long hours to assure that the mission is met. Often technical support is needed in remote areas during oil spill events and other environmental emergencies such as vessel groundings, the Drift River bulk tank farm volcano crisis and the pipeline shooting incident. His communication contributions during those events and on a daily basis have been critical to DEC's ability to protect human health and the environment. Mike is an excellent problem-solver and a diligent manager.

### **Albert Faure, Division of Water, Juneau – Exceptional Performance:**

Albert is a marine engineer who has been responsible for implementing new initiatives at DEC including a unique Ocean Ranger program, cruise ship vessel tracking and the country's first cruise ship wastewater effluent program. Albert brings experience with the European manufacturers of cruise ship pollution prevention and combustion equipment as well as his creative thinking, quick delivery and cool demeanor in demanding situations and deadlines. Albert's expertise and contributions have assured that the high quality, innovative environmental program that the Alaska people voted for has been implemented.

### **Rusty Gesin, Air Quality Division, Anchorage - Co- Worker Recognition:**

Rusty is the kind of co-worker everyone wishes they had. She never hesitates to lend a hand in the various projects in the Air permits section. She is a great teacher and mentor regarding the databases that Air Quality uses and her knowledge, experience and support are critical to the successful completion of fee regulation revisions each time they occur. She is tireless in reevaluating the data on a moment's notice when new information is presented. She is always a joy to work with; fun and professional.

### **Rusty Joy Gesin, Air Quality Division, Anchorage - Exceptional Performance:**

Rusty's history with DEC shows her ongoing accomplishments, dedication to career growth, excellence and team building. She has grown from a Clerk II in 1984 to an EPS IV and was instrumental in partnering with IT programmers to develop an interactive data storage and retrieval system for air permits and compliance. Most recently, she implemented the Quality Management System for Air Quality while continuing her emission reporting to EPA, coordinated the fee rate evaluation study and in her "spare time" was the Air Permits representative on the Space Committee during the Fairbanks office re-configuration. Rusty is a great mentor; her dedication to excellence is contagious.

### **John Kotula, Spill Prevention & Response, Valdez – Leadership**

John is an exemplary team-builder and leader. He has brought together a group of seven people with different backgrounds into an effective, valuable team. John leads by example and excellent communication. He is firm but respectful with employees as well as the regulated industry. John involves all staff as equal members of the team through clear and regular communication. It is obvious that he values his team, seeking input from each member. John analyzes and initiates improvements to the program and relationships with industry to better serve the needs of all. Finally, John is fair and accessible. He is a constant reminder of the importance of working together for success

### **David Longtin, Village Safe Water, Anchorage – Exceptional Performance:**

David is a Village Safe Water Engineer with the ability to manage multiple projects; currently he has projects in 10 rural villages. These projects have varying complexities involving studies, design, and construction of water and sewer infrastructure and range in value from \$100,000 to \$3 million. He has moved stalled projects forward and improved the communication and cooperation with all project stakeholders. David prioritizes getting the job done right in a professional way with all co-workers and the public. His exceptional can-do attitude enhances the VSW program overall.

### **Heather Newman, Environmental Health, Anchorage - Leadership**

Heather has broad skills and knowledge, and is quick, efficient and thorough in solving simple to complex issues. During the spring flooding events last year, she provided extensive support and guidance regarding Drinking Water issues. Heather's editorial reviews of official documents are always professional and thorough. Even with a burgeoning workload due to regulations and database changes, Heather has been exemplary in preparing for and incorporating the changes. Heather is an effective supervisor with a fine sense of timing and the ability to manage effectively even in conflict situations.

### **Steve Russell, Spill Prevention & Response, Soldotna – Exceptional Performance:**

Steve is part of a busy oil spill response team that must always be at the ready in the event of a marine vessel grounding, an oil pipeline malfunction or a leaking fuel tank. Steven responds to all of his duties with diligence. He has a common sense approach, implements preventive consulting with the public to avoid disasters, and is wise in his use of resources. He never hesitates to take on a big project. Steve builds excellent relationships with the public and businesses, and is always a great representative of DEC and our mission.

### **Sally Smith, Environmental Health, Anchorage – Co-Worker Recognition**

Sally supports the Food Safety and Sanitation program with a leadership quality that inspires others to do the same. When the hiring freeze caused the program to be short-staffed, Sally reliably and without complaint made sure that everything got done. Sally is efficient and can often find the impossible and acquire it, usually saving money in the process. Her excellence, mentoring and fun, upbeat demeanor makes the Food Safety program a better place to work.

### **Samantha Smith, Spill Prevention & Response, Anchorage – Co-Worker Recognition**

Samantha drafted an internal document outlining the need for better internal communications to result in faster clean-up in the event of a spill and then presented it to her peers. She uses her experience and education as a lawyer to further Department goals (i.e. interpreting regulations for marine salvage and fire

fighting, non-tank vessels, use of dispersants, etc). In addition, Samantha also drafted the successful project proposal for the Coastal Impact Assistance Program that resulted in DEC receiving a \$1 million grant for the NW Passage Scoping Study. Her positive energy is infectious.

### **Margie Vasquez, Division of Administrative Services, Juneau – Co-Worker Recognition**

Margie is a mentor, coach and natural leader. She epitomizes the skills of an effective procurement professional and has made a significant contribution to the procurement section and the entire department this year by getting the procurement web-site up and running. This tool centralizes procurement, building services, leases, property, records retention, forms, contracts and other resources too numerous to mention. This achievement will save time for DEC employees for years to come. Margie made this happen above and beyond her normal work day, which included some very high profile procurements. Finally, Margie is a patience and thorough mentor and knowledge-transfer expert.

### **David Whiting, Division of Administrative Services, Anchorage - Exceptional Performance**

David administers the procurement component of the Village Safe Water (VSW) Program. The program averages \$80 million/year with 85% of that going to procuring goods and services on projects. David has made constant improvements on solicitation of professional services, earning kudos from VSW project managers, communities and consultants. David is constantly seeking ways to better support VSW at the program and project levels. He is an approachable team player who consistently conducts his work at the highest performance level. VSW is a better program with David's expertise on the team.

### **Janice Wieggers, Spill Prevention & Response, Fairbanks – Exceptional Performance**

Janice exemplifies what the state desires in an employee. She is a dedicated environmental program specialist who has played a pivotal role in the development & implementation of risk evaluation tools that have been a model for other states. Janice is often the first stop for staff with any question about the complexities of site remediation and management. Janice is an excellent mentor and guide, quietly making a difference, exceeding expectations and providing great public service in a complex and technical area.

## **TEAM NOMINATIONS**

### **Air Permits Program Operating Permit Renewal Team - Exceptional Performance:**

**Jim Plosay, Shonda Oderkirk, Chris Kent, Wallace Evans, Liz Kerin, Tiffany Larson**

The Air Permits Operating Permit Renewal Team exceeded their previous calendar year permit renewal performance by over 40%. To achieve this they set up time and performance tracking systems to assure accountability, measure results and support continuous improvement. The team leader holds bi-weekly meetings to provide training, share lessons learned and updates. A client workshop with contractors, industry representatives and environmental consulting firms provided a forum to discuss projects and enhance effective relationships. Their success has been measured in improved internal proficiency and with term contractor resources as well as quality of the permits issued.

### **Industry Preparedness Spill Prevention and C Plan Team - Exceptional Performance:**

**Betty Schorr, John Kotula, Samantha Smith, Marty Farris**

Nominated by an ADOT Deputy Commissioner, this team went above and beyond their normal duties to identify solutions to a fuel import issue and rapidly reviewed a C-plan to bring a high sea's fuel tanker into Cook Inlet. Imported fuel was required when air cargo suddenly and unexpectedly began to increase after nearly 3 years of decline due to the recession. The shortage occurred and caused international cargo carriers to divert flights to other competing airports in the US. Betty and her team expeditiously provided understandable summary fact sheets, examples and briefings for many impacted parties to achieve a fast solution, quickly turn around C-Plan reviews and gain approval and inspections for the fuel to reach the Anchorage Airport. Their excellent facilitation, dedication and overtime work assured that the airport, community and air carriers all operated safely and effectively.

### **Municipal Grants & Loans, Obligation of Stimulus Funds - Exceptional Performance:**

**Mike Lewis, Mike Phillips, Beth Verrelli, Dan Garner, Terri Lowell, Carol Petraborg**

Thanks to this team, Alaska is the first State in EPA's Region 10 to have all its stimulus funds committed ahead of the deadline. These six employees closely coordinated with local communities and other DEC staff to successfully accomplish a project that would normally require 2-3 years to complete. Their efforts have ensured all of the funding available to Alaska will be put to use and not re-obligated to other states as a consequence of not meeting the deadline. Projects include drinking water, sewer, and clean water projects throughout the state and will create jobs, improve aging systems, and protect public health.

### **Tug Pathfinder Oil Spill Response Team - Customer Service:**

**Bob Mattson, Gary Folley, Larry Iwamoto, Scot Tiernan, John Engles, Young Ha, Neil Huddleston, Neil Vince Kelly, John Kotula, Sarah Moore, Steve Russell, Mark Sielaff, Rebecca Spiegel, Weld Royal, Camille Stephens**

When the Tug Pathfinder hit Bligh Reef on the eve of Christmas Eve, this team went into action. With 123,000 gallons of fuel on board and a 5 foot hole at the keel, time was of the essence. This nomination is for the team of ADEC employees (mostly overtime ineligible) who addressed the mission of their division - to respond rapidly when a spill occurs to protect human health and the environment - and responded over the Christmas weekend and beyond. This dedicated group of people gave up holidays with family; some traveled to Valdez to assure that human health and the environment was protected by minimizing the amount spilled and the cleanup of oil that escaped. The good news is that the spill was held to 6,400 gallons and no oiled wildlife or shoreline impacts have been reported. The DEC team partnered with other Incident Command members to assure that even at Christmas, the mission was achieved.

### **Water Information Management Team - Exceptional Performance:**

**Michelle Bonnet, Janice McLean, Leslie Eagle, Kaitee Fleck, John Randolph, John Roxburgh**

This team's cohesiveness combined with a clear vision of objectives has allowed them to develop and maintain stable and reliable systems needed to achieve the mission of the Division of Water. Core reasons that this is such a productive and enjoyable team include: shared common professional values and commitment; shared value of technical and management expertise and attention to creating a healthy team environment including trust, respect and acknowledgement of accomplishments. These approaches to problem-solving have resulted in the development and implementation of a network of systems to support Alaska's assumption of wastewater discharge permitting primacy from EPA, APDES.