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The Nature Conservancy in Alaska

Alaska ShoreZone partners share 2009 Coastal America National Spirit Award

Mapping program assists oil-spill responders, fisheries managers



JUNEAU, AK — The 41 partners of the Alaska ShoreZone project will receive the 2009 Coastal America National Spirit Award for their collaborative high-tech project to inventory every mile of Alaska's coast.

Since 2001, the Alaska ShoreZone team has collected aerial photos and video of coastal areas. This powerful visual database is available to the public at the NOAA Fisheries Service Alaska Region website:

<http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/maps/szintro.htm>. Users can virtually fly the coast, viewing high definition photos and video to identify sensitive habitats and other coastal features.

ShoreZone photos and video are already proving to be a vital resource for volunteer oil-spill responders and scientists who manage fisheries. Others use ShoreZone photos and video to help plan marine debris cleanup efforts, monitor coastal changes due to climate change, and continue Exxon Valdez oil spill restoration efforts.

Sue Saupe of the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council introduced the ShoreZone program to Alaska by organizing the first flights in Cook Inlet.

“We used the coastal imagery and data from those first surveys to demonstrate the value of ShoreZone information for a wide range of users interested in coastal environment. It turns out that there was such a huge need for that type of information that the program quickly expanded from a regional effort to a state-wide effort supported by many different organizations,” Saupe said.

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Each year, the Coastal America Spirit Award recognizes exceptional projects that address the nation's challenging coastal issues. Coastal America is a partnership of federal agencies dedicated to restoring and preserving coastal ecosystems and addressing critical environmental problems needing multi-faceted solutions.

"The ShoreZone mapping project team is an outstanding example of how we can accomplish more by working together than we can do alone. Coastal America is proud to publicly recognize the team's efforts," said Doug Mutter, Regional Environmental Assistant for the U.S. Department of the Interior and Co-chair of the Coastal America Alaska Regional Implementation Team.

Forty-one partners participate in the Alaska ShoreZone program, including industry groups, non-governmental organizations, tribal entities, local, state and federal agencies, and partners from British Columbia and Washington State.

"Many of the ShoreZone partners were involved in the Exxon Valdez oil spill clean-up and are applying lessons that they've learned to take preventative actions. Their level of dedication goes above and beyond anyone's job description," said Laura Baker of The Nature Conservancy, the primary coordinator of the Alaska's ShoreZone efforts.

So far, the ShoreZone program has imaged more than 28,000 miles of coastline in Southeast Alaska, the northern Gulf of Alaska, Prince William Sound, and Bristol Bay. This imagery is already available to the public for viewing, and additional sections of Alaska's coastline will be added in the future.

"The ShoreZone Project has been one of the best advancements in oil spill response for Southeast Alaska. We have used ShoreZone data during every response since it has been available," said Cheryl Fultz of the Southeast Alaska Petroleum Resources Organization.

The Coastal America award ceremony will be held on January 19, 2010 at noon at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium at the Captain Cook Hotel in Anchorage.

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Award Recipients

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Dave Carey	Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly
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Megan Dethier	Friday Harbor Laboratories, University of Washington
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Zachary Ferdana	The Nature Conservancy, Washington Field Office
Cheryl Fultz	Southeast Alaska Petroleum Resources Organization (SEAPRO)
David Gann	AK Dept. of Natural Resources, Div. of Coastal and Ocean Management
Scott Gende	National Park Service
Bill Gissel	Minerals Management Services, Coastal Impact Assistance Program
Todd Golumbia	Gulf Islands National Park Reserve
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John Harper	Coastal and Ocean Resources Inc.
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