

A Tribal Partner's Perspective



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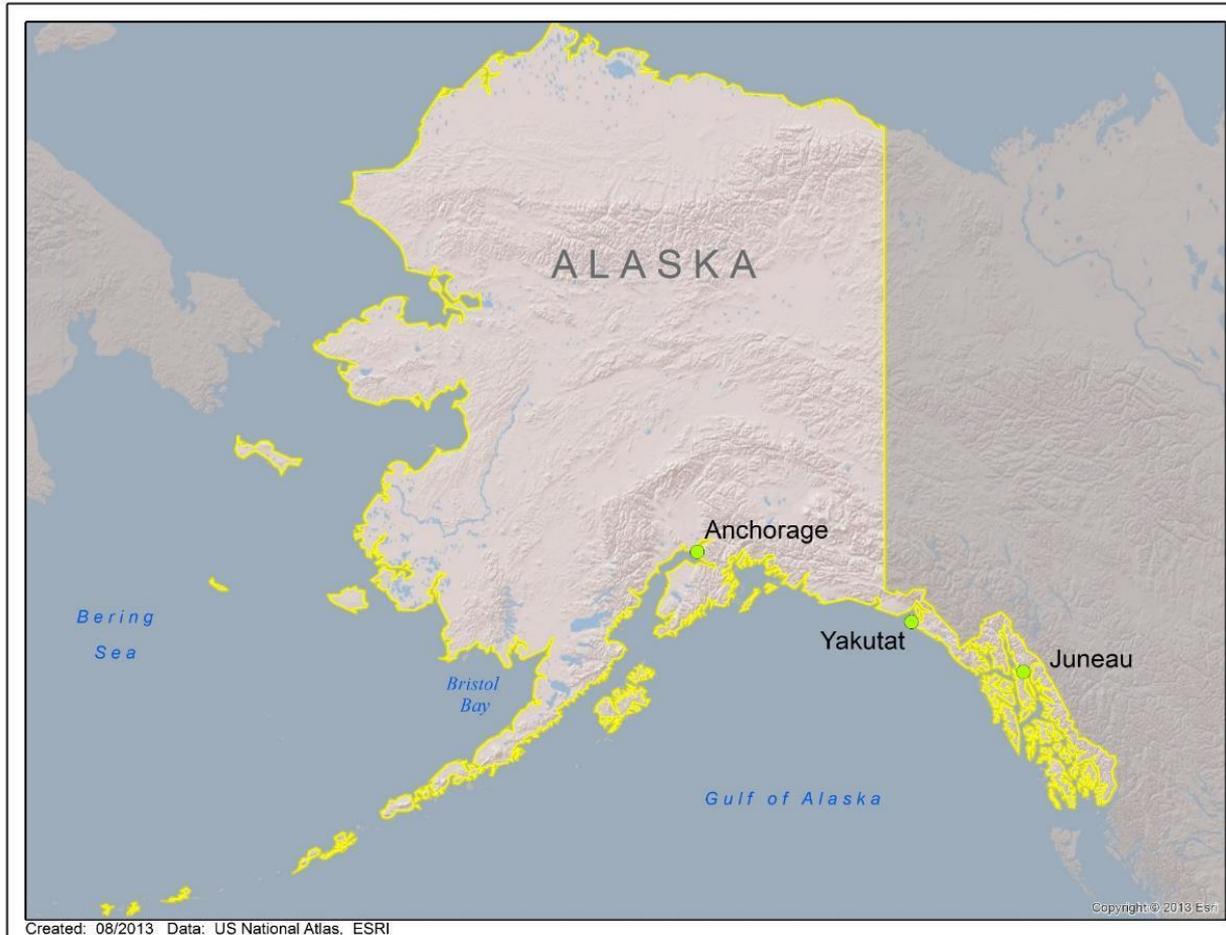
Adverse Environmental Impacts on the Ankau Saltchucks



YAKUTAT
TLINGIT
TRIBE

By: Alex James, Yakutat Tlingit Tribe

Alaska



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Ankau Saltchucks



Ankau Saltchucks

**“OUR BEACHES WERE OUR GARDEN...
ANKAU ALWAYS HAD THE BEST OF EVERYTHING”**



- Rich estuary with abundant clams, cockles, crab, fish, seals, ducks, moose, deer, berries, and useful plants
- Used all year round for hunting and gathering of subsistence foods



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Ankau Saltchucks Culture Camp

- A place where our children learned and lived the traditional Tlingit way of life
 - Song
 - Dance
 - Storytelling
 - Language
 - Arts and crafts
 - Preparation of traditional subsistence foods



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Ankau Saltchucks Culture Camp

Our Culture Camp began in 1985 and closed in 2003 due to concerns about dioxins in the soil, water, and seafood.



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Military History

- U.S. military occupied the Phipps Peninsula and areas surrounding Yakutat since 1929
- Strategic World War II Air Base from 1940 to 1945
- U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force facilities were located in and around Yakutat



Military Impact Concerns

- Dioxins and furans
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)
- Diesel
- Gasoline
- Oil
- Metals
- Asbestos
- Debris dumps
- Barrel dumps
- Fuel storage areas
- Firing ranges
- Septic systems
- Culverts and roads



How Mitigation of Impacts Began

- Community health concerns raised awareness of the possibility of dioxin exposure
- Former military facilities were identified as possible sources



U.S. Department of Defense

Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program (NALEMP)

- Cooperative agreements are negotiated between federally recognized tribes and U.S. Department of Defense (DoD)
- Tribes identify sites that are eligible for work under NALEMP, develop strategic plans, and manage the work
- Yakutat NALEMP Objectives:
 - Protect the Tribal food gathering areas within the traditional and customary use lands of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe
 - Protect and provide for the health and safety of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe
 - Protect and enhance the environment
 - Preserve the Yakutat Tlingit culture



Challenges

Convincing others there is a problem

- Limited options under NALEMP
- Limited sampling and inconclusive results from Culture Camp under FUDS
- Limited support from Alaska Department of Public Health (Now working with Tribe)



Strategic Planning

- What do we know?
 - Compile and review existing data
- What do we need to know?
 - Identify targeted sampling areas
 - Compile data to strengthen the Tribe's case
- How do we ensure high quality data?
 - EPA support in developing sampling and analysis plans
 - Independent data review and validation
- How DO other agencies help?



Review of Dioxin Sampling Conducted Under Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS)

- During 2003, 2004, and 2006, samples of soil, surface water, sediment, and shellfish tissue were collected within the Yakutat area
- Of the contaminants of concern detected, dioxins are of greatest concern to the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe and Yakutat community
- The Tribe compiled and evaluated existing dioxin data that were collected within the usual and accustomed lands of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe



2010 Site Investigation

- Funded under EPA Tribal Response Program
- Built on results of previous investigations
- Soil sampling in the Culture Camp area and analysis at lower detection levels
 - Developed a sample profile for the dioxins
 - Compared to typical source profiles
- Seafood sampling within the Ankau Saltchucks
 - Determined whether elevated dioxin concentrations in tissue are localized or wide-spread



Recommendations from 2010 Site Investigation

- Collect additional sediment samples over a more extensive area
- Analyze sediment samples to lower detection limits
- Collect additional shellfish samples over a more extensive area
- Analyze shellfish tissue to lower analytical detection limits
- Co-locate shellfish and sediment samples



ATSDR Involvement

- Yakutat Tlingit Tribe petitioned ATSDR for assistance in evaluating findings
 - Working with **Joe Sarcone**, Environmental Health Scientist
- ATSDR reviewed results of 2010 investigation
 - Determined that quality of data is excellent
 - Identified additional data needed



Yakutat Tlingit Tribe and ATSDR Concerns and Public Health Evaluation

- ATSDR met with the community to compile information on subsistence use of the Saltchucks and assessed:
 - 1) Whether community members still gathered food from the area
 - 2) What kinds of subsistence foods were gathered
 - 3) How much of each subsistence food is consumed



Next Steps with ATSDR

- ATSDR partnered with environmental public health experts on dioxin to evaluate the dioxin data from investigations of the Ankau Saltchucks
 - 2010 shellfish and soil
 - 2012 shellfish and crab
 - 2013 shellfish and sediment
 - Culture Camp soils



Summary

ATSDR responds to two tribal community concerns:

- Are dioxins in shellfish from the Ankau Saltchucks harmful to our health?
- Can exposure to dioxins in the shellfish account for the high cancer rate in Yakutat?

ATSDR partners with a toxicologist expert on dioxin and an epidemiologist from the State Cancer Registry to tackle these hard questions.

ATSDR provides feedback to the Tribe that is helpful in deciding the future use of the Ankau Saltchucks for shell fish harvesting and informs the discussion of reopening the culture camp.



