



DEC in 2019: A year in review

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Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation

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DEC's Mission

Conserving, improving, and protecting Alaska's natural resources and environment to enhance the health, safety, economic, and social well-being of Alaskans.



What We Do

Protect Human Health and the Environment

Air Quality

- Permit industrial air emissions
- Monitor & assess air quality
- Address small & mobile air pollution sources
- Conduct inspections & ensure compliance

Water Quality

- Permit water discharges
- Oversee water quality standards, assessment & restoration
- Technical assistance for financing
- Conduct inspections & ensure compliance

Environmental Health

- Ensure safe food & drinking water
- Oversee landfills & pesticide applicators
- Provide animal care & importation standards
- Conduct analytical testing
- Conduct inspections & ensure compliance

Spill Prevention & Response

- Respond to spills
- Require spill prevention & response plans
- Evaluate response drills
- Manage cleanup of contamination
- Conduct inspections & ensure compliance

DEC Leadership Team



► Over 125 years of state service!



DEC Employees Matter

Predictable, timely, science-based, legally defensible permits require experienced and knowledgeable staff

- Improve retention rate: DEC currently has a 21% annual turnover rate...Why?
 - Exit Interviews
- Evaluations-bringing private sector experience to DEC
 - 25% of employees weren't current (quickly became current by end of January!)
 - Evaluations are required to be done at different times of the year based on hire date
 - Create individual development plans
 - Evaluate employees based on metrics, not seat time
- Develop departmental, division, program, and individual goals on an annual basis (same time)
- Develop DEC's values



Our Values

We strive to provide excellent Customer Service both inside and outside of the organization by being professional, responsive, reliable, and respectful.

We are Accountable for our actions and stand proudly behind our work, as individuals and as an organization.

We perform to the highest moral and ethical standards, and produce transparent and consistent regulatory actions to show our Integrity.

We support and encourage Collaboration across programs and partners to meet challenges and further our collective mission.

We make Objective decisions, based on science and facts.

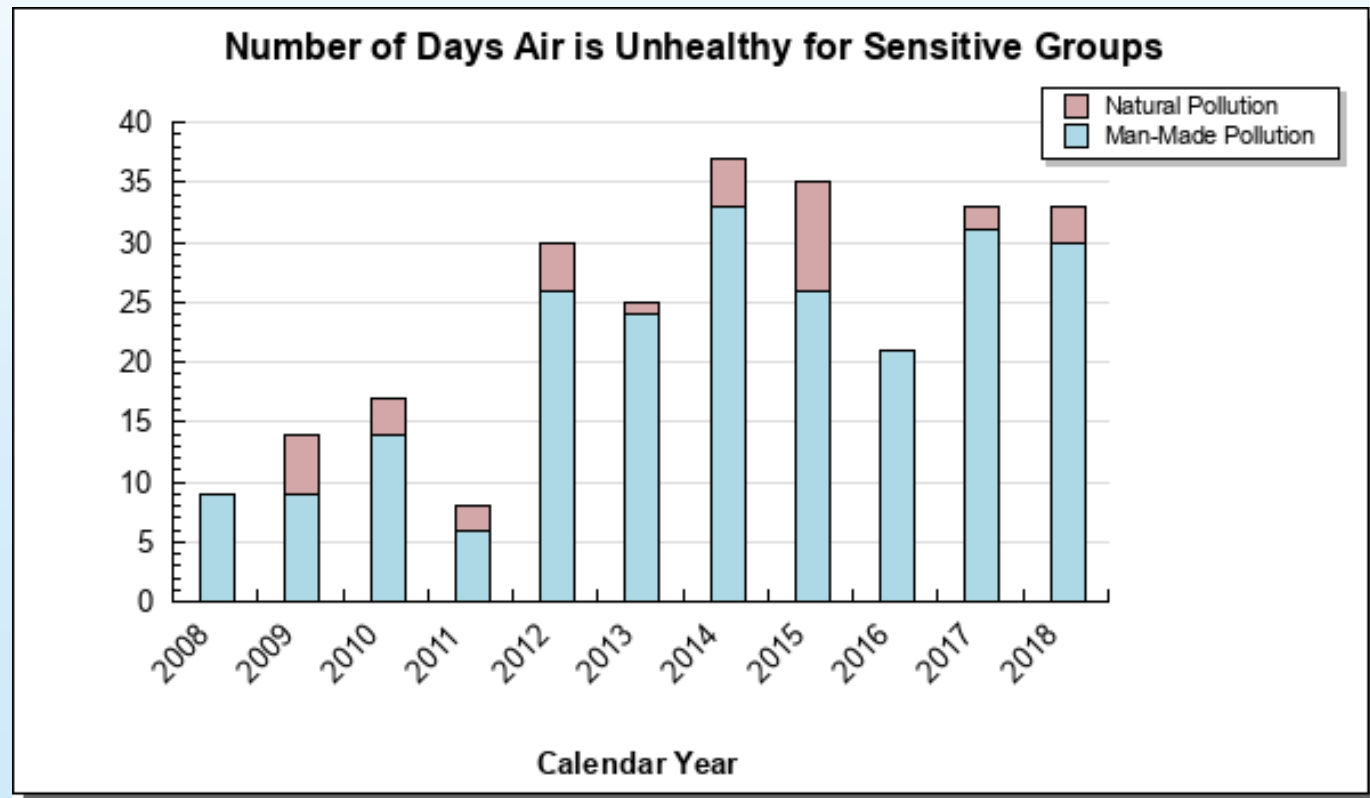


Incorporating Technology

- Eliminate/reduce need for FOIA/Records Requests
 - Posting data on website
 - Online commenting/transparent real-time viewing
- Improve inspections
 - Drones
 - FaceTime rather than travel
- Management
 - Utilize Skype
- Please share YOUR ideas

Protect Air Quality

DEC's goal is that there are no days when air is unhealthy for sensitive groups.



Improving Fairbanks Air Quality



- Implemented air quality control programs following 2018 ballot initiative that prevented Borough from meeting federal air quality commitments
- Worked with local government and stakeholders to finalize and submit to EPA the Serious State Implementation Plan and submitted in December 2019

HOW'S THE AIR OUT THERE?

GET AIR-QUALITY TEXT ALERTS.

SIGN UP



Water: Supporting Primacy Through APDES

- ▶ DEC has authority for compliance and enforcement of portions of EPA's Clean Water Act in Alaska.
- ▶ The Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems (APDES) Program provides permits to all major industries in Alaska.
- ▶ In 2019, DEC did not pass the EPA's five year review of the APDES program, and EPA is conducting inspections on DEC's behalf.
- ▶ DEC was marked down for staffing deficiencies and insufficient travel funds, threatening Alaska's primacy over this program.
- ▶ DEC's Division of Water has reassigned three internal positions to increase staffing, and successfully requested an RPL to increase federal authority in FY20 for four new positions and travel funds.

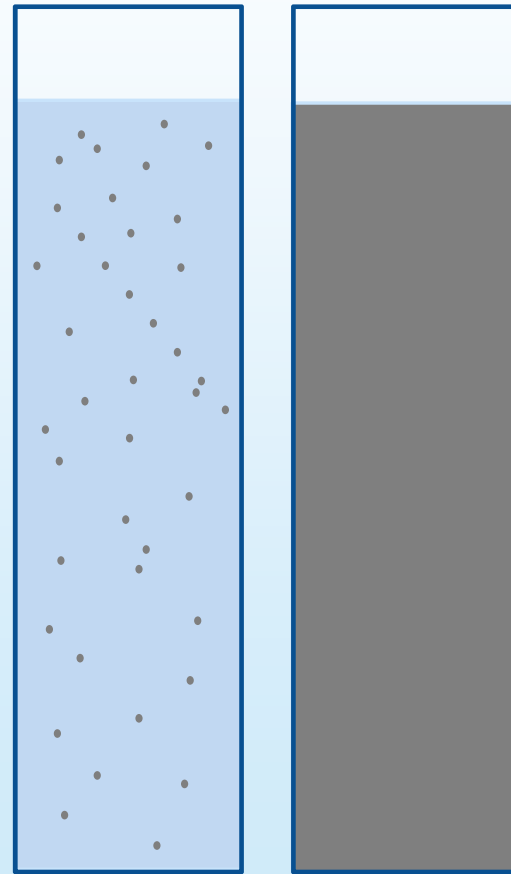


Projects of Interest

- ▶ Palmer
 - ▶ Connectivity of ground water, awaiting results of dye test
- ▶ Pebble
 - ▶ EPA withdrew 404(c) determination
- ▶ Ambler
 - ▶ EPA initially proposed 404(q), but has since withdrawn

Holding everyone to the same high standards

- ▶ Large cruise ship permit allows up to 40 fecal coliform bacteria in 100 ml
- ▶ Local waste water treatment facility permit allows up to 1.5 million fecal coliform bacteria in 100 ml.





Cruise Ship Environmental Oversight

- DEC's Water, Air Quality, and Spill Prevention and Response Divisions have authority and funding to regulate cruise ship emissions and discharges in place for the 2020 cruise season.
- The Ocean Rangers are observers, not trained inspectors. Over 12 years, only 12 of the 259 notices of violation DEC issued were from Ocean Ranger observations.
- DEC is proposing a program to replace the Ocean Rangers with tools that more effectively protect Alaska's environment.
- Parts of the new program could take effect this cruise season if the bill passes this session.

Current Issues: Tier 3 Water Bodies



- Policy enacted at the end of the previous administration to require the passage of legislation to designate a Tier 3 water body
- Same policy remains in effect today
- Letters have been sent to 5 nominations that have been submitted to DEC indicating this process
- Attempts to codify this process in SB 51 and HB 138
- Without codifying this process, future DEC commissioner could change at any point

Environmental Health: Improving Multi-Agency Response to Invasive Species

- ▶ DEC created general pesticide permits to strengthen the State's ability to rapidly respond to invasive species, such as elodea and Northern Pike.
- ▶ The general permit will allow the Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Game to start work within 15 days, compared to the average of 70 days previously required to issue an individual permit.



Improving food safety complaint process - Yuck Line

- DEC, with DH&SS and Municipality of Anchorage, implemented a cell phone number which can take calls, texts, photos and videos, and also created an online submission form.
- This has increased the number of submitted complaints, helping the program identify unsafe and unsanitary conditions that could cause foodborne illness in Alaska.



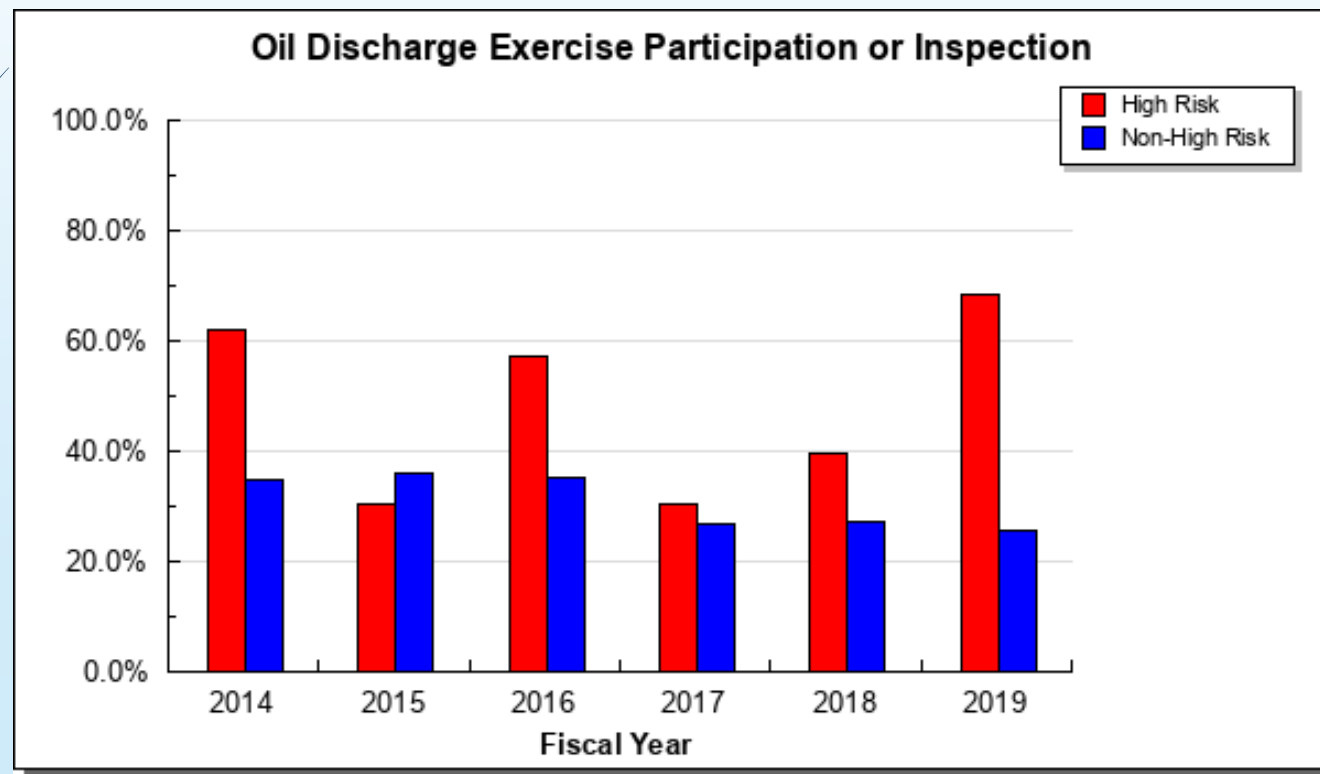


Food Safety Testing in the Current Fiscal Climate

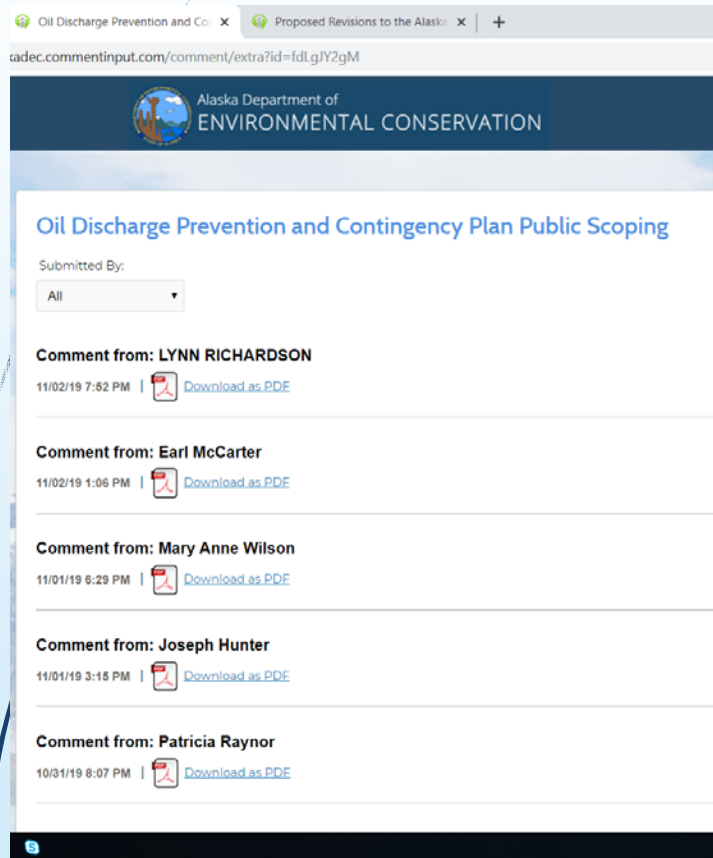
- ▶ The Food and Drug Administration requires testing for milk to receive Grade A status. Retailers will only sell Grade A milk.
- ▶ The FDA also requires testing of shellfish meat and growing water samples for the presence of toxins and harmful bacteria for sale to the public.
- ▶ DEC maintains FDA approval for both of these programs and the State has subsidized all testing costs.
- ▶ DEC is proposing to eliminate the \$179.6 dairy program as the industry cannot afford to pay meaningful fees.
- ▶ DEC is asking for the shellfish industry to pay \$228.9 in fees to cover half of the testing cost in the FY2021 budget.

Spill prevention and response

DEC's goal is that 100% of high risk and 20% of non-high risk contingency plan holders are inspected or evaluated for oil discharge prevention annually.



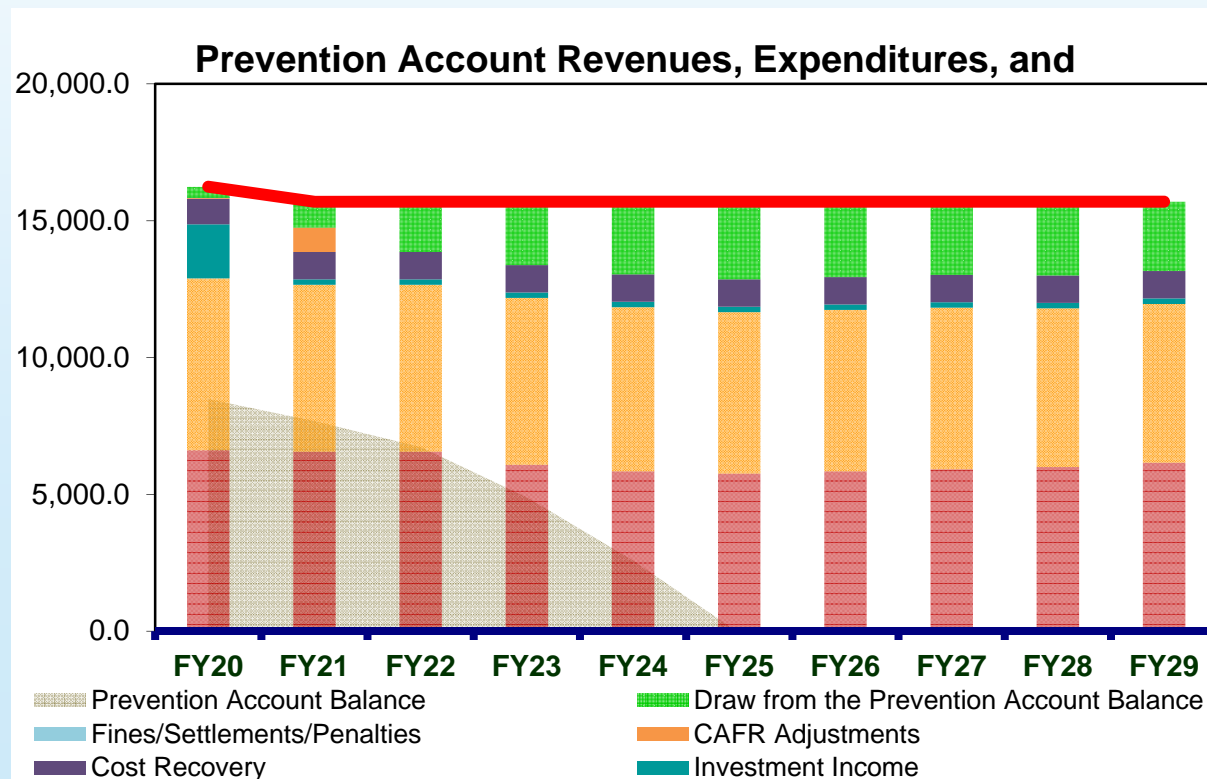
Contingency Plan Scoping Project



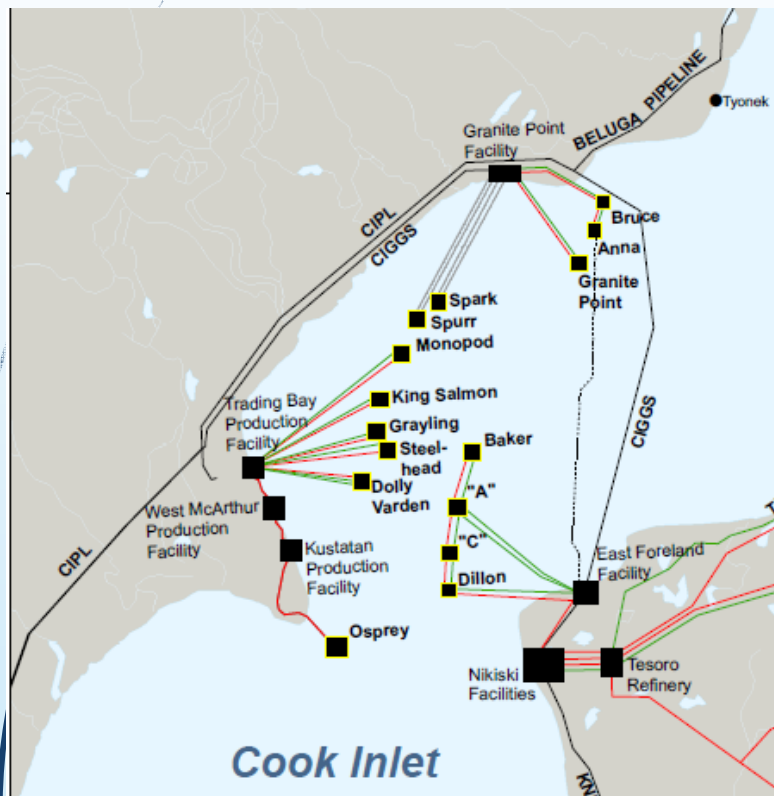
- Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plans are required for oil terminal facilities with significant storage capacity; pipelines, exploration and production facilities; tank vessels and oil barges; and rail tank cars.
- DEC has heard there may be room for improvement.
- Comment deadline is March 16, 2020 and all comments are publicly available when posted.
- <http://alaskadec.commentinput.com/>

Prevention and Response Fund

DEC's mission is to manage the Oil and Hazardous Substance Release Prevention and Response Fund as a viable, long-term funding source for the state's core spill prevention and response programs.



Assessing Cook Inlet Pipeline Infrastructure



- DEC and the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (CIRCAC) worked together to complete an inventory of Cook Inlet's operating pipelines, along with risk mitigation measures provided by experts.
- These measures will be part of a final report, slated for release in Spring 2020.

Reducing Public Exposure to Contaminants

- ▶ DEC closed out the cleanup of 106 contaminated sites in 2019, returning them to safe re-use.



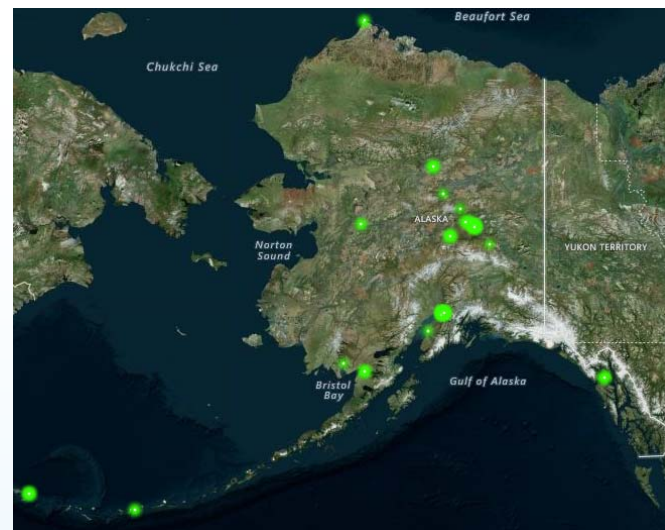
- ▶ Ward Cove success story – cleanup of the contaminated Ketchikan Pulp Company site was successfully completed in early 2000's under the oversight of DEC and the EPA.
- ▶ January 2020, Army Corp of Engineers approved building a two-berth cruise ship dock in Ward Cove, reopening economic potential for the site.



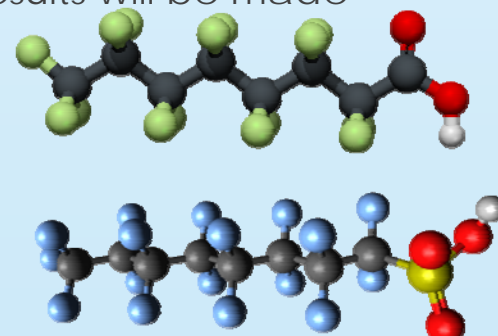
Responding to PFAS

- ▶ DEC, with support from DOT&PF and DHSS, prioritized drinking water wells at risk of PFAS contamination.
- ▶ The Department required drinking water sampling, and ensured alternative drinking water was provided to people with wells contaminated by PFAS.
- ▶ DEC aligned its policies with EPA's non-regulatory lifetime health advisories for use in laboratory monitoring and action levels for provision of alternative water.
- ▶ PFAS test results data are posted online to ensure transparency and public availability.
- ▶ DEC also permitted the first incinerator in the country to test the efficacy of burning PFAS contaminated soils, providing a local solution to a local problem.

Responding to PFAS



- ▶ DEC inline with EPA approach
 - ▶ Lifetime health Advisory of 70 ppt for PFOS and PFOA
 - ▶ Testing for 18 PFAS using EPA method 537.1
 - ▶ All data being placed on DEC website:
<http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/pfas/sample-results/>
- ▶ Issued first air permit in nation for PFAS incineration at Moose Creek (OIT)
 - ▶ Preliminary results show 99.99% of PFAS chemicals destroyed in soil and minute amounts released into air
 - ▶ Additional tests have been done in conjunction with EPA's Office of Research and Development. Results will be made public as soon as possible.
- ▶ *Local solutions for local problems!*





Telling our story

- ▶ Why does DEC matter?
- ▶ Starting in December we increased our social media presence
 - ▶ Facebook: AlaskaDEC
 - ▶ Twitter: @AlaskaDEC

If we're not telling our story, someone else will, and we may not like the narrative.