Grant Awards - Fiscal Year 1998

**Project: **"Science of the Sound" Education Program

**PI:**
E. Becker

**Contract No:**
98-10-11

**Award Amount:**
$25,000

**Term:**
10/1/98-9/30/99

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**Scope of Work:**

Since 1989, the year of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS), the Prince William Sound ecosystem has become one of the most carefully studied bodies of water in the world. When the spill occurred, little was known about crucial factors such as marine currents, fish and animal populations, or the effects of oil contamination on the ecosystem. This lack of knowledge caused much anxiety and fear among the people of the Sound as they worried about their livelihood, their health, and their way of life.

The results of the continuing research about the Sound are remarkable. Scientists now have a preliminary circulation model that is a first step in predicting where an oil spill might travel. Researchers are also developing models to better predict physical and biological events such as fish populations and returns. These ecosystem level studies are resulting in a better understanding of how natural change occurs in the Sound, an important element for responding to pollution events.

As critical as scientific research is sharing the results of research with the affected communities. Since 1990, the Prince William Sound Science Center's Science of the Sound has provided opportunities to residents, particularly children, to learn more about the environment in which they live. We use Prince William Sound and the nearby Copper River Delta to illustrate the dynamic nature of science and the importance of our natural resources.

The current programs of Science of the Sound are the Cordova Discovery Room, our Outreach Discovery Room for the villages of the Sound, and our Summer Science Camp. We believe that we are helping to raise enthusiastic, literate learners who will grow into thoughtful, educated decision makers. With OSRI funding, we intend to expand our programs to include three new projects: Teacher Training to facilitate student inquiry and exploration of the environment; Adult Environmental Education programs for visitors; and a Prince William Sound Virtual Classroom, a live via satellite interactive learning program that will bring students to scientists in the field to learn about the health of the Sound ten years after the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill. A thorough description of each of our projects is included in this proposal.

**The goals of Science of the Sound are:**
• to increase public awareness of the surrounding natural resources, scientific research, and pollution prevention and response efforts
  • to increase ecological literacy
• to promote informed involvement in the decision making process on management and use of local natural resources
• to encourage cooperative resource education efforts by local, private, and public organizations

Our partnerships with other agencies are crucial to our success. *Science of the Sound* has been a collaborative effort from the beginning. Our current partners include the USDA Forest Service/ Cordova Ranger District, the Cordova School District, the Chugach School District, the PWS Community College, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the Alaska Natural Resource and Outdoor Education Association, and Chugachmiut, an Alaska Native association. We also partner with various local and regional businesses to share ideas and technology.