

2015 Atigun Award spotlight: Environment, Flood response teams
Friday, May 1, 2015



Alyeska Pipeline Service Company recognizes the exceptional work of TAPS employees and programs through the Atigun Awards programs. Atiguns are given in categories of Environment, Health and Safety, Innovation, Integrity, and Teamwork. In addition, Professionals of the Year and Lifetime Achievement awards may be presented. In the coming weeks, 2015 Atigun Award winners will be profiled on A-net and in other Alyeska communications.

2015 Atigun Award spotlight: Environment, Flood response at Sagavanirktok (Sag) River and Beaver Brook

In 2014, two extraordinary and unexpected flooding emergencies were met by two groups of talented, resourceful and quick-responding TAPS employees who safely protected the pipeline infrastructure and the environment around it from potential disaster.



When the surging Sagavanirktok (Sag) River began carving away at underground pipeline coverage between Dalton Highway Mileposts 18-19 in May, TAPS employees responded. When a July rainstorm created a wild waterway that began encasing nearly 300 feet of aboveground pipe north of Pump Station 4 with quick-hardening shale, TAPS employees responded.

For their preparation, mobilization and work, 32 TAPS employees are receiving a 2015 Atigun Award for

Environment.

Alyeska's Rivers and Floodplains Program was created shortly after TAPS construction to monitor the waterways that cross Alyeska's right of way or are in close proximity to the pipeline and other facilities. The group's work usually involves proactively reducing risk. Because of this preventative work, the program rarely has to respond to waterway emergencies. But in 2014, forces of nature changed the group's work from preemptive to responsive.

Adam McAllister, a longtime operator for Houston Contracting Company, was working near both areas when the respective flooding emergencies began. He said, "They were both unique types of situations, something we rarely see, but we're always well-prepared. We know where our rock sources are. We also know where the equipment is and how to get it. We just jump in with both feet and get to work."

McAllister said the Sag River flooding was surprising because it occurred in an area that never floods. The pipe there is normally 5-6 feet underground, but the sudden flooding washed away as much as four feet of coverage in some spots. McAllister and a team took action to ensure the pipe remained covered, but challenges swirled everywhere. A nearby pile of rock, known to operators as rip rap, was already covered by water, so truck drivers started hauling rock from a source at Milepost 47. Rented excavators kept breaking down. And the flooding river itself was a moving target.

"As we plugged one hole, there would be another washout down the line," said McAllister. "It was back-and-forth for a while."

McAllister said it turned into a 10-day job that couldn't have been completed without confidence in the group's preparation, teamwork and safety. He noted the efforts of Teamster Stephen Gregory, Laborer Calvin McGinty, and mechanic Greg Markee, and added: "We've worked together for about four years and work well as a team. I know what my team is capable of and I don't have to worry about them, so that let me focus my time on running the excavator."



Excavator use was a luxury at the Beaver Brook flooding site, which is 32 miles south of Pump Station 4 at Milepost 176. A three-week-long July rainstorm on the Chandalar Shelf routed water and material downhill, turning the usually passive Beaver Brook into a raging, murky river. Phil Huelskoetter, a Pump Station 4 Baseline Foreman, said the silty material washed away the dike and engulfed the pipe like concrete.

"The volume of water was impressive, but the amount of material the water was carrying was even more impressive," Huelskoetter said. "It was covering up the above ground pipe, the transitions, and taking away the dike that was there, the trees and everything else. It probably moved 30,000 yards of material in 24 hours

off that mountain. So it was important to coordinate this effort so that it was done well and safely."

The first move by McAllister, Huelskoetter and others was to use bulldozers to divert the flow of water away from the pipe and back toward the failed dike. After that, crews began removing material from around the pipe, by hand and with heavy equipment. Crews had to go over Atigun Pass to get equipment and materials for the worksite. After seven days, the team had cleared the pipe and expanded the existing dike to twice its original size. It is now six-feet tall, 400-feet long and reinforced by rip rap.

"It took quite a bit of planning, a number of laborers and operators, a bunch of spotters for safety, and tons of manual labor," Huelskoetter said. "I just want to give kudos to everyone involved. It was an extensive amount of work, including hand work, and it wasn't easy. The physical labor was impressive. And because of our coordination, it all went off without a hitch."

The Atigun Award recipients are, from Alyeska: James Criner; Ross Oliver; Alex Lai; Kate Montgomery; Cathy Girard; Shaune O'Neil; Donald Richardson; Nathan Green; Deb Logan; Kenneth Wilson. From Houston Contracting Company: Adam McAllister; Scott Thomas; Stephen Gregory; Calvin McGinty; Greg Markee; Ron Ready; Paul Arnett; Richard Covington; Roy Friesen; Frank Wells, Jr.; Phil Huelskoetter; Don Lachnit; Scott Mayo. From Maritime: Scott Nicholson. From Doyon Security: Fred Young. From Merrick Survey: John Kunst; John Karoly; Bret Somers. From Hamilton Oil Field Services: Dwight Stuller; Brian O'Dowd. From Arctic Slope Engineering Services: John DeGeorge. And from Hawk: Gary Dillon.