

"Promoting environmentally safe marine transportation and facility operations in Cook Inlet."

CIRCAC Receives USCG Recertification

The U.S. Coast Guard has recertified the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (CIRCAC) as the alternative advisory group for Cook Inlet. Rear Admiral Arthur Brooks, Commander, Seventeenth Coast Guard District, recertified CIRCAC in his September 8 letter to the organization. CIRCAC must be managed within regulatory requirements for fulfilling the mandates of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 to continue as an advisory group.

The federal legislation established regional councils in Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound to provide advice, oversight, and monitoring of terminal facilities and tanker operations. CIRCAC's 13 directors represent cities,

boroughs, and interest groups from Anchorage to Kodiak who have a stake in the protection of Cook Inlet resources. As a consensus building organization, CIRCAC works continually to be an effective voice for citizens.

Executive Director Michael Munger was pleased with the recertification notice.

"The annual recertification process gives us an opportunity to showcase the substantive changes in our programs," said Mr. Munger. "CIRCAC is a great example of how a citizen-based organization can serve a broad constituency. Safe marine transportation and oil facility operations are important issues affecting the quality of life around Cook Inlet.

XTO Assists CIRCAC on Science Study

Researchers Use Platform for Hydrographic Work

Cook Inlet RCAC recently partnered with XTO Energy to deploy equipment as part of a larger study to determine the seasonality of boundary conditions for Cook Inlet. Through funding received from the Coastal Marine Institute, CIRCAC purchased two instruments (Seabird SBE-37 Microcats) that can continuously log temperature and salinity data, one of which was deployed this summer by XTO Energy on their Platform "C." The other was deployed near Nanwalek, in lower Cook Inlet. The goal of the deployments are to acquire time series measurements of temperature and salinity and to compare the point measurements to data collected during the larger study to ascertain their utility as proxies for freshwater originating in northern Cook Inlet and associated with the Alaska Coastal Current.

The main objectives of the overall study, conducted with Dr. Steve Okkonen of the



University of Alaska Fairbanks and Dr. Scott Pegau of the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve, are to improve our understanding of the temporal and spatial variations in the hydrography of central and lower Cook Inlet and to investigate the mechanism influencing these variations.

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PHOTO (right): A member of the XTO Energy Remote Access Technology team attaches a device to measure temperature and salinity in the Inlet.



Stakeholders Review Cook Inlet Refuges at November 1 Meeting

Stakeholders from across the Cook Inlet region gathered in Homer on November 1 for the first workgroup meeting to discuss Potential Places of Refuge or PPOR for the area. The meeting was held in the Homer City Council Chambers and attended by approximately 50 representatives from across the region.

When a vessel in distress needs refuge from foul weather or a safe place to effect repairs, there may be many options or only a few depending on its size and the danger it presents. As residents saw with the T/V Seabulk Pride grounding last winter in Cook Inlet, Kachemak Bay may be the only realistic choice for a stricken vessel. PPOR addresses this need by identifying locations in advance of an incident and providing that information to mariners throughout the region.

Cook Inlet RCAC and others have worked with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation to designate funding for PPOR in Cook Inlet during the new budget cycle that began July 1, 2006. Since Kachemak Bay figures prominently in most PPOR discussions, organizers decided to meet in Homer for this first round of discussion with fisherman, marine pilots, native representatives, city, state, and federal agency representatives.

Kachemak Bay is a National Estuarine Research Reserve with well-documented marine resources and several communities along its shores. The deepwater port is also one of the most attractive places for large vessel because of its size, sufficient depth, ice free

waters, mooring locations, and readily available labor and equipment. The potential risk to the area requires additional scrutiny for any plans to use it as a place of refuge and that we maintain appropriate response capability locally.

PPOR locations become part of a database that contains information about the area, what size vessel the location can accommodate, and what resources may be found there to best aid a disabled vessel. Because the sites can be pre-identified, responders and regulators may have better options for dealing with a stricken vessel.

All of the meetings are open to the public and Cook Inlet RCAC will announce dates for the subsequent meetings. If you would like to be notified automatically, please enter your name and email address on the front page of our web site, www.circac.org.

KODIAK PPOR

The Kodiak PPOR workgroup recently identified ninety-six possible sites in that area. These will be developed into 11 or 12 site maps. Both the PPOR and Geographic Response Strategies complement each other since selection of one could trigger the development of the other.

The work group reviewed recent progress and agreed on some additions and modifications to be completed. The edited version is posted on the state web site and the Kodiak PPOR has been forwarded for inclusion to the Kodiak Sub-area Contingency Plan.

Preview Streamlines C-Plan Review

Cook Inlet RCAC staff has been soliciting C-Plans from the Cook Inlet plan holders prior to their application to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation in order to expedite the review process.

Doing so allows Cook Inlet RCAC a longer review period, minimizes delays, and allows time for the plan holder to consider our recommendations and to make changes streamlining the formal process.

Since May, Cook Inlet RCAC has reviewed

and commented on the Escopeta Oil and Gas plan and the XTO Energy and the Elmendorf AFB plans (through a funding agreement with the Municipality of Anchorage and Mat-Su Borough). Marathon's Beaver Creek Production Facility plan went through the second round Request for Additional Information with notable positive changes and improvements leading to plan approval.

The *Seabulk Pride* Vessel Response Plan is also currently under review.

Harbors to Get Closer Look Under Program

Cook Inlet RCAC recently allocated \$10,000 toward a project to design harbor-specific response strategies to contain spills within harbors. Cook Inlet RCAC Executive Director Michael Munger brokered an agreement with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) that would allow this project to merge with the ADEC Fishing Vessels/Clean Harbor Initiative.

That initiative began in 2004 to develop recommendations and strategies for reducing the number of oil spills from fishing vessels in the State of Alaska. In FY 07, the focus of this spill prevention initiative will be expanded to incorporate projects that are boat harbor-based and include recreational boating as well. Spill prevention projects that involve fishing vessels

typically have the same goals and are similar in design to those included in Clean Harbors (Marinas) initiatives that are gaining support throughout the United States. In both initiatives, projects involve bilge water management, waste disposal, environmentally-friendly boat maintenance and providing oil spill response materials on docks. Since the Federal and local participants in both efforts are the same, this is a natural expansion of focus. This project has been discussed with Conoco/Phillips and they have tentatively agreed to also provide funding. Anyone touring our harbor areas will see the associated sheens, creating a lasting impression of the less than pristine condition. These projects combined will go a long way toward dealing with this problem.

Hydrographic Science Study *(continued)*

For the past several years, the scientists have been taking measurements of temperature and salinity from onboard local fishing and charter vessels during different seasons to determine freshwater influences from upper Cook Inlet and the Alaska Coastal Current on Cook Inlet's circulation. From these hydrographic measurements, the seasonal cycle of density-driven, geostrophic circulation within the inlet can be derived. A need for more detailed measurements during late summer and early drove the bimonthly measurements in 2006 and led to the deployments of the Seabird Microcats.

Deploying instruments in upper Cook Inlet is a real challenge for scientists due to the extremely high tidal energy and expense in working in that environment with underwater divers. XTO Energy offered the expertise of their engineers to design and develop a method for deploying the instrument on one of their

platforms. XTO Production Superintendent Scott Griffith commented that he was happy to have the opportunity to play a role in advancing our understanding of the Inlet.

"The guys on the RAT (Remote Access Technology) really worked to put the device in place down there on the leg and it was pretty exciting to watch. We're looking forward to putting it back out there after the ice is gone next spring and continuing this project with CIRCAC and Dr. Okkonen."

Due to some of the technical complexity, the device deployed in August and was retrieved a few weeks later and rescheduled for spring 2007 to prevent damage or loss from sea ice. The Nanwalek C-T sensor was deployed by Dr. Pegau on a bottom-mounted mooring in late spring 2006 and will be recovered in April or May 2007.

Calendar of Events

November 1	Cook Inlet Places of Refuge Meeting, Homer
November 5-8	SETAC - Global Environment & Sustainability, Montreal
November 8-9	KPB Incident Command System Training, Soldotna
November 10	Veterans' Day Holiday - Offices Closed
November 13	Intelligent Pigging of Pipelines, Anchorage
November 15-17	Alaska Municipal League Meeting, Juneau
November 23-24	Thanksgiving Holiday - Offices Closed



Kodiak GRIN Prototype Completed

Contractors working for Cook Inlet RCAC on the Geographic Resource Information Network or GRIN Project recently completed the prototype that will help guide development for other communities. GRIN takes existing information from a number of sources, supplements that information as needed, and compiles both electronic and paper documents that allow the user to easily locate and view logistical information relevant to oil spill response in coastal Alaska.

Information in the GRIN is organized by community, so that incident personnel assigned to a specific community (or a number of communities within a larger geographic region) are able to access a broad range of community-specific information in one central location. Four major categories of information will be addressed - logistics, safety, public information, and liaison.

In some ways, this project represents a first step toward developing an "online" or paperless version of the Subarea Contingency Plans. Much of the logistical, public information, and safety information in the Subarea plans will be incorporated into the GRIN; however, instead of relying on text-based descriptions in a printed plan, the GRIN will use maps and pictures to provide responders with a visual reference to accompany textual information. The project is

also developed for use online - both web-available and transportable via CD or DVD.

CIRCAC is very excited to watch the development of this project and looks forward to expanding it throughout Cook Inlet.



CIRCAC Membership Forms Due

Four seats on CIRCAC's 13-member Board of Directors will expire February 23, 2007 and either the incumbent or a newly elected volunteer will fill those seats for the new term. The seats represent: Recreational, State Chamber of Commerce, and the cities of Seldovia and Anchorage.

The two municipal seats are appointed by their respective mayor or city council and serve for three years. The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce appoints their representative. The Recreational Interest Group seat is elected by the member groups in that category. Groups whose focus is on Recreational Activities in Cook Inlet should contact CIRCAC no later than November 30 to apply for membership for this election cycle. CIRCAC will solicit nominations from member groups and ballots

will be mailed January 6, 2007.

If your recreational organization maintains an interest in issues regarding environmentally safe marine transportation and oil facilities operations in Cook Inlet and Kodiak, please contact Karen Delaney at 907.283.7222 and speak to a staff member about an application for membership. Membership is free. CIRCAC's Board of Directors serve as volunteers and receive no compensation. For more information please contact our offices.

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