

Rear Admiral Matthew T. Bell, Jr. Seventeenth District Commander (D17) United States Coast Guard  
PO Box 25517

Juneau, AK 99802-5517  
DOC Number USCG-2020-0188

Re: Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (CIRCAC) Recertification Dear Admiral Bell:

I serve as Executive Director of the Oil Spill Recovery Institute (OSRI) and President & CEO of the Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) in Cordova, Alaska. I am writing to support recertification of the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (CIRCAC) as the alternative voluntary advisory group for Cook Inlet, in accordance with the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. Established after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, CIRCAC has worked diligently to fulfill its mission representing the citizens of Cook Inlet in promoting environmentally safe marine transportation and oil facility operations.

CIRCAC has broad representation from coastal communities at risk from oil industry operations in the Inlet. Its meetings are well advertised and open to the public and are an example of how citizens can come together to provide thoughtful input and oversight. CIRCAC representatives provide reports to residents, organizations, and governing entities of the region and they have established an excellent network for communications on issues related to oil spill prevention and response while seeking public input on issues of concern.

CIRCAC has worked closely with industry, regulators, and industry experts to evaluate risks and propose solutions, leading to improved response readiness. They are often the only non-agency entity that reviews oil spill contingency plans and regulations for the Cook Inlet area. Several on-line tools initially developed by CIRCAC to improve access to information during oil spill planning and response have been modeled for other areas of the state, including the Alaska ShoreZone program (now administered state-wide by NOAA and involving dozens of partnering

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organizations), the Cook Inlet Response Tool (CIRT), and the Geographic Resource Information Database (GRID).

CIRCAC's science program provides invaluable data about coastal habitats, physical oceanography and oil behavior. Their collections of background and pre-spill information have filled large data gaps and provide contexts in which to interpret and understand other information and data in the Gulf of Alaska. The imagery collected during their aerial and shore-based surveys within the Alaska ShoreZone program ensures quick access to low-tide imagery and habitat data, often some of the first information gathered at oil spill drills and spills. Their most recent studies on oil-mineral-aggregates and marine-oil-snow are furthering our

understanding of the potential fate and transport of oil in the water column and to benthic habitats.

I believe CIRCAC meets and exceeds the requirements of OPA '90 regarding citizen oversight of Cook Inlet's oil industry operations. They have been a valued partner to other organizations by sharing funding, facilities, knowledge, and experience. As such, I strongly support CIRCAC's recertification. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Katrina Hoffman

Executive Director, Oil Spill Recovery Institute President & CEO, Prince William Sound Science Center  
khoffman@pwssc.org