

# Alaska State Legislature

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Rules Committee  
Labor and Commerce Committee  
Legislative Council  
Judiciary Committee



**REPRESENTATIVE LOUISE STUTES**  
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Date: July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020

To: Rear Admiral Matthew T. Bell, Jr.  
Commander 17<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District  
United States Coast Guard

Re: Support for Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council Recertification

Dear Admiral Bell,

I am writing in full support of recertification of the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (CIRCAC). For 30 years, CIRCAC has been Cook Inlet's most effective organization for promoting programs to prevent spills, enhance safety in both marine transportation and oil facilities operations, and protect Cook Inlet's waters, shorelines, as well as its cultural, natural and wildlife resources.

Not only does CIRCAC advocate for better regulatory oversight and safety measures, it contributes concrete solutions on how to achieve those goals. This includes conducting risk assessments, sharing data, developing applicable tools and strategies, evaluating best available technology, engaging the public, and thoroughly reviewing contingency plans and regulations that prioritize prevention while promoting safety. No other organization has focused as much attention for as many years to identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks in this region.

CIRCAC has been proactive in identifying risks and developing recommendations to address them; one example is the recently completed Cook Inlet Pipeline Integrity Assessment. Through this project, a full catalog of Cook Inlet's undersea pipeline system was documented allowing a panel of experts, operators, and the public to recommend risk reduction measures before problems arise.

Working with industry, CIRCAC has also been able to achieve the long-term goal of closing the Drift River Oil Terminal on the West side of Cook Inlet. Situated at the base of Mt. Redoubt, Drift River posed a significant safety hazard in the event of a natural disaster. Now, that oil is transported via pipeline, greatly reducing unnecessary risk.

CIRCAC's science program provides valuable data about coastal habitats, physical oceanography, and oil behavior. Current research will generate new information about how biological debris interacts with oil as it moves through the water column.

CIRCAC continues to strengthen oil spill contingency plans and recommend substantive changes to ensure facilities are adequately staffed and that the plans are executable.

CIRCAC's accomplishments in the last three years include, but are certainly not limited to:

- Completing multi-year near-shore habitat assessment
- Launching groundbreaking study of marine snow as an oil transporter
- Advocating for a strengthening of oil spill prevention and response regulations
- Increasing public outreach efforts through new local advertising and exhibits, and expanding audiences for its newsletter, website, and social media
- Expanding Geographic Response Information Database (GRID) in scope and accessibility
- Working with regulators to maintain a robust Vessels of Opportunity program
- Upgrading the Cook Inlet Ice Monitoring Camera Network with modern video technology

Since its inception, CIRCAC has formed and strengthened partnerships and encouraged consensus decision-making. Through this process, CIRCAC brings a varied group of stakeholders together to create environmental monitoring and oil spill prevention programs to promote safe production and transportation of oil in Cook Inlet.

I strongly urge the U.S. Coast Guard to recertify CIRCAC so that it can continue to build on its work and positively impact the future of Cook Inlet.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louise Stutes". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Representative Louise Stutes  
Chair, House Transportation Committee  
Chair, House Fisheries Committee  
Alaska State Legislature