



*Cook Inlet  
Regional  
Citizens  
Advisory  
Council*

*Annual Report  
2011*



*Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (Cook Inlet RCAC) was created by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90), specifically to combat complacency by creating an avenue for public participation in the oversight of the Cook Inlet oil industry. Since its inception, Cook Inlet RCAC has formed partnerships and encouraged consensus decision making.*

*The Mission of the Cook Inlet RCAC is to represent the Citizens of Cook Inlet in promoting environmentally safe marine transportation and oil facility operations in Cook Inlet.*



*A crane from the CISPRI vessel Perseverance lowers a 56 disc Crucial skimmer into Current Buster boom in a Kachemak Bay training deployment in October.*

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## ***Executive Welcome ~***

***By: John Williams, President  
& Michael Munger, Executive Director***

Cook Inlet RCAC confronted a great deal of change and challenge in 2011. It was also a year of significant accomplishment and promise.

We are fortunate to have a dedicated and committed corps of volunteers, from our appointed and elected Council Directors and Alternates representing thirteen stakeholder groups, to Ex-Officio representatives, to Council and public committee members. We simply couldn't fulfill our Mission without their leadership and support, and we thank them. Similarly, our national, state and local officials have embraced our core mandates and the programs and projects undertaken to manage them, as have our corporate funding sources in the industry.

We successfully achieved our full triennial Federal Recertification from the U.S. Coast Guard. It remains a testament to our exemplary performance and effective public outreach that our stakeholders, elected officials, industry, and prominent members of the community so solidly support our work. We appreciate the ongoing demonstration of confidence.

Cook Inlet RCAC finally launched the long-awaited Cook Inlet Risk Assessment project, a two-year, \$1 million project. This Federally-mandated undertaking is typical of our projects in that it utilizes a highly collaborative process with multiple partners and funding sources. Read more about this critical initiative later in this Annual Report.

The highly anticipated arrival of new Cook Inlet oil and gas exploration was realized in 2011, throwing our Oil Discharge and Spill Contingency Plan review function into high gear, accelerating an already busy schedule of spill training exercises and drills with these new operators. We've seen a corresponding escalation of capabilities from the local oil spill recovery organizations active in Cook Inlet in terms of equipment, technology and personnel.

Similarly, our environmental monitoring programs remained at the forefront of our activities. We've seen significant advances in the long-standing ShoreZone project; a launch of the Beluga Whale Winter Prey and Habitat Study; greater accessibility of our integrated environmental monitoring data, and the continuation of contaminants and ballast water monitoring.

The partnerships, collaborations and relationships we form to pursue our mandates are invaluable, and we are grateful for the opportunity to serve the stakeholders and citizens of Cook Inlet.

*John Williams*

President

*Michael Munger*

Executive Director

***OPA 90 mandates that the Cook Inlet RCAC represent the citizens of Cook Inlet through the active participation on the Council of specific Stakeholder groups. Our Council members are appointed or elected by their respective organizations to staggered three-year terms.***

***Board of Directors ~***

John Williams  
President  
City of Kenai

Grace Merkes  
Vice President  
Kenai Peninsula Borough

Gary Fandrei  
Secretary / Treasurer  
Aquaculture Associations

Elizabeth Chilton  
Kodiak Island Borough

Bob Flint  
Recreational Interests

Rob Lindsey  
City of Kodiak

Deric Marcorelle  
Environmental Organizations

Molly McCammon  
Municipality of Anchorage

Allison Miller  
City of Seldovia

Michael Opheim  
Alaska Native Organizations

Robert Peterkin, II  
Alaska Chamber of Commerce

Carla Stanley  
City of Homer

Jay Stinson  
Commercial Fishing Organizations

***Ex-Officio Members ~***

Gary Folley  
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

Bruce Buzby / Saree Timmons  
Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources - Div. of Oil & Gas

Joe Dygas  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management - Office of Pipeline Monitoring

Richard Prentki, Ph.D.  
U.S. Bureau of Ocean Management (formerly BOEMRE)

Patricia Winn  
U.S. Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management

Matt Carr  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

John Whitney  
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration

Captain Jason A. Fosdick  
U. S. Coast Guard - Captain of the Port of Anchorage

Gary Lehnhausen  
U.S. Forest Service

***Staff ~***

Michael Munger, Executive Director  
Karen Delaney, Assistant Executive Director  
Susan Saupe, Director of Science & Research  
Steven "Vinnie" Catalano, Director of Operations  
Jerry Rombach / Trenten Dodson, Directors of Public Outreach  
Dinelle Penrod, Administrative Assistant  
Maritta Newgren, Accounting & Grants Manager  
Cindy Sanguinetti, Transcriber

## **Cook Inlet Risk Assessment**

Though fortunately not commonplace, with a significant number of ships of all kinds transiting Cook Inlet the possibility of a serious navigational accident is always present. The Inlet and surrounding area are subject to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, strong tides and currents, floating debris, harsh weather and severe ice conditions that make navigation hazardous. In addition, the challenges to pilots are only exacerbated by man-made obstructions on the surface and on the sea bed, by a wide variety of vessel types, fuels and cargos, and by human error.



For these reasons, Cook Inlet RCAC has long championed the need for of a Cook Inlet Risk Assessment (CIRA). An assessment would help determine: what can go wrong; how likely it is that an incident could happen; how the incident might be prevented; and should an accident occur, how would the effects best be mitigated. Over the past decade, we have held several forums on the subject, advocated for a formal study with our Congressional delegation, and pursued fundraising (see inset).

### ***Cook Inlet Risk Assessment Funding***

<b><i>\$ 250,000</i></b>	<b><i>ADEC/Kenai Peninsula Borough</i></b>
<b><i>180,000</i></b>	<b><i>National Fish &amp; Wildlife Federation</i></b>
<b><i>20,000</i></b>	<b><i>Tesoro</i></b>
<b><i>20,000</i></b>	<b><i>Prince William Sound RCAC</i></b>
<b><i>\$ 470,000</i></b>	

In late 2010, Congress mandated the U.S. Coast Guard undertake the CIRA. We formed a Management Team consisting of Cook Inlet RCAC, Coast Guard and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), and selected Nuka Research to serve as Project Manager. Nuka created a project website ([www.cookinletriskassessment.com](http://www.cookinletriskassessment.com)). We selected an Advisory Panel of experts and alternate members representing stakeholder groups which began to meet in late 2011. As the year drew to a close, a Vessel

Traffic Study was completed, and under the direction of the Management Team with input from the Advisory Panel, a framework for a Spill & Accident Causality Study was being developed for release in the 2nd quarter of 2012. A Consequences Workshop will be held in fall 2012.

Before completion, the CIRA is expected to take two years and cost an estimated \$1 million.



***Cruise ships and ferries are among the vessel types considered by the CIRA Vessel Traffic Study and Spill & Accident Causality Study***

# ***Oil Spill Prevention & Response***

Vital to our mission and the protection of Cook Inlet is our review of the operators' plans for prevention and spill response for oil facilities and transportation in the Inlet. But that's far from all we do.

## ***C Plan Reviews:***

Cook Inlet RCAC is a named reviewer by state statute. Staff and the Protocol committee reviewed seven Oil Discharge and Spill Contingency Plans (C Plans) in 2011 for new and existing operators in Cook Inlet. These plans may well exceed 200 pages of highly detailed and technical material, including charts, product and equipment specifications, and more. Staff literally reviews these documents page by page, poring over every detail, cross-referencing footnotes, looking for gaps, discrepancies, and evidence of ability to perform, while compiling extensive notes and comments. Recommendations and requests for additional information are then reviewed by the Protocol Committee prior to submission to ADEC.

## ***Spill Training Exercises & Drills:***

In conjunction with the reviews and recommendations, plans are tested annually through spill training exercises, drills and equipment deployments. In 2011, staff and even board members participated in six such exercises, for Chevron, Tesoro, Escopeta/Furie (2), XTO Energy and Marathon Oil. There are two types of drills: table top and table top with equipment deployment. Both typically involve the Unified Command, made up of the Responsible Party and Federal and State On-Scene Coordinators (most often the Coast Guard and ADEC). We are usually assigned to Operations and Public Information sections. The main objective is to exercise the Incident Command System (ICS) and response actions as presented in the Responsible Party's C Plan.

In a training exercise, a hypothetical spill "scenario" is presented and all aspects of the ICS are tested. Throughout the exercise, "injects", or changes to the scenario, are identified. These may be changes in weather, environmental impacts or on-scene conditions such as injuries or equipment failures.

Immediately following the drill, agencies, Cook Inlet RCAC, and drill participants critique the ICS and field response (in cases of equipment deployments) and make recommendations for improvements.



***CISPRI technicians are briefed prior to the Tesoro drill in October.***

## ***Alaska Regional Response Team (ARRT):***

Staff regularly attends ARRT meetings, providing valuable input whenever appropriate. The ARRT is an advisory board to the Federal On-Scene Coordinator that provides federal, state, and local governmental agencies with the means to participate in response to pollution incidents.

Additionally, the ARRT provides a regional mechanism for deployment and coordination of preparedness activities before a response action is taken. In addition, it offers guidance to Subarea Committees to ensure consistency of inter-area and individual Subarea Contingency Plans (SCPs) and of individual SCPs with the Regional and National Contingency Plans. Sub-Area Committees work in consultation with the ARRT to focus on and address issues such as amendments and updates to the sub-area plans; the inclusion of Geographic Response Strategies and Potential Places of Refuge into sub-area plans; the ARRT Tribal Government Outreach and Consultation Guidelines; and much more.

**Regulations:**

Our PROPS and Environmental Monitoring Committees review staff recommendations concerning proposed state and federal regulations or agency rules and procedures. For example, we recommended that operators' blowout prevention contingency plans be a part of the operator's Oil Discharge and Spill Contingency Plans, and that the Alaska Oil & Gas Conservation Commission assume the task of reviewing these plans. We expect action on this proposed change soon.

**Ice Observation & Forecasting Network:**

Cook Inlet RCAC led the effort to see cameras mounted throughout central and upper Cook Inlet. Six cameras are now active: at Port Mackenzie, the Port of Anchorage, on offshore platforms and onshore facilities. We are seeking funds for additional cameras to be mounted offshore on a platform.

Through this network, the NOAA Ice Forecaster in Anchorage provides interpretations to the Coast Guard prior to activating the operating procedures for ice conditions in Cook Inlet (known as the winter guidelines). In addition, these cameras are used in the command center by emergency responders, providing real time images of on-scene conditions to the emergency responders in the command center.



*Furie's Spartan Jack-up rig is positioned into place.*



**Oil Spill Recovery Organizations (OSRO):**

Staff collaborates with the regional OSROs in the demonstration, evaluation, and certification of best available technologies for oil spill clean-up. We help evaluate their response capabilities and effectiveness through participation in spill training exercises and deployments. The area is fortunate to have the services of Cook Inlet Spill Prevention & Response, Inc. (CISPRI), Alaska Chadux, the Seldovia Oil Spill Response Team, and by agreement, the Ship Escort/Response Vessel System (SERVS) of Prince William Sound available to respond in Cook Inlet. CISPRI has recently installed a test tank for measuring skimmer performance and for proper operation after maintenance or repair of existing skimmers. It also allows spill responders to practice their skimmer operating skills using Cook Inlet crude oil in sea water and even ice - an opportunity that is not available unless there is an actual spill.

## ***Environmental Monitoring***

A major focus of our efforts in 2011 was to provide better access to information and photography obtained during our prior science and monitoring projects and programs. By improving our communication of study results, we can maximize future partnerships and minimize duplication. In addition, we can ensure important data can be used for oil spill planning and response. Another goal was to excite local citizens about the magnificent marine environment in Cook Inlet and the Gulf of Alaska.

### ***Integrated Cook Inlet Environmental Monitoring & Assessment Program (ICIEMAP) Posters:***

Over the years, Cook Inlet RCAC has completed a long list of habitat and contaminant studies throughout Cook Inlet.

Our most comprehensive water and sediment quality study to date was the ICIEMAP program that was based on protocols adopted by the National Coastal Assessment program. During the fall of 2011, we prepared a series of seven scientific posters summarizing the ICIEMAP program. The presentations at the January 2012 Alaska Marine Science Symposium raised considerable interest, especially about the scope of the project and the taxonomists' descriptions of potentially new invertebrate species collected in bottom sediments. In the near future, the data will become even more accessible to the public once they are integrated with another project, described below, the goal of which is to provide a visualization tool for multiple Cook Inlet spacial data layers.



*Dr. Mark Savoie describes hydrocarbon data from ICIEMAP Posters at Alaska Marine Science Symposium*

### ***Beluga Winter Prey and Habitat:***

Funding was secured from the Kenai Peninsula Borough (\$102,000 for a grant proposal entitled "Oil Related Contamination in Prey Availability in Winter Habitat of Cook Inlet Beluga Whales"), with an additional \$40,000 plus in-kind scientific support contributed by Cook Inlet RCAC. Everything was in place for the samoling to begin in November. But in Alaska the best of intentions are sometimes completely thwarted by weather, and so it was with our Beluga whale winter prey and habitat research project, as the endeavor was delayed by high winds and rough seas. We resumed trawling sampling work in late April of 2012, and are planning a short trip again late fall.

## ***Oil Spill Prevention & Response (concluded)***



*PROPS Committee meets at CISPRI*

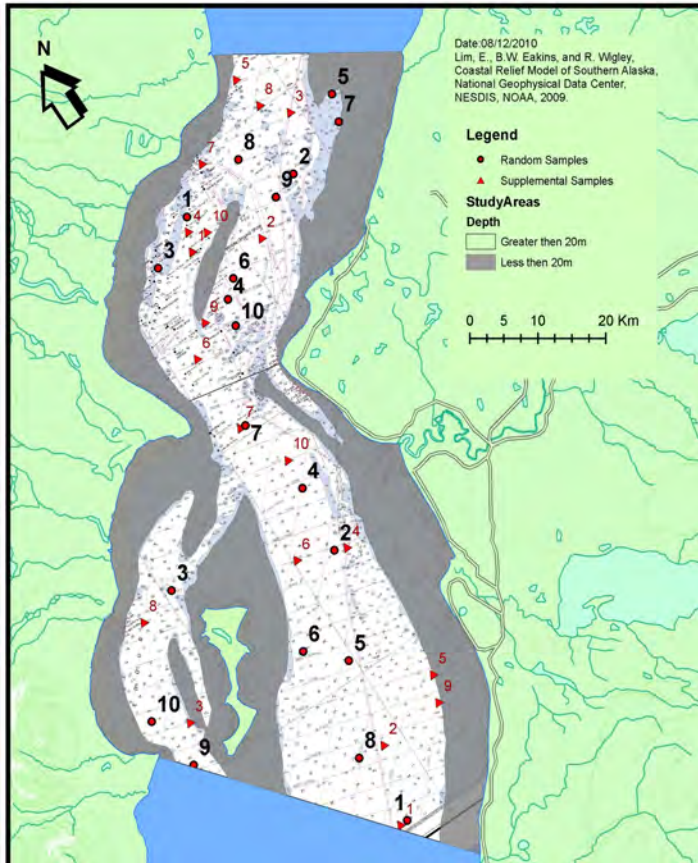
### ***Prevention, Response, Operations & Safety Committee ~***

Director Members	Public Members
Bob Flint	Jerry Brookman
Rob Lindsey	Barry Eldridge, V-Chair
Deric Marcorelle, Chair	Lois Epstein
Grace Merkes	Robert Favretto
Robert Peterkin, II	Scott Hamann
Carla Stanley	Ted Moore
	Bill Osborn

### ***Protocol Committee ~***

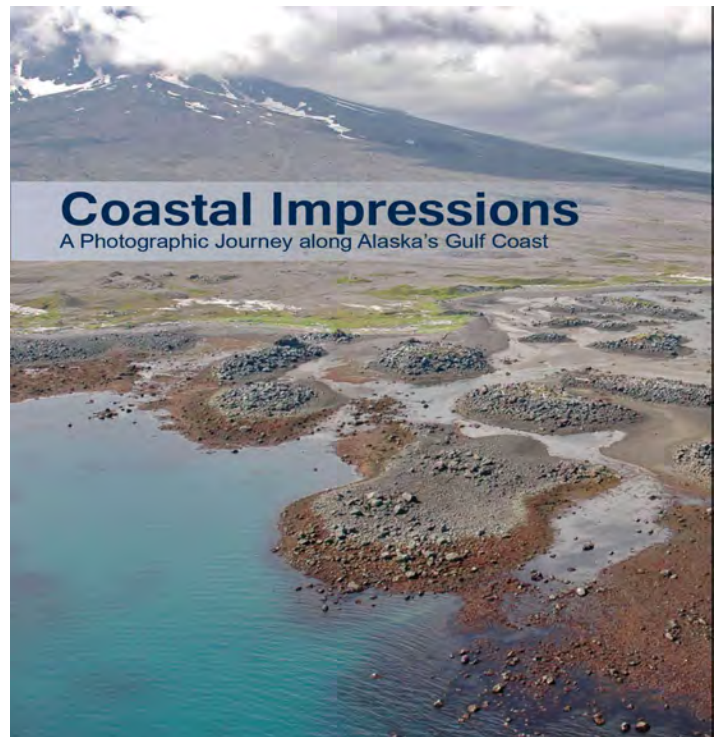
Elizabeth Chilton	Robert Peterkin, II, Chair
Deric Marcorelle	John Williams
Grace Merkes	





*A NOAA field map shows locations of Beluga whale trawling sites*

Our on-the-ground shore station project - which was developed to nest within the larger ShoreZone website - was presented at the 2011 Kodiak Area Science Symposium and at the national meeting of the American Fisheries Society in Seattle. As for the mapped habitats, we are now focusing our efforts on improving access to data and imagery during oil spill planning and response efforts, and to educational uses of the dramatic shoreline images.



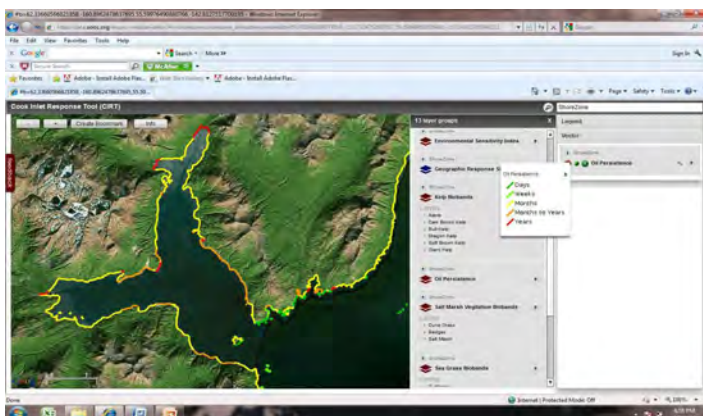
**Coastal Impressions Exhibit:**

An exciting ShoreZone-related project is the newly created gallery exhibit, *Coastal Impressions: A Journey Along Alaska's Gulf Coast*, sponsored by Cook Inlet RCAC. We selected over sixty photographs from the tens of thousands of digital images collected during ShoreZone aerial surveys, and printed and mounted them in large format to illustrate the range of coastal processes that shape our shores. *Coastal Impressions* is intended to be a traveling exhibit of some of the most beautiful and descriptive photographs obtained during ShoreZone aerial and ground surveys. Authors Sue Saupe, Mandy Lindeberg and Dr. Carl Schoch developed a companion catalog that provides the history of Alaska ShoreZone and describes the habitats and coastal processes associated with each of the dramatic images in the exhibit.

The primary research team (Cook Inlet RCAC, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Motes Marine Lab), will trawl Cook Inlet to study the winter food sources and habitat of the unique Cook Inlet Belugas. With the whale population recently placed on the Endangered Species List, the project should go a long way toward identifying the availability and health of potential winter prey, while also providing data on contaminants.

**Alaska ShoreZone:**

We continue to be active with a group of more than forty organizations and agencies in the Alaska ShoreZone Partnership, formed after Cook Inlet RCAC initiated the Alaska program in 2011.



**Cook Inlet Response Tool:**

We initiated a great deal of our environmental monitoring and habitat mapping work to aid in oil spill prevention and response. In 2011 we prioritized our goal of providing quick access to project results. We partnered with the Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS) to merge ShoreZone data and imagery with natural resources data, ocean and atmospheric observations data collected from real-time sensors, and with ocean current and wind models. The product is a web-based visualization tool developed by the AOOS data team that will allow oil spill prevention planners and responders to choose and quickly view and merge data, imagery, sensors and model predictions.

**Cook Inlet Oceanography:**

Our past projects and partnerships have improved our understanding of Cook Inlet’s complex oceanography. We know for example that the interaction of broken winter ice with strong tidal currents leads to significant navigational challenges. We recently assisted Tesoro in the production of an ice and winter navigation training video for mariners operating in Cook Inlet. In 2011, we initiated a project to deploy a weather station in the Kamishak Bay area to provide real-time data for improved atmospheric modeling in Cook Inlet. These models lead to improved estimates of ocean currents and, in turn, improved oil spill trajectory models. Because weather prevented the flight during our short window of opportunity in August, the instruments will be placed in Kamishak Bay in summer of 2012 through our partnership with AOOS, the Prince William Sound Science Center, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture.

**Technical Review Program:**

In August, our contractors at Nuka Research demonstrated a unique way to provide online data and summary graphics and reports for both our ballast water catalog and our Discharge Monitoring Report catalog projects. These projects will provide quick access to data about volumes and treatment methods for ships’ ballast water discharged into Cook Inlet, as well as information about volumes and contaminants associated with produced water and other discharges to the marine environment

by oil industry operations in Cook Inlet. The data improve our ability to provide accurate and targeted comments on proposed regulations, legislation and permits.

We also collaborated in a dispersants review workshop coordinated by the Coastal Response Research Center with representatives with dispersant research or operational expertise from public and private institutions from all over the world. Director of Science and Research Sue Saupe represented Cook Inlet RCAC at “The Future of Dispersant Use in Spill Response” in Mobile, Alabama in September.



The overall goals for the workshop were to evaluate current information on monitoring, behavior, effects and fate of dispersants, and to identify information gaps. A priority list of recommended research projects was developed that should improve our knowledge about dispersants in order to better understand risks and trade-offs associated with dispersant applications. A report providing summary white papers and the recommended research goals was published in spring 2012.

**Environmental Monitoring Committee ~**

**Director Members**

- Elizabeth Chilton, Chair
- Bob Flint
- Deric Marcorelle
- Molly McCammon
- Carla Stanley
- Jay Stinson

**Public Members**

- Paul Blanche
- Steve Hunt
- Merritt Mitchell
- Kashif Naser
- James Showalter
- Daniel Urban
- Craig Valentine

## ***Public Involvement***

Communicating with stakeholders and citizens of the Cook Inlet area is a prime directive of the Cook Inlet RCAC, and it is a role each of our staff and Directors takes very seriously.

“Public outreach” might involve such diverse activities as updating our Legislative delegation or Borough Assembly; presenting a scientific abstract or posters at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium; handing out balloons at the Kenai Industry Appreciation Days; addressing oil spill response professionals at the Clean Pacific Conference; engaging 4th grade students with our Cook Inlet diorama; delivering a presentation to business leaders at a Support Industry Alliance function; or simply chatting with someone at a Chamber luncheon.

Formally, we offer our website ([www.circac.org](http://www.circac.org)), and launched a Facebook presence. Our numerous publications (a quarterly Directors Synopsis summary of Board proceedings, an Annual Report, and quarterly Council Briefs newsletter) are extensively distributed. We make presentations to business, science, and governmental audiences, and regularly engage educators. Cook Inlet RCAC routinely issues news releases on key matters and the projects and programs we undertake. Outreach to local, state, national and industry-specific media outlets is an ongoing initiative, as directed by our Strategic Plan.

In the most serious vein is our role in the event of an actual spill incident. Through our history of effective collaboration, we are privileged to have a place in the Unified Command Center during oil spill training exercises and drills, and should an actual spill occur. Typically, staff is assigned to assist the Public Information Officer, helping shape and present the important messages released to the media, government officials and the public.

As you’ve read elsewhere in this report, Cook Inlet RCAC participated in six such exercises during 2011, affording us the opportunity to test the elements of our incident public information procedures, as well as the effectiveness of operators’ spill prevention and response plans which we helped to review and improve.

*Vinnie and Robin Catalano share balloons, information and a laugh with interested Kenai Peninsula residents at “Industry Appreciation Days” in August*



## ***Photo Credits ~***

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Alaska Department of Tourism; Michael Opheim; Gary Fandrei, Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association

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Carla Stanley

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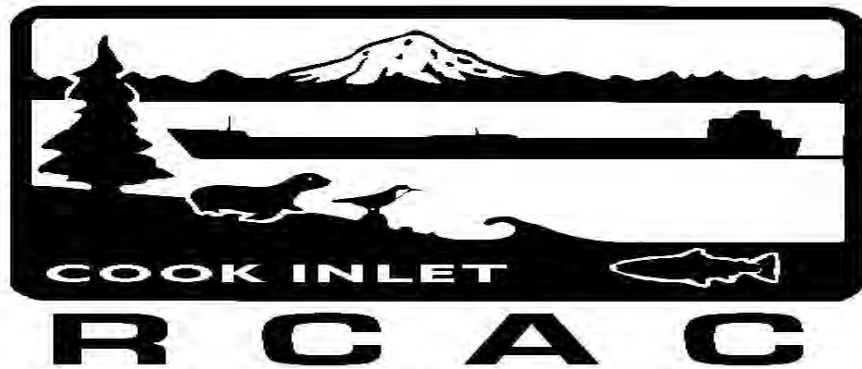
National Oceanic & Atmospheric  
Administration  
Alaska Ocean Observing System

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Cook Inlet RCAC



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