

# 2020 Annual Report

## CIRCAC



# From the President and Executive Director

Along with the rest of the world, the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council operated under a unique and challenging set of circumstances in 2020. The global COVID-19 pandemic demanded new approaches to the work we do. We are happy to report that despite those challenges we quickly adapted to remote work and fulfilled the duties of our mission while keeping our Board, committee, and staff members safe.

Operating during the pandemic forced us to adjust our priorities and we were unable to celebrate our 30th anniversary as we would have liked. At the same time, 2020 highlighted many of our organization's strengths. The Council was established following a disastrous event, the grounding of the oil tanker Exxon Valdez, that had not been fully anticipated or properly planned for. The alarming scope of that incident demanded an organization that would be able to see the potential for the unexpected and navigate those conditions as safely as possible.

Assessing risk is simply a part of what we do and after three decades of successful operation, we have the tools to respond to any number of challenges, including a global pandemic. That experience has been recognized with an unblemished record for annual recertification by the United States Coast Guard.

The partnerships we have developed among industry, regulators, and with the public were key in ensuring continuity of our activities in 2020. We reviewed oil spill contingency plans and draft discharge permits, developed strategies for future research, applied for grants, co-authored manuscripts on our

Michael Munger,  
Executive Director



John Williams,  
Board President

prior work, awarded our annual scholarships to local students, contributed to the Cook Inlet Harbor Safety Committee and participated in drills and exercises.

In the first quarter of 2020, we launched an awareness campaign to bring attention to an evaluation of state statute by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation regarding oil spill preparedness and contingency planning. Those regulations have been developed and updated cooperatively with the state and industry over the last three decades. We maintain that any changes must strengthen existing law. We can point to numerous successes over the past 30 years - the closure of the Drift River Terminal, creating publicly accessible response tools, installing a network of ice monitoring cameras, developing risk assessments, providing scientific baseline environmental data and so much more - but none of those important accomplishments can replace vigilance and awareness; those are the most effective tools for keeping Cook Inlet's vast environmental, cultural, and economic resources protected for future generations.

After 30 years, we have a long record of accomplishments to be proud of, but more work remains. The past year has presented us all with many challenges but also left us even more prepared to anticipate and deal with unexpected events in the future while keeping a focus on our work to preserve and improve Alaska's world-class oil spill prevention and response system.

# Mission

*Representing citizens in promoting environmentally safe marine transportation and oil facility operations in Cook Inlet*





# Recertification

CIRCAC is required to apply for recertification by the U.S. Coast Guard each year. In 2020, public comment was received as part of a more comprehensive triennial review of our operations, partnerships and success in fulfilling the mandates of our guiding legislation in OPA 90. Earning this recognition is our highest priority in maintaining the public's trust and we were proud to earn recertification for a 29th consecutive year in 2020.



*"Not only does CIRCAC advocate for better regulatory oversight and safety measures, they contribute concrete solutions on how to achieve those goals."*

*-Suzanne Settle, CIRI*

*"...there can be no doubt that this citizen's organization has done tremendous good in the realm of environmental monitoring and oil spill prevention and response over the 30 years of their existence."*

*-Tim Robertson, Nuka Research*

# Incidents



Left: On the morning of September 30th, 2020 the Cook Inlet Spill Prevention and Response, Inc (CISPRI) Barge 141 parted its mooring due to high winds and heavy seas and was reported grounded approximately one-half mile south of the Offshore Systems Kenai (OSK) dock in Nikiski.

*Photo: Jade Gamble, Alaska DEC*

Following thorough evaluation and consultation with regulatory agencies, the tug Bob Franco assists CISPRI Barge 141 following its grounding near Nikiski.

*Photo: Todd Paxton, CISPRI*





# Contingency Plan Review

As a named Contingency Plan Reviewer, CIRCAC receives copies of each Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (ODPCP or C-Plan) that is scheduled for review. This review is performed by experienced staff and working through the Protocol Control Committee, comments and recommendations are developed and submitted to the state on behalf of CIRCAC's diverse stakeholder groups. We also provide comments and recommendations to Federal agencies about regulatory issues or proposed legislation and legislative changes related to our mandates as laid out in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90).

## 2020 C-Plan Reviews

- **02.28.20** Comments on Tesoro Kenai Pipeline Company Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan
- **03.12.20** Comments in response to Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan Public Scoping (18 AAC 75 Article 4)
- **5.19.20** Comments and Request For Additional Information regarding BlueCrest Alaska Operating, LLC Cook Inlet, Alaska Exploration Program Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan
- **6.16.20** Comments in response to Docket No. PHMSA-2918-0047, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
- **6.16.20** Comments on Alaska Inland Area Contingency Plan
- **7.10.20** Comments Regarding the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to Expand the Regulations on Vessel Certificate Of Financial Responsibility, Docket No.USCG-2017-0788
- **7.10.20** Comments on the U.S. Coast Guard Information Collection Request Regarding the National Response Resource Inventory Docket No. USCG-2020-0185
- **8.21.20** Comments and Request For Additional Information regarding Harvest Alaska, LLC Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan
- **10.4.20** Comments in response to Docket ID BSEE-2020-0014 (Agency Information Collection Activities; Oil-Spill Response Requirements for Facilities Located Seaward of the Coastline)
- **10.4.20** Comments in response to Docket ID BSEE-2020-0007 (Agency Information Collection Activities; Pipelines and Pipeline Rights-of-Way)
- **10.4.20** Comments on RFAI response regarding Tesoro Kenai Pipeline Company Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan, ADEC #: 15-CP-2083
- **12.21.20** Comments Regarding Application for Sundry Approvals Forms to modify current status of offshore exploration wells KLU 1, KLU 2A and KLU 4 from "Suspended" to "Plug and Abandoned"

# Pipeline Infrastructure Study

In June 2020, we released a report presenting the results of the Cook Inlet Pipeline Infrastructure Assessment, funded and managed by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) and Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (CIRCAC) from 2017-2020.

The goal of the project is to ensure the continued safe operation of the Cook Inlet oil and gas pipeline infrastructure by anticipating problems in this aging infrastructure, and recommending and implementing risk reduction measures before further loss of integrity events occur.

The Cook Inlet Pipeline Infrastructure Assessment was underway when a natural gas leak from a sub-sea pipeline in Cook Inlet occurred in February 2017, lasting more than four months before being repaired. The leak raised concerns about the condition of Cook Inlet's pipelines in general, many of which were installed in the 1960s.

An expert panel made nearly 40 specific recommendations intended to minimize the chance of release due to internal or external corrosion, incorrect operations, manufacturing or installation defects, equipment failure, third party/mechanical damage or weather or outside forces.





# Science Programs

In 2020, CIRCAC collaborated on a University of Alaska Fairbanks research proposal to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) through the Coastal Marine Institute. The successful proposal will explore the use of radium isotopes as tracers of groundwater inputs, flushing rates, and produced water in Cook Inlets. CIRCAC's role will be in the larger Cook Inlet study area of Phase 2, following a year or two of methods testing, analyses, and applications in Kachemak Bay by UAF researcher Dr. William Burt. He and his team were able to conduct a scaled-down field effort in 2020 and were successful in their sampling and analytical methods.

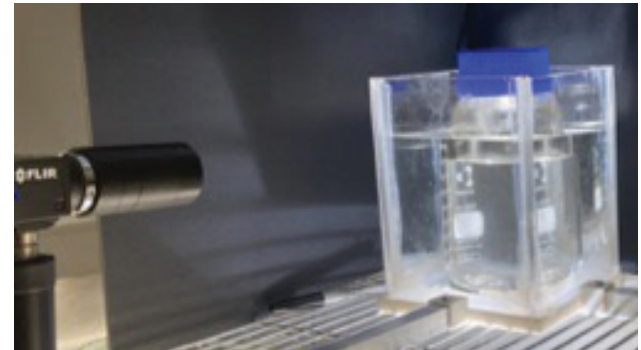
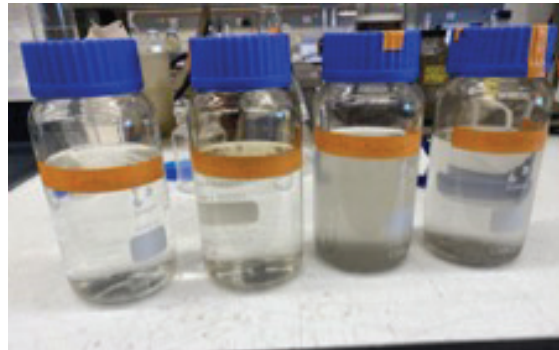
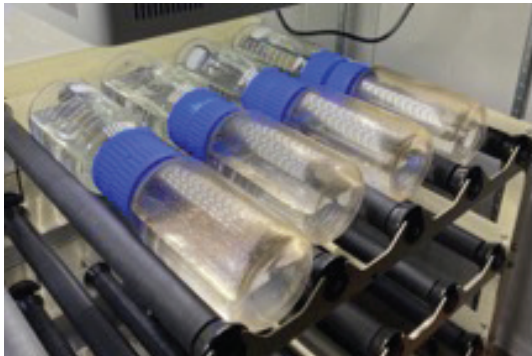
For other projects, COVID-19 restrictions forced the cancellation of field work by CIRCAC and many of our research partners in 2020. Yet, projects still moved forward by re-designing research into laboratory settings, acquiring new partners and funding for projects delayed by the pandemic, and developing new plans and collaborations for potential new studies.



# Marine Oil Snow

University of New Hampshire graduate student, Quinn Wilkins, is expanding CIRCAC-supported research regarding the potential role of marine snow in the fate of spilled oil in Cook Inlet. Marine snow is organic and inorganic detritus that falls through the water column and played a role in the transport and fate of oil during the DeepWater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Despite being unable to work in Alaska in 2020, Quinn redesigned his studies to be wholly conducted on the east coast by using a flume tank to measure particle aggregation, settling rates, and resuspension of particles at varying current speeds. By using Cook Inlet silt, a phytoplankton species common in the Gulf of Alaska, and oil transported throughout coastal Alaska in his laboratory studies, Quinn's research will help us better understand the potential fate of spilled oil in CIRCAC's areas of concern.



Roller table for marine snow formation (left), Oil and sediment treatments (middle), and settling tank (right) Photos by Quinn Wilkins.

Also in 2020, we worked with a team of researchers to complete a manuscript to help emergency responders and planners evaluate the potential for marine oil snow aggregates to reach the benthic environment for various environmental conditions and response decisions and Included is a forecasting spill decision tool. The paper was peer-reviewed in late 2020 and published in January 2021:

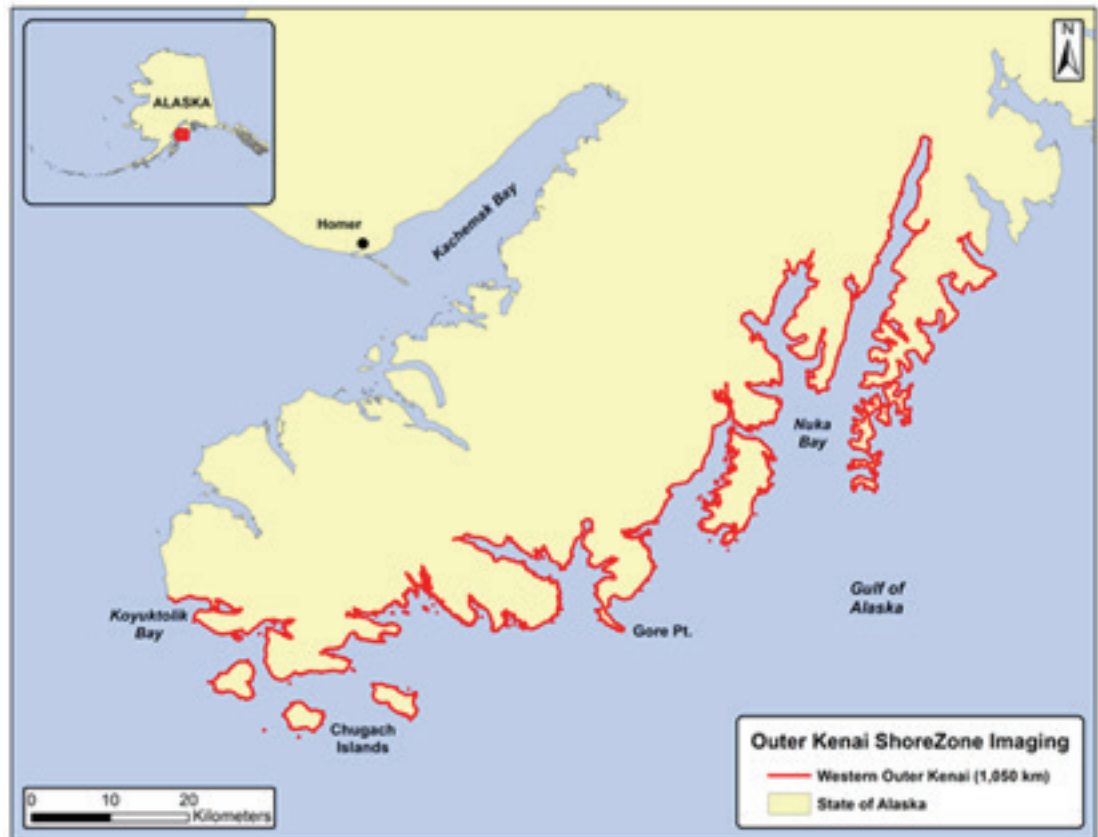
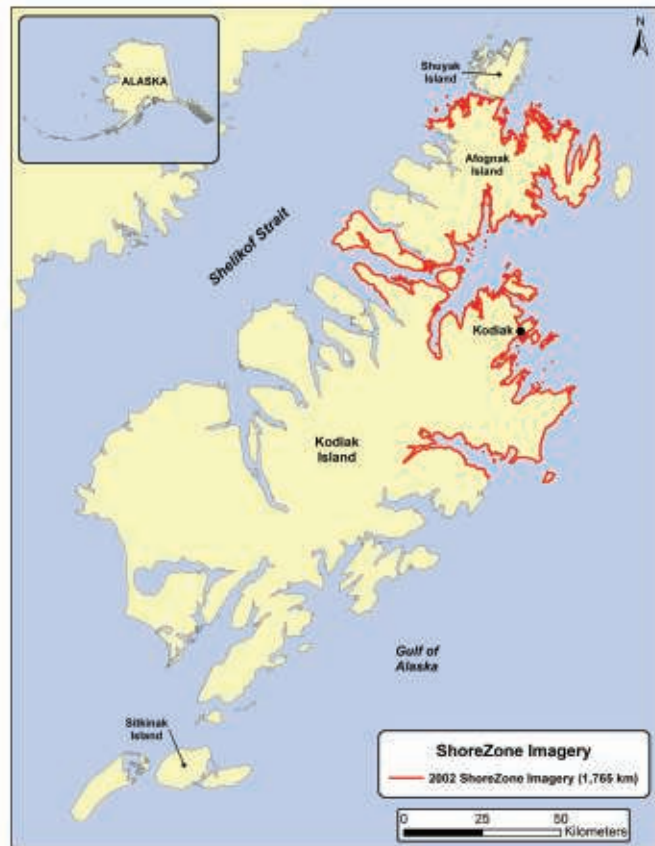
Ross, J., Hollander, D., Saupe, S., Burd, A. B., Gilbert, S., & Quigg, A. 2021. Integrating marine oil snow and MOSSFA into oilspill response and damage assessment. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 165, 112025; DOI

*"This is a very nice viewpoint article -- it clearly lays out the issues, provides helpful guidelines, and includes exhaustive references. It should serve as a very useful resource for oil spill responders and planners."*

- Peer review comment

# Outer Kenai Peninsula ShoreZone Surveys

As with our other fieldwork, the planned ShoreZone aerial and shore-station surveys were not conducted in 2020. However, the survey delays led to new opportunities to partner and expand the length of shoreline included in the future imaging and mapping efforts. By working with the National Park Service (NPS) and our contractors at Coastal and Oceans Resources, Inc. (CORI), we will now survey further along the outer Kenai Peninsula coast when the surveys do take place. The additional funds from NPS will ensure inclusion of the Kenai Fjords National Park shoreline.





The priority ShoreZone survey area is along the outer Kenai Peninsula coast. It was initially surveyed in 2002, prior to our use of digital imaging technology during ShoreZone aerial surveys and is the lowest resolution and shoreline coverage in the Alaska ShoreZone database. The northern Kodiak Island archipelago was also last surveyed in 2002, and CIRCAC is working with potential partners to identify funding and priorities for re-imaging those shorelines using the current Alaska ShoreZone protocols and technology (map at left).



Shorelines to be resurveyed using updated ShoreZone protocols, imaging technology, and digital shorelines in Kodiak area and along outer Kenai Peninsula coast (left). Exposed rocky habitat on outer Kenai Peninsula coast (photo S. Saupe).

# Giant Kelp (*Macrosystis*)

Since CIRCAC last surveyed *Macrocystis* kelp beds in the Kodiak, Afognak, and Shuyak islands in 2009, additional reports of its spread into the western Gulf of Alaska have been reported, including an extensive new bed on Afognak Island and a new western range

extension in the Shumagin Islands. This kelp grows in thick beds very near shore and has implications for oil spill risk and oil retention, and is likely to respond to changes in sea surface temperature and circulation related to climate change.



*Macrocystis* kelp offshore of Afognak Island. Photo by Terril Efird.

CIRCAC was contacted in 2020 by a team of researchers from the University of British Columbia, University of Victoria, and the Hakai Institute soliciting participation in a new study focused on *Macrocystis* to examine its population genetics and phylogeny, or evolutionary development and history. Researchers can incorporate kelp frond samples we collected and preserved during our earlier *Macrocystis* surveys into their study.

We shared our plans to continue research on *Macrosystis* kelp in CIRCAC's areas of concern. Although we were unable to carry out planned dive surveys in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions, we continued planning work with our research partners to conduct these expanded studies in the coming years.



# Geographic Response Strategies

The PROPS Committee worked to develop stream crossing Graphic Response Strategies (GRS) along the truck route from BlueCrest Operating Alaska's Cosmopolitan facility in Ninilchik to the Marathon Refinery in Nikiski. In all, 24 sites were surveyed and the data recorded to be compatible with the format used in the ADEC GRS catalog and for future Geographic Information Systems (GIS) integration. These site surveys were the second phase of the project and moved the GRS sites from a tier one GRS site (identification and strategies based on location and other available data) to a tier two (physical visit to verify and adjust tier one strategy assumptions) site. Each anadromous stream that crossed the truck route was surveyed to determine its viability for a response strategy and deployment. The survey team consisted of a CISPRI spill response technician and two subject matter experts with equivalent spill response and GRS development experience along with CIRCAC staff.

The data collected were used to produce a prototype or beta GIS/pdf compatible format that may be used by planners and responders. Phase three of the project will be to submit the data and the new GIS/pdf compatible format and raw data to the Arctic and Western Alaska Area Committee's GRS Sub-committee for consideration and acceptance to be placed into the State's GRS catalog.



*Photo: (L) McCarty Peak as viewed from the Tyonek platform. (R) Sunrise view from Granite Point platform. We continued updating our network of cameras in 2020 that provide high definition images with pan, tilt, rotate and zoom capabilities that offer a better field of view of the Inlet year round.*

# Public Outreach



Our public outreach efforts, like so many areas, had a different look this year. While we typically focus on public presentations and events, 2020 demanded a new approach.

We took advantage of new advertising opportunities in print and broadcast media to share CIRCAC's message and mission. We expanded previous radio advertising campaigns to include public radio stations throughout the Cook Inlet region, reaching new audiences. We increased our social media presence and amplified our message through traditional print advertising and also continued other public campaigns including digital displays at the Kenai airport (featured on this page).



While many of our outreach plans were curtailed in 2020, we were able to take advantage of both new and existing media and technology to maintain public awareness and keep our constituents informed of important Council business.





# Scholarships



The CIRCAC/Captain Barry Eldridge Memorial Scholarship for Maritime Studies was awarded to Rio Shemet-Pitcher of Homer High School. He is attending the University of Alaska Southeast



The CIRCAC/James Carter Memorial Scholarship for Environmental Sciences was awarded to Autumn Carlson of Homer Flex High School. She is attending Kenai Peninsula College

CIRCAC launched its scholarship program in 2015. The \$2,500 scholarships support area students who are pursuing courses of study that can advance our mission and promote future stewardship of Cook Inlet's waters and shorelines.

# Board of Directors



**President**  
**John Williams**  
City of Kenai



**Vice President**  
**Robert Peterkin, II**  
Tourism



**Secretary/Treasurer**  
**Gary Fandrei**  
Aquaculture Associations



**Grace Merkes**  
Kenai Peninsula Borough



**Bob Flint**  
Recreation



**Molly McCammon**  
Municipality of Anchorage



**Rob Lindsey**  
City of Kodiak



**Walt Sonen**  
City of Seldovia



**Paul A. Shadura**  
Commercial Fishing



**Scott Arndt**  
Kodiak Island Borough



**Michael Opheim**  
Alaska Native Groups



**Carla Stanley**  
City of Homer



**Deric Marcorelle**  
Environmental



# Committees

## Environmental Monitoring Committee

### *Public Members*

- Molly McCammon-Chair
- Michael Opheim
- Carla Stanley
- Deric Marcorelle
- Dr. Eric Klein
- Richard Prentki
- Rick Frederic
- Dan Urban
- A. Bruce Magyar
- Robert Reges
- John Morton
- Ginny Litchfield

## Prevention-Response-Operations-Safety (PROPS) Committee

### *Public Members*

- Bob Flint-Chair
- Rob Lindsey
- Michael Opheim
- Deric Marcorelle
- Carla Stanley
- Walt Sonen
- James McHale
- Ted Moore
- Scott Hamann
- Jan Hansen
- John Bauer
- Steve Lufkin
- Capt. Bob Pawlowski
- Robert Reges

## Protocol Control Committee

- Robert Peterkin-Chair
- Bob Flint
- Rob Lindsey
- Deric Marcorelle
- Paul A. Shadura
- Gary Fandrei

## Administrative Committees

### Executive

- John Williams-Chair
- Robert Peterkin
- Gary Fandrei
- Bob Flint
- Deric Marcorelle

### Audit

- Gary Fandrei-Chair
- Molly McCammon
- Grace Merkes
- Robert Peterkin

### Credentials

- Robert Peterkin-Chair
- Gary Fandrei
- Grace Merkes
- Michael Opheim

Our committees are led by staff and collaborate to develop programs and projects that promote CIRCAC’s mission.

# Stakeholder Groups

## Environmental

Alaska Marine Conservation Council  
Anchorage Waterways Council  
Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies  
Cook Inlet Keeper  
Great Land Trust  
Kachemak Bay Conservation Society  
Kenai Watershed Forum  
Kodiak Audubon Society  
National Parks Conservation Council  
ReGroup  
The Alaska Center

## Recreation

Alaska Charter Association  
Alaska Sportfishing Association  
Kenai River Sportfishing Association  
Kenai River Professional Guide Association

## Tourism

Alaska State Chamber of Commerce  
Kenai Peninsula Tourism and Marketing Council  
Kenai Chamber of Commerce  
Soldotna Chamber of Commerce  
Homer Chamber of Commerce  
Kodiak Chamber of Commerce

## Commercial Fishing

Alaska Groundfish Databank  
Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association  
Alaska Salmon Alliance  
Kenai Peninsula Fisherman's Association  
Northern District Setnetters Association  
United Cook Inlet Drift Association

## Alaska Native

Kenai Natives Association, Inc  
Kenaitze Indian Tribe  
Ninilchik Natives Association  
Port Graham Village Council  
Seldovia Village Tribe  
Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak  
Cook Inlet Region, Inc.  
Natives of Kodiak, Inc.  
Nanwalek IRA Council  
Seldovia Native Association  
Native Village of Eklutna

## Aquaculture Associations

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association  
Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association



# Staff & Ex-Officios



Michael Munger - Executive Director

Susan Saupe - Director of Science and Research

Steve “Vinnie” Catalano - Director of Operations

Shaylon Cochran - Director of Public Outreach

Jerry Rombach - Director of Administration

Maddie Jamora - Administrative Assistant

Vaito’a Heaven - Accounting and Grants Manager

Cindy Sanguinetti - Transcriber

Capt. Leanne Lusk - US Coast Guard

Robert Whittier - Environmental Protection Agency

Dr. Heather Crowley - Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

Graham Wood - Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

Jonathan Schick - Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Catherine Berg - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

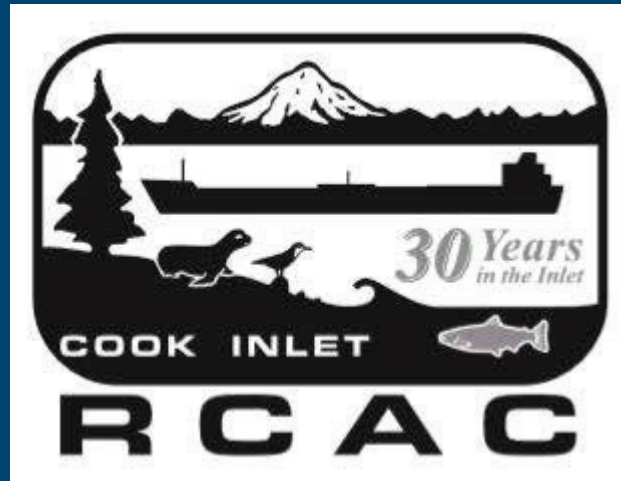
Kevin Reeve - Division of Homeland Security

Brian Blossom - Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Anthony Strupulis - State Pipeline Coordinator’s Office

David Fitz-Enz - United States Forest Service





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