

# Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council

## 2021 Annual Report



# From Executive Director Mike Munger and President Gary Fandrei

For the second year, the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (CIRCAC) operated under the unique circumstances presented by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We have been able to refine our operations, adapting to the current challenges facing everyone, and continue carrying out CIRCAC’s mission while maintaining the health and safety of our Board members, staff, and other partners.

The past year saw a number of noteworthy accomplishments, from professional accolades for staff to successful grant proposals to comprehensive policy reviews. We also saw industry make investments in updating Cook Inlet’s undersea pipeline network.

We continued our engagement with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation regarding their proposed changes to state statutes for oil spill prevention and response. We believe the regulations and policies that have been in place for more than three decades have been instrumental in preventing major spills in Cook Inlet. Current regulations were developed with regulators, the public and industry to provide for advanced training to prevent incidents and the use of effective tools to respond to discharges when they do occur. Our goal is to ensure that none of the existing protections are weakened.

We partnered with Prince William Sound RCAC to ensure the best possible information was available to the public and was considered by ADEC while these proposed changes went through a lengthy public process of review and comment. As this process continues in 2022, we remain concerned with the longer-term trend within ADEC of higher staff turnover and reductions that could decrease capacity to respond to events.

Two new staff members joined the CIRCAC team in 2021; Accounting and Grants Manager Cassandra Johnson and Administrative Assistant Candice Elias. We also said a partial goodbye to Jerry Rombach. After almost 10 years as CIRCAC’s Director of Administration, Jerry continued several special projects for us on a part-time basis.

While we intend to resume field work and in-person meetings in the coming year, we will continue to make decisions that ensure operational safety of CIRCAC personnel, our

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



The jack-up rig Randolph Yost being being loaded onto the heavy lift vessel FALCON in Kachemak Bay, October 2021 for transport out of

## Recertification

CIRCAC is required to apply for recertification by the U.S. Coast Guard each year. The purpose of the recertification process is to ensure that through our operations and partnerships, we are successful in meeting 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 30th consecutive year in 2021.



# Contaminants Database

CIRCAC entered into a new three-year agreement with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to compile historical contaminants data from Cook Inlet into an integrated database for online access.

This is a complex task due to differences in how and where samples were collected and analyzed, which affect how data can be combined. The project, *Synthesis of Contaminants Data for Cook Inlet: Evaluation of Existing Data as “Baseline Conditions” and Recommendations for Further Monitoring*, will include data evaluation and compilation, web-based data access and visualization tools, and recommendations for future monitoring.

Outreach to potential users is also key to useful products and the project will include visits to communities and the query of individuals from industry, agencies, and other organizations with interests in and concerns for contaminants in the Cook Inlet environment.

In addition to CIRCAC, the project team includes experts from Payne Environmental Inc. (PEI), Kinnetic Environmental, Inc. (KEI), and Axiom Data Science (Axiom). Specifically, Principal Investigators include Susan Saupe from CIRCAC, Dr. James Payne and William Driskell from PEI, Mark and Janet Savoie from (KEI), and Rob Bochenek of Axiom. This team brings nearly 200 years of combined experience conducting studies in Cook Inlet. Areas of expertise include contaminant sampling and data interpretation, hydrocarbon forensics, and the programming necessary to serve and visualize complex data on-line.

Intertidal habitats such as Iniskin Island (pictured) are particularly at risk from spilled oil. Photo: Alaska ShoreZone



# ShoreZone

Detailed shoreline habitat information can significantly enhance oil spill planning and response efforts and is essential for understanding potential long-term impacts of spilled oil or subsequent clean-up activities to intertidal and nearshore ecosystems.

To ensure access to good coastal data in our areas of concern, CIRCAC initiated an Alaska ShoreZone mapping program in 2001 and have conducted aerial and on-the-beach habitat surveys in Cook Inlet, the Outer Kenai Peninsula, the Alaska Peninsula, and the Kodiak Island archipelago.

Unfortunately, some of the earliest survey areas now include the lowest resolution imagery in the Alaska ShoreZone program. We subsequently updated the Cook Inlet imagery, and are actively working toward updates for the rest of our areas of concern. Our plans included re-imaging aerial and on-the-beach surveys of the outer Kenai Peninsula in 2020, a plan that was disrupted due to COVID-19 restrictions. The down-time, however, allowed us to leverage additional funds from the National Park Service (NPS) to ensure that the entire Kenai Fjords National Park shoreline would be included in a survey now planned for June 2022.

# Legacy Award

Science Director Susan Saupe received a Pacific States/British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force “Legacy Award” and was nominated in part for her efforts in building a ShoreZone program in Alaska.

The Legacy Awards honor efforts to improve oil spill prevention and planning across the West Coast and Ms. Saupe was one of the 2021 recipients for her “outstanding career in improving oil spill response in AK; for her tirelessness, persistence and relentless partnership building; for her excellent leadership and dedication to oil spill prevention, preparedness and response.”

Aerial imaging surveys produce high resolution photos of coastal habitat, like the salt marsh pictured below.

Photo: Alaska ShoreZone

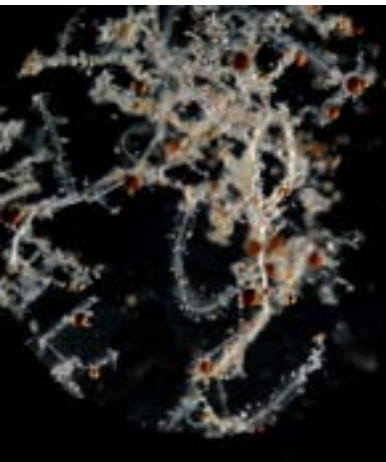




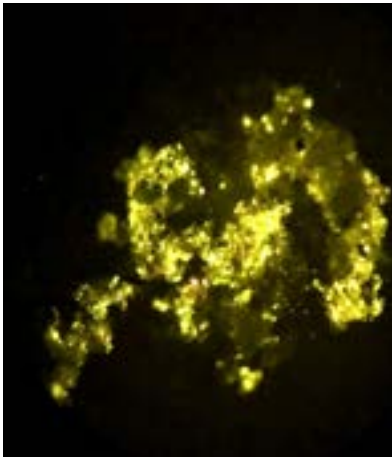
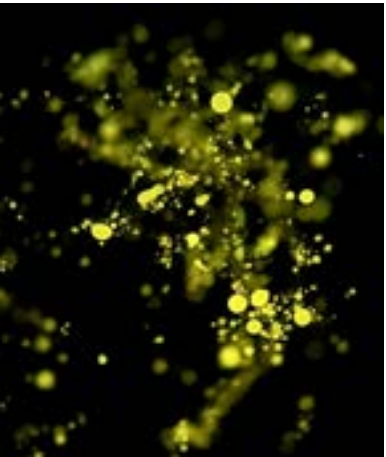
# Marine Snow

University of New Hampshire graduate student Quinn Wilkins expanded a research project that CIRCAC has supported since 2018, when student Jesse Ross conducted field sampling in the Cook Inlet and Kodiak regions to better understand the potential role of marine snow in the fate of spilled oil. 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 or 2021, 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. In his laboratory studies, Quinn used Cook Inlet silt, a phytoplankton species common in the Gulf of Alaska, and oil that is transported throughout coastal Alaska to ensure his laboratory results remain applicable for our areas of concern.



During earlier experiments, surface seawater from lower Cook Inlet was agitated with crude oil to create marine snow aggregates. Photomicrographs show aggregates that were formed with (right) and without (left) added Cook Inlet silt.



Ultraviolet fluorescent microscopy was used to quantify the oil seen in the above marine snow and oil aggregates with (right) and without (left) added Cook Inlet silt.

Photo: Jesse Ross

# Ice Monitoring Cameras

CIRCAC installed a camera at a new location on Marathon’s Nikiski LNG dock. This new camera location replaces the camera located at the former ASRC facility. The camera at the ASRC facility had provided fair images of the Inlet near the KPL dock, however that camera was one of the first camera styles purchased for this project and did not produce the best field of view. Once the new camera was installed and operational, the camera located at the ASRC facility was demobilized.

Another part of the new camera installation included an upgrade of the Alaska Communications System (ACS) circuitry used to transmit the data signal. That changed from a dedicated business exchange circuit to a Fiber/Wireless circuit which provides faster upload and download speeds and saves on monthly fees. Along with the monthly savings, the new camera location provides a superior field of view that includes the Kenai Pipe Line (KPL) dock face. Staff is working with ACS to determine if any of the remaining business exchange circuits can be upgraded to faster, less expensive circuits for future upgrades.

Additionally, Staff worked to provide “view only” access to the marine pilots of the Southwest Alaska Pilots Association, also know as SWAPA, and is currently providing images along their transit to and from the Port of Alaska. CIRCAC also provided access to view and control the Ice Monitoring System to the Coast Guard Sector Anchorage Command Center. Both are very happy to have this great tool for use in their operations.

Finally, staff worked with Cook Inlet Energy personnel to remove the camera and data carrier equipment from the Osprey platform. Since the platform had been shut down and power was no longer available to operate the camera, staff decided to retrieve the equipment to refurbish and reuse as possible.

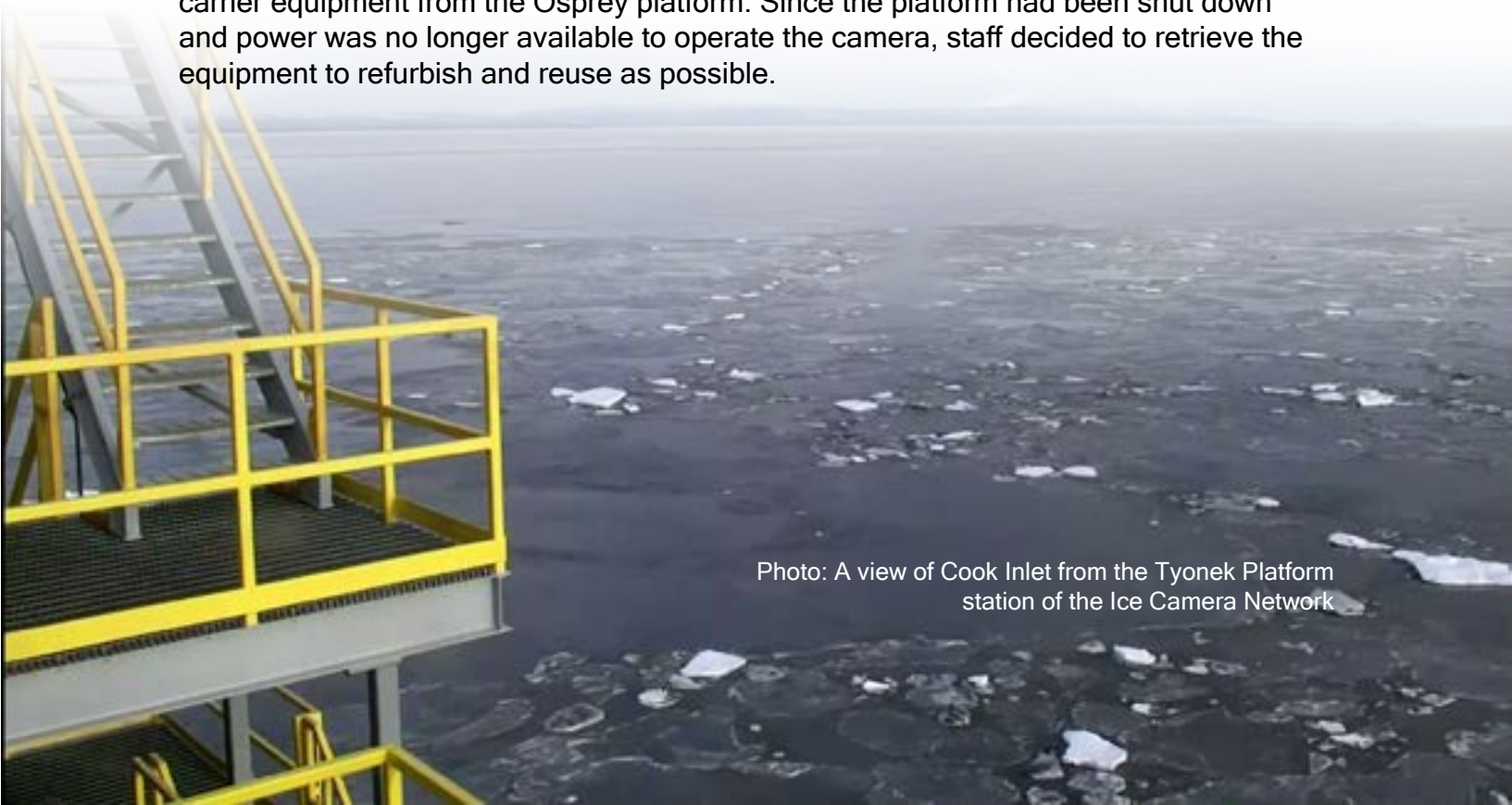


Photo: A view of Cook Inlet from the Tyonek Platform station of the Ice Camera Network



# Prevention-Response-Operations-Safety

Despite ongoing restrictions due to COVID-19, our PROPS Committee remained very active in 2021, with staff participating in a number of virtual webinars and training and work sessions.

## *Pacific States/British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force*

Staff attended a Pacific States/British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force hosted webinar on lessons learned from virtual drills and conducting virtual inspections during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Task Force, Federal partners and Industry shared their experiences and reported the successes and challenges faced while navigating virtual drills and facility inspections. On day one of the meeting, we heard the industry and agency perspectives on virtual drills during the pandemic followed by a panel discussion. The group discussed how the future may look, the state of virtual drills beyond Covid, and how or whether virtual drills can be incorporated into normal activities. Day two contained discussions of industry and agency perspectives on regulatory requirements, the innovations and technology used to reach compliance in the virtual inspection setting.

## *Annual Pre-Winter Meeting*

Annually, Marathon has hosted a pre-winter meeting for the maritime community operating in Cook Inlet. At the meeting, each member in attendance is given an opportunity to present an operational update highlighting improvements or areas requiring improvement for discussion by the group. This process has provided a forum to discuss and improve maritime operations each year. In 2021 CIRCAC staff presented a project update on the Ice Monitoring System. Staff received very positive feedback from the Southwest Alaska Pilots Association (SWAPA) regarding the view-only access CIRCAC provide to the Ice Monitoring System.

Opposite page photo: Cook Inlet's dynamic surface ice pack can reach as far south as Kachemak Bay, providing another layer of challenges for regional spill response planning. (Linda Robinson)

## *Alaska Regional Response Team (ARRT)*

CIRCAC staff attended virtual ARRT meetings where members presented their various committee reports, which included an EPA update for the National Contingency Plan Sub-part J. Subpart J governs the use of dispersants and any other chemical or biological agent to respond to oil discharges. Noting that the last major revisions were in 1994 (post OPA 90) and that the April 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill prompted changes.

The January 2015 EPA proposed revisions received over 81,000 total comments, which included CIRCAC's comments. Beginning in the spring of 2020 the EPA began work on a three-pronged approach to finalize Subpart J rulemaking. This work included a new requirement for monitoring how subsurface or prolonged application of dispersants shall be monitored.

## *Meeting 21st Century Maritime Challenges in the U.S. Arctic*

Staff attended this webinar to hear about the challenges of operating and regulating in the Arctic coupled with the emerging opportunities and increasing presence of other arctic nations. As the U.S. Arctic continues to become both more accessible and more traversed, it is critical that stakeholders have a holistic understanding of the region and the issues surrounding it.



## *Drill Planning*

Cook Inlet RCAC staff routinely participates in drill planning with Cook Inlet operators. One example was the Hilcorp annual joint field exercise. This exercise plan was developed through multiple planning and workgroup meetings. These workgroup meetings were conducted in virtual workshop segments over several months and culminated in a live Incident Management Team (IMT) exercise followed by a live field deployment of response equipment and personnel.

During the exercise planning process Cook Inlet RCAC staff participated by providing the RCAC's interests and concerns regarding drill objectives and how they may be achieved as part of the drill exercise. The Incident Management Team (IMT) is often presented with unscheduled injects to challenge their management of response personnel and their activities. These injects are artificialities designed by the drill planning committee that help guide the direction of the exercise to meet the exercise objectives and to test the response efforts of the IMT.

## *Harbor Safety Committee*

Staff attended virtual meetings for the Harbor Safety Committee (HSC) Workgroup Chair(s), the Harbor Safety Plan (HSP) workgroup, and the Navigation Safety (Nav Safety) workgroup. CIRCAC staff occupies primary and alternate seats on the HSC and acts as the Chair for the HSP workgroup, overseeing the Harbor Safety Plan. The goal of the HSP is to enhance marine safety and environmental stewardship via risk-based decision making. The plan is intended to provide information, guidelines and standards of care for marine operators in Cook Inlet. The HSP workgroup manages the information contained in the plan through annual updates and public review. As a result of the 2021 annual update additional information for the Port of Alaska, Port MacKenzie and other useful phone numbers were added.

## *Geographic Response Strategies (GRS)*

An update to this program included transition of more than 700 legacy GRS pdf files that needed to be digitized from "fixed" maps into the new geospatial data format. This Geographical Information System (GIS) data will not only populate a base map with GRS locations and details, but will also allow future updates to be validated and synchronized to the database that enables the administrator to track updates and Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) verifications. The GIS format will allow full integration into the Arctic Environmental Response Management Application (ERMA), a web-based GIS data portal served by NOAA and used by Federal agencies and others. As with other data layers, the updated GRS layers can be shared between ERMA and the more regionally-based Cook Inlet Response Tool (CIRT).

# C-Plan Reviews

The Protocol Control Committee and staff developed and approved comments on numerous Contingency plans:

- Comments and Request for Additional Information (RFAI) Regarding Hilcorp Alaska, LLC Oil Discharge and Contingency Plan for Cook Inlet Exploration Facilities
- Comments on Alaska Regional Contingency Plan (Cover Letter)
- Alaska Regional Contingency Plan Comment Matrix Comments and request for additional information on Furie Operating Alaska, LLC, Oil Discharge and Contingency Plan for Cook Inlet Exploration Program (Cover Letter)
- Furie Operating Alaska, LLC Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan, for Cook Inlet Exploration Program, ADEC Plan #: 16-CP-5184
- Comments Regarding Crowley Alaska Tanker, Cook Inlet Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan, ADEC Plan #: 21-CP-5252
- BlueCrest Alaska Operating (BCAO) LLC Hansen Production Facility Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (ODPCP), ADEC Plan #: 15-CP-5245
- Comments Regarding Hilcorp Alaska LLC Cook Inlet Exploration Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan, ADEC Plan #: 17-CP-5216

Photo: A tanker offshore of the KPL Dock near Nikiski. (Alaska ShoreZone)





# ADEC Regulation Revision

In November, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation began taking public comments regarding revisions to the Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan Plans and Streamlined plans; (18 AAC 75 Article 4).

CIRCAC staff worked through the Protocol Control Committee process to evaluate the proposed rule changes and highlighted several areas of concern:

- Compliance with Alaska and federal regulations
- Alignment with area planning documents
- Approval of exemptions to plan requirements for oil spill vessels
- Submittal of documents/types of business entities included
- Distribution of plan documents to Regional Citizens Advisory Councils
- Plan amendments for change of ownership
- Timing of amendment submittals for oil barges or tank vessels to be added
- Discharge prevention programs
- Ensuring and sustaining awareness of improved technologies



Rock Sandpipers gather on the shores of Kachemak Bay near Homer.

Photo: Susan Saupe

# Public Outreach

While travel restrictions due to the pandemic limited our typical suite of in-person outreach events and programs, webinars and other online venues offered other opportunities for staff training and networking including Incident Command System (ICS) training and Pacific States/ British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force Remote Operations training. Our Director of Public Outreach also joined other staff on the Cook Inlet Harbor Safety Committee.



We continued our longstanding scholarship program in 2021, again awarding two \$2,500 scholarships to graduating seniors in our area of concern. Austin Cline (pictured above), from Homer High School, was given the James Carter Memorial Scholarship for Environmental Sciences.

Dylan Bender (left), from Eagle River, was awarded the Captain Barry Eldridge Scholarship for Maritime Studies. To date, \$35,000 in scholarships have been awarded to local students pursuing continued education in environmental science or maritime studies.

Scholarship Committee: Carla Stanley, Rick Fredric, Capt. Bob Pawlowski



# Board Members



President  
Gary Fandrei  
Aquaculture Associations



Vice President  
John Williams  
City of Kenai



Secretary/Treasurer  
Deric Marcorelle  
Environmental



Robert Peterkin II  
Tourism



Grace Merkes  
Kenai Peninsula  
Borough



Bob Flint  
Recreation



Molly McCammon  
Municipality of  
Anchorage



Paul A. Shadura  
Commercial Fishing



Scott Arndt  
Kodiak Island  
Borough



Michael Opheim  
Alaska Native  
Groups



Carla Stanley  
City of Homer



Walt Sonen  
City of Seldovia



Rob Lindsey  
City of Kodiak

# Committees

## Administrative

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

- Credentials
- Robert Peterkin-Chair
  - Gary Fandrei
  - Grace Merkes
  - Micheal Opheim

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

## Environmental Monitoring

- Board Members
- Molly McCammon-Chair
  - Michael Opheim
  - Carla Stanley
  - Deric Marcorelle

- Public Members
- Dr. Eric Klein
  - Robert Reges
  - Richard Prentki
  - John Morton
  - Rick Frederic
  - Ginny Litchfield
  - A. Bruce Magyar
  - Dan Urban

## Protocol Control

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

## Prevention Response Operations Safety

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Board Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bob Flint-Chair</li><li>Rob Lindsey</li><li>Michael Opheim</li><li>Deric Marcorelle</li><li>Carla Stanley</li><li>Walt Sonen</li></ul> | <p>Public Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>James McHale</li><li>Ted Moore</li><li>Scott Hamann</li><li>Jan Hansen</li><li>John Bauer</li><li>Steve Lufkin</li><li>Capt. Bob Pawlowski</li><li>Robert Reges</li></ul> |
|---|---|



# Stakeholder Groups

## Alaska Native

Kenai Natives Association, Inc  
Kenaitze Indian Tribe  
Ninilchik Native Association  
Port Graham Village Council  
Port Graham Corporation  
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

## Recreation

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

## Tourism

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

## Commercial Fishing

Alaska Groundfish Databank  
Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association  
Alaska Salmon Alliance  
Kenai Peninsula Fisherman’s Association  
Northern District Setnetters Association  
North Pacific Fisheries Association  
United Cook Inlet Drift Association

## Environmental

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

## Aquaculture Associations

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association  
Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association

Opposite and back cover page  
photos: Alaska ShoreZone

# Staff

Michael Munger - Executive Director  
Susan Saupe - Director of Science and Research  
Steve “Vinnie” Catalano - Director of Operations  
Maddie Jamora - Director of Administration  
Shaylon Cochran - Director of Public Outreach  
Candice Elias - Administrative Assistant  
Cassandra Johnson - Accounting and Grants Manager  
Jerry Rombach - Special Projects

## Ex-Officios

Capt. Leanne Lusk - US Coast Guard  
Kevin Reeve - Division of Homeland Security  
Robert Whittier - Environmental Protection Agency  
David Fitz-Enz - United States Forest Service  
Brian Blossom - Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Anthony Strupulis - State Pipeline Coordinator’s Office  
Jonathan Schick - Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
Graham Wood - Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation  
Catherine Berg - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Dr. Heather Crowley - Bureau of Ocean Energy Management



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