Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council Annual Report

Our Mission

To represent the citizens of Cook Inlet in promoting environmentally safe marine transportation and oil facility operations in Cook Inlet.



Michael Opheim tours XTO Energy Alaska facilities in Nikiski

My time with the CIRCAC board has been very good, and I have learned much that I would not have otherwise. I would not have met such great people who could help educate me as to the workings of the oil industry in Cook Inlet. I am learning and getting a grasp on how things operate, and I've had many questions answered. I hope for the same great education to continue into the future. The more I know, the more I can pass along to the tribes in the area.

> Michael Opheim, Representing Alaska Native Organizations

Message from the Executive Director and President Michael Munger and John Williams





Since we opened our doors in 1990, we have made it a priority each year to find better ways to fulfill our mission of representing our stakeholders and protecting Cook Inlet's waters, wildlife and natural resources.

With our navigational risk assessment, we are identifying ways to best reduce maritime risks. Our successful collaborations and partnerships are leading to enhanced tools and information for spill responders to more quickly and effectively respond to spills. We are supporting and promoting improved spill prevention practices and technology, including the highly effective oleophilic disc skimmer. We were instrumental in encouraging industry to acquire docking assist tugs for Cook Inlet's crude oil tankers. We have been vocal in our support for a safer way to transport oil across Cook Inlet. Our research and white papers are considered primary reference points for state and federal agencies, and our rigorous contingency plan and technical reviews often prompt requests for more information from industry, resulting in better plans. Years devoted to biological and chemical environmental monitoring, coastal habitat mapping, and our studies on physical oceanography and oil behavior are leading to stronger regulations and well informed decisions involving oil and gas development in Cook Inlet.

We are doing a stellar job at communicating with our stakeholders and partners. During the past year, we spent months redesigning and improving our website to more fully reflect the breadth and depth of our work. Now, with a robust web presence, monthly electronic newsletters and social media, we are making our information, data and research more easily accessible.

Looking ahead, we are tackling new projects, including developing a newer version of the Cook Inlet Oil Spill Model, initiating an area-wide Harbor Safety Committee, exploring ways to enhance the ice forecasting camera network, and revising our white paper on dismantlement, removal and restoration of unused oil platforms. These are just a few projects that are already under way.

It goes without saying that we are only as good as our people. We could not accomplish so much without the commitment, expertise and time of our all-volunteer board of directors and committee members, and professionalism of our staff. Because of their involvement, we are a strong and effective voice for protecting Cook Inlet.

Who We Are

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 created Cook Inlet RCAC as a mechanism to foster long-term partnerships between industry, government, and Alaska's coastal communities, and directs us in our efforts to improve marine transportation and oil facility operations in Cook Inlet.

Cook Inlet RCAC provides advice and recommendations on policies, permits and regulations pertaining to terminal and tanker operations, as well as on policies and practices pertaining to port operations. We monitor impacts to the environment, review oil-spill discharge prevention and contingency plans, and standards for crude oil tankers transiting Cook Inlet's waters.

Charter Funding Partners

Cook Inlet RCAC receives base annual funding per OPA 90 from the operators in Cook Inlet. The companies, required to file an oil spill contingency plan for the Cook Inlet region under OPA 90, represent what are known as the Charter Funding Companies: Tesoro Alaska Petroleum, Cook Inlet Energy, ConocoPhillips, Cook Inlet Pipeline Co., XTO Energy, and Marathon Oil Company. They have since been joined by Buccaneer Energy, Hilcorp Alaska, and Furie Operating Alaska.

Certified Participating Organizations

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90) mandates the composition of Cook Inlet RCAC's board of directors. In addition to communities, Cook Inlet RCAC represents special interests, including the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce; recreational, environmental, Alaska Native, commercial fishing groups, and Aquaculture Associations. The representatives from cities, boroughs and municipalities are appointed by their mayors. Representatives for special interest seats are elected by the certified organizations below, and serve three-year terms:

Recreational Interests

Alaska Sport Fishing Association Deep Creek Charter Boat Association Alaska Charter Association Kenai River Sports Fishing Association Kenai River Professional Guide Association

Commercial Fishing

Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association Alaska Groundfish Data Bank Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association North Pacific Fisheries Association Northern District Setnetters Association United Cook Inlet Drift Association

Native Corporations/Villages/Tribes

Kenai Natives Association, Inc. Kenaitze Indian Tribe Ninilchik Native Association, Inc. 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

Aquaculture Associations

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association

Environmental Interests

Alaska Center for the Environment Alaska Marine Conservation Council Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies Cook Inletkeeper Kachemak Bay Conservation Society Kenai Watershed Forum Kodiak Audubon Society National Wildlife Federation National Parks Conservation Association ReGroup

Tourism

Alaska State Chamber of Commerce



Board

Board of Directors

City of Kenai – John Williams (President) State Chamber of Commerce – Robert Peterkin, II (Vice President) Aquaculture Associations – Gary Fandrei (Secretary/Treasurer) Alaska Native Organizations – Michael Opheim City of Homer – Carla Stanley City of Kodiak – Rob Lindsey City of Seldovia – Walt Sonen Commercial Fishing Organizations – Paul Shadura Environmental Organizations – Deric Marcorelle Kenai Peninsula Borough – Grace Merkes Kodiak Island Borough – Scott Smiley Municipality of Anchorage – Molly McCammon Recreational Interests – Bob Flint

Ex-Officio Members

OPA 90 also calls for the inclusion of non-voting Ex-Officio members, representing various state and federal agencies.

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation – Gary Folley Alaska Department of Fish and Game – Ginny Litchfield Alaska Department of Natural Resources – Kathleen King National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – John Whitney United States Coast Guard – Captain Paul Mehler III United States Environmental Protection Agency – Matt Carr United States Forest Service – Gary Lehnhausen



Steve Lufkin, Jan Hansen, John Bauer

PREVENTION, RESPONSE, OPERATIONS & SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBERS Bob Flint, Chair Rob Lindsey Deric Marcorelle Grace Merkes Carla Stanley Michael Opheim Paul Shadura

PUBLIC MEMBERS

John Williams

Doug Jones Jan Hansen John Bauer Robert Favretto, Vice Chair Scott Hamann Ted Moore Bill Osborn Steve Lufkin

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING COUNCIL MEMBERS

Bob Flint Deric Marcorelle Molly McCammon, Chair Carla Stanley Michael Opheim Scott Smiley

PUBLIC MEMBERS Paul Blanche Trenten Dodson Steve Hunt Kashif Ahmed Naser Daniel Urban Craig Valentine Richard Prentki, PhD Ted Rockwell

PROTOCOL CONTROL Bob Flint Deric Marcorelle Grace Merkes Robert Peterkin, II, Chair John Williams Rob Lindsey Paul Shadura

CREDENTIALS Grace Merkes, Chair Robert Peterkin, II Gary Fandrei Paul Shadura

EXECUTIVE

John Williams Robert Peterkin, II Gary Fandrei Bob Flint Grace Merkes

AUDIT

Gary Fandrei, Chair Grace Merkes John Williams Robert Peterkin, II

Committees

A better tug built for the Inlet

Cook Inlet RCAC's role in securing docking assist tugs for Cook Inlet oil tankers began well before the grounding of the T/V Seabulk Pride in 2006. Throughout the 1990s, we endeavored to ascertain what additional navigational safeguards were needed for Cook Inlet. Directly after the Seabulk Pride grounding, the Council began working closely with Tesoro Alaska to place a docking assist tug in Nikiski. Soon after, Tesoro brought the first tug, the Protector, to the inlet. Because of our efforts through the State of Alaska Contingency plan process, the docking assist tug is now a regulatory requirement.

This past year, Tesoro exceeded our expectations and delivered the world class *Bob Franco*, a docking assist, response, and rescue tug that is ideally suited and specifically designed and built for Cook Inlet's demanding conditions. With its thicker hull, under deck heating for freezing spray, and extra heating in the wheel house, accommodations and bridge windows, the *Bob Franco* was built to work in cold and ice. Chief among its many attributes, the *Bob Franco* has increased capability for response operations and a tow winch suitable for ocean towing and rescue. Welcoming the *Bob Franco* to Alaska was a major highlight of the year.

Cook Inlet RCAC is proud of our role in making this world class docking assist tug a reality for Cook Inlet's crude oil tankers, and equally proud of Tesoro Alaska for listening and sharing our commitment to protecting this spectacular region.



Lt. Sarah Geoffrion, board members Deric Marcorelle, Carla Stanley, Bob Flint and public member Jan Hansen Facing page: *Bob Franco*.

Protecting our fragile, unique Cook Inlet environment for future generations to use and enjoy, is my mission at CIRCAC.

Deric Marcorelle, Representing Environmental Organizations

Lynda Giguer





A better view of Cook Inlet ice

Cook Inlet RCAC's involvement with tracking and predicting movement of Cook Inlet's ice originally began with a request for ice observers. To provide this ad hoc information, we looked to the operators of offshore platforms, response vessels and charter air services. This system has since evolved into Cook Inlet RCAC's highly effective ice camera network, featuring high resolution digital cameras mounted in locations where the risks are the greatest for vessels navigating through the Inlet. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) gathers data directly from the cameras to locate and evaluate ice conditions in the upper and mid-inlet. The network's strength is its ability to provide a strategic view of the Inlet and focus on ice coverage and make-up, pan sizes and thickness, and any outstanding features that may be an obstacle for marine traffic, giving NOAA and mariners the most accurate ice reports possible.

In 2013, we further strengthened the network with the installation of two more cameras. Working with Cook Inlet Energy and Hilcorp Alaska, we identified the best locations on the Osprey and the Granite Point platforms for maximum fields of view. Now the ice camera network consists of eight cameras, and we have already identified a key location in Kenai for an installation in 2014.

The Cook Inlet ice forecasting network of cameras would not be possible without the support of these partners:

Alaska State Legislature ASRC Energy Services Cook Inlet Energy Hilcorp Alaska Kenai Peninsula Borough Port MacKenzie, Matanuska-Susitna Borough Port of Anchorage Offshore Systems Kenai NOAA, National Weather Service XTO Energy



View from ice camera at Port of Anchorage

The National Weather Service Sea Ice Program is truly grateful for the service CIRCAC has provided with the installation and permission to view the live streaming Cook Inlet sea ice web cameras in our office. When sea ice analysts have access to these cameras, we are able to have a better understanding of real time sea ice conditions within the inlet. We can compare what we are seeing on the web cameras with what we are seeing on satellite imagery to make more informed decisions regarding sea ice thickness and sea ice concentration. In addition, the sea ice web cameras are essential for our sea ice analysis on days when we have no recent visual satellite imagery of the inlet due to cloud cover. The CIRCAC web cameras allow the NWS Sea Ice Program to increase the quality and confidence we have in our sea ice analysis of Cook Inlet. With the increased quality of our sea ice analysis, our Cook Inlet customers are able to make more informed decisions regarding navigation, safety, and planning. We truly appreciate your partnership.

National Weather Service Sea Ice Program



Vinnie Catalano installs one of Cook Inlet RCAC's ice cameras

Reviews lead to better plans, permits and regulations

Through our Protocol Control Committee and contractors we apply multiple levels of experience, expertise and knowledge when reviewing the State of Alaska's required Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plans, action plans used by a responsible party to address an oil spill. Our comments and requests for additional information often prompt a more thorough regulatory review. In 2013, we reviewed the following plans:

- Hilcorp Alaska, Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan for Cook Inlet Production Facilities
- Hilcorp Alaska, Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan for Cook Inlet Exploration Operations
- Buccaneer Alaska Operations, Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan for Cook Inlet Exploration Program
- Buccaneer Alaska Operations, Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan for Cook Inlet Exploration Program, amendment to include the West Eagle Prospect
- Cook Inlet Pipeline Company, Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan

While not as numerous, our recommendations on proposed regulatory changes and permits are nonetheless equally important. In 2013, we commented on draft permits that would authorize discharges from mobile oil and gas exploration facilities in Cook Inlet state and federal waters. One of these draft permits (Draft APDES Permit No. AKG-31-5100) is the first general oil and gas discharge permit proposed by Alaska since they assumed authority to issue permits under the Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System.

Photo facing page:

Current Buster, mini-barge, and shuttle

Steve "Vinnie" Catalano

In addition to the discharge permits, we also reviewed the following:

- Annual Progress Report on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program, 2012-2017
- Tank Vessel Oil Transfers (Docket # USCG-2013-0522)
- Proposed changes to Title 20, Chapter 25, AAC, hydraulic fracturing
- Proposed changes to Regulations 11 AAC 83, Oil and Gas Exploration and Development by Geographical Area; and Lease Plans of Operation

All of our comments can be found on our website at: www.circac.org/what-we-do/oil-spillcontingency-plan-review/cook-inlet-rcac-comments/

A better understanding of belugas

Cook Inlet RCAC recently completed a study designed to fill some of the data gaps identified in the Conservation Plan for the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*). Information about beluga distributions and their prey is relatively well known during summer, while the opposite is true for winter. Our study was designed to assess biomass, diversity, abundance, and hydrocarbon contaminants of potential beluga whale prey items in beluga winter habitat areas. With funding from the Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) and our own budget, we collaborated with Mote Marine Laboratory and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game for trawl surveys in 2012, with subsequent chemistry analyses of the potential prey in 2013. Trawling took place in April and October 2012 to "bracket" winter months, given that ice conditions preclude trawl sampling midwinter. Even so, due to difficulties trawling in the high currents and the uneven and rocky bottom, on top of the extensive undersea industry infrastructure (active and abandoned), we ultimately focused the successful trawling to areas south of the Forelands.

The study findings were presented to the KPB at their Cook Inlet Beluga Whale symposium in January 2014 and are available in the report Assessment of Prey Availability and Oil-related Contaminants in Winter Habitat of Cook Inlet Beluga Whales. The report describes the abundance, biomass, and distribution of trawl catches that represent potential winter prey species for the whales. In total, thirty-four taxonomic groups were caught in the bottom trawls in April and October, with starry flounder, eulachon (hooligan), sevenspine bay shrimp, Pacific tomcod, and Pacific sandfish dominating the mean biomass density of non-sessile (mobile) animals in April. In October, starry flounder, spiny dogfish, jellyfish, sevenspine bay shrimp, Pacific halibut, walleye Pollock, and Pacific tomcod dominated the catches.

Our data indicate that the biomass and individual sizes of benthic fauna available to beluga whales are very low in much of the sampled area, although both are greater in the southeast study area near the lower inlet, and the biomass likely declines over the winter. Given the small body sizes and apparent low density of benthic fauna, it's possible the whales are not acquiring a maintenance ration during winter. Polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), a class of hydrocarbons thought to be a factor in cancers detected in beluga whales from the St. Lawrence Seaway in eastern Canada, were analyzed in selected prey tissues from the Cook Inlet catches and concentrations were below method detection limits. This is in contrast to earlier analyses of their summer prey where low levels of PAHs were detected in fish tissues using the same laboratory procedures.

Our study results are providing some of the only information available on winter habitat and prey and are informing other Cook Inlet beluga whale life history studies and the recovery team, as well as enhancing management decisions. Cook Inlet RCAC has previously provided the most extensive body of work for PAHs in the water column and sediments of Cook Inlet.

Cook Inlet is surrounded by a significant proportion of Alaska's population. Much of that population relies on resource exploitation, everything from fishing to agriculture to fossil fuels, to make their living. As production on the North Slope has drawn down, the petroleum resources in and around Cook Inlet have become more valuable. As a member of the Cook Inlet RCAC board, I can tell you that we do our best to provide reliable scientific data using tested mechanisms for continued monitoring of resource development in and around Cook Inlet.

Scott Smiley, Representing the Kodiak Island Borough

Better tools by putting them to the test

Imagine a vessel heading for a remote rocky Alaska coast in the middle of an extreme winter storm. Last winter, the grounding of the drill rig *Kulluk* on Sitkalidak Island near Kodiak unfolded just that way. As it was pushed closer and closer to shore – and ultimately grounded – responders were able to "see" the beach more than 12 hours before the first overflights provided photographs of the grounded rig. Thanks to two projects initiated by Cook Inlet RCAC—Alaska ShoreZone and Cook Inlet Response Tool—planners and responders were able to immediately access shoreline habitat data, video, and photographs of area beaches, gaining valuable information that would prepare them for what to expect and, thus, aid in the response.

In 2001, Cook Inlet RCAC began a coastal habitat mapping program and developed a demonstration website for viewing ShoreZone aerial survey imagery and biophysical mapping data from Cook Inlet shorelines. By proving the value of shoreline information for a range of uses—oil spill planning and response, resource management, permitting, research, education, and recreation—that pilot project led to workshops and the quick expansion of an Alaska ShoreZone partnership, with dozens of local, state, and



Screen shot of Cook Inlet Response Tool for Kulluk grounding

federal agencies and organizations sponsoring imaging and mapping surveys throughout the state. Currently, over 70% of Alaska's coastline has been surveyed for ShoreZone. Since 2004, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has hosted an interactive website portal at http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/mapping/ szflex/ and continually updates the technology, ensuring that the images and data can be accessed at a moment's notice by anybody with web access.

At the time of the grounding, we were also

working with the Alaska Ocean Observing System on another web-based tool, the Cook Inlet Response Tool, to integrate ShoreZone imagery and data with other information to aid emergency response decisions. The pilot project focused on Cook Inlet, but also incorporated a lot of information for areas downstream, including Kodiak Island. With the Cook Inlet Response Tool, users can:

- Virtually fly the coast with high resolution video and imagery
- Tap into weather and ocean conditions, such as wind speed, water level, and air temperature from over 100 real-time sensors
- Visualize atmospheric and ocean circulation forecast models across time and depth
- Access Geographic Response Strategies and dozens of other geospatial data sets, including maps of salmon streams and information on other sensitive species



Kulluk grounded on Sitkalidak Island)

Although still in development, we quickly made the Cook Inlet Response Tool available to responders and the public. We are applying lessons learned during the *Kulluk* to further improve and refine the tool and are providing training so that it can be effectively utilized during future oil spill responses. Luckily, on that dark Kodiak night, these images and data were at the fingertips of responders.



Cook Inlet Risk Assessment for better navigation and operations

Improved navigational and operational safety in Cook Inlet has been a major focus since 1990, when we began working with our Congressional Delegation to initiate the Cook Inlet Navigational Risk Assessment. After the delegation made the assessment a required study, led by the U.S. Coast Guard, Cook Inlet RCAC spearheaded efforts to secure its financing through multiple sources. With funding in place, Cook Inlet RCAC, the U.S. Coast Guard and the State of Alaska have been managing this critical assessment and working steadily toward its completion.

The risk assessment project's findings are the result of years spent gathering information from studies and analysis from experts in the fields of meteorology, commerce, industry, navigation, tides, oil behavior, vessel traffic, geography and oceanography. Thanks to their dedication and efforts, we are nearing our goal of completing the first comprehensive navigational risk assessment for Cook Inlet.

Recent accomplishments include completing an analysis and report on the consequence of spills and identifying risk reduction options, such as: analyzing the towing ability of tugs of opportunity; constructing a cross-inlet subsea pipeline from Drift River to Nikiski; enhancing situational awareness through an Automated Information System (AIS); improving ice monitoring procedures; encouraging third party inspections or audits of workboats; and forming an area-wide harbor safety committee.



Changes are already taking place to implement some of the recommendations, including expanding the ice camera network and forming the area-wide harbor safety committee.

Now, as we near the end of this years-long project, we are looking forward to sharing our findings and taking action to make navigating in Cook Inlet safer.

2013 Drills

Cook Inlet RCAC staff actively participates in drills that test industry's readiness to respond to an oil spill. In 2013, we provided expertise, recommendations and advice during the following exercises:

Furie Operating Alaska (2) Hilcorp Alaska ConocoPhillips NordAq Energy Cook Inlet Energy Buccaneer Energy Cook Inlet Pipe Line XTO Energy Tesoro Alaska

It's very gratifying that representatives of industry and the regulatory agencies share our mission, welcome citizens' input and buy into how we pursue our mandates.

John Williams, President of the Board, Representing the City of Kenai

Top Photo

Overseas Nikiski at KPL Dock Susan Saupe

Recertification

We cannot do our work without earning the support and confidence of the U.S. Coast Guard each year. By law, the U.S. Coast Guard recertifies Cook Inlet RCAC to insure that we are meeting the mandates spelled out in our founding legislation (the Oil Pollution Act of 1990), and that we are effectively representing the interests of the communities within the vicinity of oil terminal operations. In their evaluation, the U.S. Coast Guard takes into consideration how well we are initiating and developing new projects, working with existing partners and forming new partnerships, promoting safer crude oil transport, sharing information, providing technical oversight, and conducting scientific monitoring.

Our goal is to leave no doubt that we warrant recertification. In August, our efforts were recognized when the U.S. Coast Guard approved our annual recertification to August 2014.

CIRCAC provides a forum for a balanced input from citizens as it relates to oil exploration, development and transportation. CIRCAC has been an active participant in safety, prevention and response for oil development and transportation issues. This includes leading the ice forecasting network, major work with the Cook Inlet response tools and active involvement with response drills.

Bob Flint, Representing Recreation Groups



Better ways to engage, involve and inform

To be successful, an organization must have the support and trust of its stakeholders. Our public outreach program strives to maintain that support and trust through frequent and open communication with our communities, partners and the media.

Like many organizations, we rely on our website to disseminate our information. The best websites reflect where an organization has been and where it is going, allow visitors to easily find what they're looking for, and encourage two-way communication. We believed that our website was in need of more than a fresh coat of paint, so we have devoted months to its redesign. Now, www.circac.org is more dynamic, comprehensive, and better reflects the significant volume of work we do.

Frequent communication is key to staying on the radar. With our monthly e-newsletter, Cook Inlet Navigator, we are growing our audience by keeping our stakeholders informed of what is happening in our areas of concern now.

Our staff also welcomes opportunities to make presentations throughout the Cook Inlet region, as well as nationally, to share research and hear about concerns and interests, or answer questions. This year, we participated in a number of meetings, workshops, conferences, and public speaking engagements, including:

- · Consequence Analysis Workshop for Cook Inlet Risk Assessment as subject matter experts
- Alaska Regional Response Team Science and Technology Committee's Dispersant Workgroup Meetings
- Oil Spill Recovery Institute Advisory Board
- Alaska Forum on the Environment
- Ocean Sciences Meeting
- Navigational Safety Committee Meeting
- 2013 Arctic Cold Regions Oil Pipeline Conference
- Industry Outlook Forum and ComFish Expo (booth exhibits)
- Kenai Chamber of Commerce Luncheon (guest speaker)
- ADEC/ADNR Workgroup for Global Air Quality Development for Temporary Oil and Gas Drill Rigs

We also share our data and findings through scientific presentations, including:

- Trophic relationships and carbon flow of the northeastern Chukchi shelf: extending isoscapes to the highly productive Hanna Shoal. Alaska Marine Science Symposium, Anchorage, January 2013
- ShoreZone applications in emergency response: examples for Kodiak Island. ShoreZone Workshop, January 2013
- Applications for Planning and Emergency Response. Using ShoreZone for Natural Resource Damage Assessment, April 2013
- The Science of Cook Inlet RCAC. Presentation to Kenai River Fishermen's Association, June 2013.
- Alaska ShoreZone Program: Aerial Surveys and Mapping. Presentation to communities of Gambell and Savoonga, Saint Lawrence Island for Alaska ShoreZone Partnership, April 2013
- Cook Inlet Response Tool: Integrating and Visualizing Data with ShoreZone Imagery. Presentation to OSPR Committee, Prince William Sound RCAC, May 2013
- Mechanisms for Stakeholder Involvement in Cook Inlet Oil Spill Planning, Prevention, and Response. White paper for The Community Oil Spill Response in Bering and Anadyr Straits workshop, November 2013

We held three public board meetings, in Homer, Kenai and Anchorage, and arranged for in-depth presentations from industry, agencies, legislators and project managers, and have posted presentations online.



ComFish Expo, Kodiak

CIRCAC is amazing. It is the catalyst for an incredible amount of useful research into oil spill effects and prevention, a meetinghouse for regulators and industry to realize our common goals, and a truly effective platform for the everyday layman to express plain old common sense concerns regarding oil exploration and development right here at home. CIRCAC seems to have exceeded everyone's highest hopes to fulfill the spirit of OPA 90.

Rob Lindsey, Representing the City of Kodiak



Kodiak

I am somewhat new to the CIRCAC board of directors, but I have seen that the organization maintains a steady spotlight on oil operations regarding environmental concerns here in Cook Inlet. The wreck of the Exxon Valdez occurred 25 years ago. It serves as a reminder that we should be ever conscious of our duty to prevent such a recurrence and be prepared for any eventuality, large or small. The beautiful surroundings we enjoy deserve our constant attention.

Walt Sonen, Representing the City of Seldovia

Looking ahead

In addition to our ongoing program work, in 2013 we also initiated other projects that will be completed in the months ahead.

Improving the Cook Inlet oil spill model

Two primary purposes of a drill are to test an operator's ability to respond and gauge the effectiveness of the Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency plan. The drill allows problems to be identified and addressed before a real event occurs. During several drills, we determined that responders were having difficulty accessing and navigating the Cook Inlet oil spill model using current technology. Oil spill models are essential for contingency planning and tactical responses. Models are used to track and predict the movement of oil slicks over time so that response assets can be deployed accordingly to prevent harm to our waters, shorelines, wildlife, and sensitive areas. Cook Inlet RCAC's oil spill model is referenced in several area contingency plans and is available to the public. However, current computer technology has outpaced the model as originally designed, making a program update essential.

The Prevention, Response, Operations and Safety (PROPS) and Environmental Monitoring Committees are working to identify what an updated program should do and how to improve access and ease of use. We will consolidate this new model with the Cook Inlet Response Tool to give the spill response community as many advantages as technology allows.

Dismantlement, Removal and Restoration

Declining production and lack of information about unused Cook Inlet platforms and facilities led Cook Inlet RCAC in 2005 to develop a white paper concerning their Dismantlement, Removal and Restoration (DR&R). The final report includes a map of all facilities and associated pipeline infrastructure and a dossier on each offshore facility in Cook Inlet describing its site topography and geography, age, production status, lease stipulations, ownership history, and DR&R status. Cook Inlet RCAC also summarized relevant Alaska Attorney General Opinions regarding liability as part of the report.

With new platforms coming on line, questions are again being asked about what to do with the unused, old platforms and how existing regulations come into play. Cook Inlet RCAC is updating the 2005 white paper to reflect the current challenges and assist our stakeholder groups in understanding the complexities of DR&R. We are reviewing what has changed since 2005 in state and federal regulations, current lease stipulations and regulations to establish jurisdictional authority, and permitting, and taking another look at potential impacts. The updated white paper will be available in 2014, and will serve as a reference point for the Department of Natural Resources, stakeholders and other interested parties as DR&R is reviewed.



Capt. Richard "Barry" Eldridge

He made our organization better

Any organization is only as good as the people who make it work. Until his death in October 2012, Captain Richard "Barry" Eldridge was an integral part of Cook Inlet RCAC, and served as a valued public member of the Prevention, Response, Operations and Safety Committee for 17 years. Highly educated and skilled, he'd earned degrees in mathematics and management, and had attained the rank of Captain in the U.S. Coast Guard. He was a Master in the U.S. Merchant Marines for more than 20 years, and later piloted vessels in and out of various ports, including Homer and Seward.

Barry was a doer and one of the most "quietly" civic minded people you could ever meet. He never shied away from taking on a project, getting involved, and pulling others in along the way. Not only did he help people in his own community and country, he helped others in need around the world. Close to home, Barry gave of his time and skills to the Kenai City Council, Harbor Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission, the Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, Salvation Army Advisory Board, and Love, Inc. He also founded the Alaska chapter of Habitat for Humanity. He led a rich and full life, enjoyed flying, skiing and squaredancing, and was a beloved husband and father.

Still, he found the time to help guide our organization for 17 years. It's impossible to replace someone like Barry. He was, to put it simply, a wonderful person. But we can all follow in his footsteps, share his passion for work and play, volunteer in our communities, and truly make a difference just by emulating him.



Board and staff tour Alyeska Pipeline Services Company--Carla Stanley, Rob Lindsey, Molly McCammon, Deric Marcorelle, Bob Flint, Gary Fandrei, Michael Opheim, Director of Operations Steve "Vinnie" Catalano, Scott Smiley, Executive Director Mike Munger, President of the Board John Williams, Paul Shadura, Walt Sonen (not pictured: Grace Merkes, and Robert Peterkin,II)

STAFF

Michael Munger, Executive Director Susan Saupe, Director of Science and Research Steve "Vinnie" Catalano, Director of Operations Jerry Rombach, Director of Administration Lynda Giguere, Director of Public Outreach Dinelle Penrod, Office Manager Maritta Newgren, Accounting and Grants Manager Cindy Sanguinetti, Transcriber

My experience on the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council has been very educational as well as rewarding. The staff, industry and speakers have given me a great insight on what problems and consequences could happen in the oil, fishing and environmental communities. I believe that it is through participation in discussions and understanding of all industries involved we can continue to have a viable oil industry, a good fishing industry as well as protect our very fragile environment. It has been an honor to be a member of CIRCAC over the past 15 years.

Grace Merkes, Representing the Kenai Peninsula Borough

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Phillips Petroleum Kenai LNG Dock Susan Saupe

Cover photo: Outside Aurora Lagoon, Kachemak Bay Mandy Lindeberg, Alaska ShoreZone

