

COOK INLET REGIONAL CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL
Video Conference
December 4, 2020
Approved Minutes

Members Present by Video Conference: John Williams, Robert Peterkin, Gary Fandrei, Molly McCammon, Carla Stanley, Paul Shadura, Walt Sonen, Grace Merkes, Bob Flint, Deric Marcorelle, Michael Opheim, Scott Arndt

Members Absent: Rob Lindsey (excused)

Others Present by Video Conference: Angie Fuschetto, Crowley AK Tankers; Bart Buesseler, NOAA; Brooke Taylor, PWSRCAC; Denise Koch, DEC; Hadley Owen, NOAA; Lt. Lauren Bloch, USCG District 17; CMDR Matt Hobbie; Jason Brune, DEC Commissioner; Jade Gamble, DEC; Lori Nelson, Hilcorp; Sarah Moore, DEC; Becky Spiegel, ADEC; Heather Crowley, BOEM; Jonathon Schick, DNR; Capt. Leanne Lusk, USCG; Tony Strupulis, State Pipeline Coordinator’s Office; Catherine Berg, NOAA; Louie Flora, The Alaska Center; Lt. CMDR Matt Richards, USCG Sector Anchorage

1. CALL TO ORDER/ APPROVAL

John Williams called the meeting to order at 9:07 AM. Roll was called, establishing quorum.

Gary Fandrei moved to approve the agenda. Grace Merkes seconded. The agenda was approved.

Gary Fandrei moved to approve the minutes of August 28, 2020. Grace Merkes seconded.

Susan Saupe requested an amendment to her statement on page 4 under the Environmental Monitoring Report to read: “Ms. Saupe is pleased with the increased focus on research in Cook Inlet...”

The minutes were approved as amended.

Council Directors, Ex-Officios and guests introduced themselves. Mr. Williams extended congratulations for the Coast Guard ice breaker.

*******Public Comments*******

Lori Nelson, Hilcorp, said she anticipates the plug and abandon of the Tyonek will take place in 2021. Integrity work will be done in the inlet and onshore drilling will continue. When plans are finalized she will keep the Council informed; she keeps in touch with CIRCAC staff.

Heather Crowley, BOEM reported the call for suggestions for new research projects in Alaska for the fiscal year starting in October closes on December 4. The national call closes on December 7. An OCS

lease sale is scheduled for next year; BOEM is working on the draft EIS and it will be released with the normal announcement and comment period.

*****PRESENTATIONS*****

Captain Leanne Lusk, USCG, transferred to Alaska and assumed command on July 15. COVID has created challenges. She visited the Port of Alaska, CISPRI, and Port of Nikiski and attended an oil spill response exercise. Sector Anchorage implemented the Ice Guidelines for the northern inlet on November 20. As needed, they will be implemented in the southern inlet. The CISPRI Barge 141 broke its mooring and went aground on September 30, causing significant damage when it hit an engine block on shore. There was good coordination between CISPRI and Marathon and a temporary stand by ship was employed. The barge is being repaired. Regular Coast Guard business has continued under COVID protocol.

The Captain provided an update on the ice breaker and an incident in the Bering Sea between Russian authorities and U.S. commercial fishing vessels, which is being addressed by District office.

Jason Brune, ADEC Commissioner, reported that most of the team is working virtually, doing inspections and exploring virtual drills. The Furie/Hex draft permit for multiple discharges from the natural gas Julie Star platform is out for public comment until December 28. The smart comment tool will be used, giving public access to all comments.

Over 100 comments were received on the regulation package; DEC met bi-weekly for 8 months to meticulously review the comments and regulations. As directed by the Governor, the Department will remove unnecessary requirements to show Alaska is open for business, while not eliminating environmental protections. Commissioner Brune anticipates the draft recommendations will be out in a couple of quarters, allowing another public comment period.

The Governor's budget will be released by December 15. SPAR is facing a sustainability issue. Seven positions have been cut and DEC is seeking additional funding sources via an increase of the per gallon refined fuel surcharge levied where the fuel is sold. DEC's budget is still being worked out; it is a priority that regulatory agencies be adequately funded. The Commissioner offered to meet with the Board once the budget is released.

Mr. Brune will seriously consider any request for additional comment time on the draft recommendations and will maintain open communication with CIRCAC. While the ice breaker is in the state Mr. Brune suggested arranging collaboration between DEC and the Coast Guard.

There are exemptions from the refined fuel surcharge. When asked about budgetary priorities, Mr. Brune said the department's mission is to protect human health and the environment. Primacy over federal programs is a priority. He said he is open to input and wants to reduce redundancy. DEC's goals are 1) focusing on human health and the environment and providing timely, science-based, legally defensible permits; 2) incorporating technology; and 3) encouraging retention and development of staff.

2. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

John Williams reported that the committee met twice since the last Council meeting to approve alternate procedures for processing payables and payroll, receive the 2019 financial audit, an update on funding, the funding contracts, 2020 budgets, draft 2021 operating and program budgets and banking

reports. The committee approved the 2021 Council meeting schedule. The chairman thanked the committee members and Mr. Rombach for their work.

- **2020 Statement of Financial Position & Budget**

Vaito'a Heaven said the organization is doing well, all funders have paid on time and all grants are closed out. The accounts are balanced and healthy. There are two legal teams on retainer. The predominant expenses are for personnel and insurance. Unspent funds can be held in Special Opportunities.

- **2021 CIRCAC Board Meeting Schedule**

Presuming conditions allow a return to normal; the Executive Committee recommends the 2021 meetings be held on April 9 in Kenai, on September 10 in Seldovia and on December 2, 3 in Anchorage. Mr. Munger said he is cautiously optimistic but virtual meetings will be conducted until it is safe to meet in public.

3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- **Draft 2021 Administration and Program Budgets**

Mr. Munger presented the Draft 2021 Administration & Program Budgets. Funds are allocated according to needs. There is no increase in the CPI, so the funding will be the same this year. With Mr. Rombach taking a part-time position and the intention to hire a new administrative assistant the personnel budget is slightly decreased. Insurance has increased.

Ms. Heaven added that the retirement budget dropped slightly. Mr. Catalano opted to boost the PROPS budget; the PROPS Committee approved. The Public Involvement was increased by \$5,000 to increase public outreach efforts.

Robert Peterkin moved to approve the 2021 Administration and Program Budgets. Gary Fandrei seconded. The motion passed.

- **2019 Financial Audit/Tax**

Mr. Munger reported that the audit has been completed with no deficiencies noted in spite of the COVID challenges to the field audit. He appreciates the auditor's professionalism. He thanked the staff for their good work.

Staff has adapted well to working remotely and the organization is running smoothly. If Hex LLC operates gas-only they will not fund CIRCAC, but the funding agreement requires the other companies to make up the difference.

4. STAFF REPORTS – STATUS OF PROGRAMS

All reports have been provided in the packet.

- **Public Outreach**

Shaylon Cochran participated in a drill. He will take Mr. Rombach's seat on the Harbor Safety Committee.

CIRCAC provides two \$2500 scholarships and contributes \$1250 for a current AVTEC enrollee scholarship. The scholarships are promoted through each public and private school district, and through home school counselors. Continuing students can reapply.

- **Environmental Monitoring**

Ms. Saupe is trying to leverage with UAF on a radium isotope study and with UAA on an oxy-PAH study. Planning continues for Macrocytis and ShoreZone field studies that could not be done last year. Marine Snow research will be conducted in the lab in New Hampshire.

Staff will review the new APDES produced water discharge permit. Ms. Saupe worked on the AOS 5-year proposed plan and she will submit study plan ideas to BOEM. Legislative funding is being sought for research by the AK Research Consortium that might support the Macrocytis kelp study. Mr. Fandrei noted that the Paint River Aquaculture facility is available for use in the lower Inlet. He expressed appreciation for all of Ms. Saupe's coordinating work. EMC approved funding for a new skiff she hopes to use this summer.

- **Prevention, Response, Operations & Safety**

Mr. Catalano reported the camera at the Port of Alaska has been replaced and the one at Port McKenzie will be replaced next. Access to them has been provided to the Air Force. At the winter Ice Meeting access to all of the cameras was granted to SWAPA. Work is underway to provide Sector Anchorage with access and control of the cameras. An additional camera will be installed at the Marathon LNG facility for a better view of the dock; the one at the ASRC facility will be demobilized.

Twenty-four site visits were made at anadromous stream crossings between the Cosmopolitan facility and the refinery. GRSs will be developed. PROPS will update the Vessel Traffic Study using data collected from 2011-2020 to identify trends in incidents, vessel traffic, vessel types, etc. The data will be updated hereafter every 3 years.

Staff participated in the Cook Inlet Pre-Winter meeting. Hilcorp and Glacier/CI Energy each conducted a virtual drill; Mr. Catalano has been participating in Hilcorp drill planning and training. Their March drill will highlight the GRID and ICS.

- **PROTOCOL**

Protocol reviewed and submitted comments for the Harvest AK, LLC plan and 2 Information Collection Requests for BSEE. Comments on an RFAI for the Tesoro Kenai Pipeline Company were submitted.

- **Administration**

Mr. Rombach reported that the election and appointment process will begin next week. The Aquaculture, Commercial Fishing and Cities of Homer, Kenai and Kodiak seats are expiring. Staff will reach out to the organizations and municipalities involved.

Work on the scholarship program will commence in January.

Mr. Williams and Mr. Munger thanked Mr. Rombach for his great work.

5. STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan provides the direction for Cook Inlet RCAC to fulfill the mandates of OPA90 and CIRCAC's mission and it serves as a tool to develop programs and partnerships. The Strategic Plan is a living document; the 2014-2019 plan was revised in 2018 and 2019. The plan is designed to pre-identify goals for staff to fulfill via projects as opportunities to partner arise. Annual workplans are developed to address the goals. The Committees reviewed their Program pages and submitted edit recommendations for Council approval. In 2013 the Council developed and since revised Priorities, and revision of those is recommended for the 2021-2026 plan.

Ms. Saupe presented the recommended edits for the Program pages:

Biological and Chemical Environmental Monitoring Program

Program Strategies:

(edit) Conduct field sampling and laboratory, statistical, and data analyses **to characterize** ~~for~~ Cook Inlet's biological, **chemical**, oceanographic, habitat, and contaminant ~~studies~~-**environments**.

(addition) **Conduct trajectory analyses for simulated Cook Inlet oil spills that includes shoreline impact, site oiling, threat zone, and resource analyses.**

Coastal Habitat Mapping Program

Program Strategies:

(addition) **Integrate habitat data and imagery with other information important for oil spill response including Environmental Sensitivity Index (ESI) data.** ~~Make information available through web accessible database.~~

(edit) Develop tools for effective application of data in oil spill planning and response, **ensuring access of information through on-line portals.**

(edit) Participate in ~~efforts to~~ **the coordination of an Alaska and** ~~or~~ North Pacific-wide **nearshore** biophysical **habitat** mapping programs ~~of near-shore habitats.~~

Physical Oceanography Program

Program Goals:

(edit) Promote collaborations and partnerships between and among researchers and organizations to support "Program Goal 1" **and to** ~~Encourage and support~~ development of a comprehensive Cook Inlet ~~physical oceanography~~ observing system.

Oil Transport, Fate and Effects Program

Program Goals:

(edit) Make data accessible **and actively engage in efforts** to improve oil spill planning and response decisions.

Program Strategies:

(edit) Identify, prioritize, and fill data-gaps for transport and fate models, taking into consideration parameters such as emulsification, dispersal, biodegradation, aggregation with mineral ~~fin~~ **and organic particles**, deposition, photo-chemical oxidation, and food-web interactions.

Technical Review Program

Program Strategies:

(addition) **Prioritize issues of concern to ensure efforts and funds are appropriately delegated.**

Geographic Response Strategies

Program Goals:

(addition) **Present Shore based GRS to AREA Committee GRS workgroup for inclusion into catalog.**

Prevention and Response

Program Goals:

(addition) **Develop and maintain a Geospatial Resource Inventory Database (GRID) for use by Area emergency responders.**

(addition) **Integrate GRID into web based Cook Inlet Response Tool.**

Risk Assessment

Program Goals:

(addition) **Expand Ice Monitoring capabilities and user groups.**

Program Strategies:

(addition) **Conduct Tri-annual Vessel traffic studies in order to track Vessel traffic trends.**

(addition) **Provide limited access to ice monitoring cameras for user groups within project scope.**

Contingency Planning

Program Purpose:

(edit) Review, evaluate, and comment on new and existing oil discharge, prevention and contingency plans **and regulations** for Cook Inlet exploration, production, crude oil facilities and tankers.

Program Goals:

(edit) Review, evaluate, and comment on legislative and regulatory developments **and amendments.**

Program Strategies:

(edit) **Monitor**, ~~Review~~ and provide comments for all proposed changes to existing or new regulations affecting the Cook Inlet RCAC area of concern.

(edit) Review all portions of ~~the~~ contingency plans and provide comments that ensure regulatory compliance and improve industry readiness.

Program Outcome:

(edit) All Contingency plans ~~meet~~ and current regulatory intent and requirements **support CIRCAC's program purposes.**

Public Involvement

Program Strategies:

(edit) Provide regular **correspondence and engagement through social media, traditional advertising, newsletters and other promotional materials.** ~~through different media— internet, pamphlets, brochures and newsletters.~~

Ms. Saupe noted that much thought was put into developing the architecture of the Strategic Plan through the Programs. It's good to be able to make changes to the goals and strategies as needed.

Gary Fandrei moved to accept the proposed edits to the Program section of the Strategic Plan as presented. Molly McCammon seconded.

Mr. Sonen commended Ms. Saupe and the committees for the important work.

The motion passed.

6. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Council Priorities 2014-2019

Ms. Saupe explained the recommendations to remove some previously identified priorities, edit others and add new ones. The list of priorities provides Council direction to the Committees.

(remove) **Continue to seek legislative changes, including amendments to OPA 90 and establish adequate funding levels to satisfy federal mandates.**

This goal was met through an OPA 90 amendment establishing a \$1.4 million + CPI increase floor for Council funding. Mr. Munger added that he will continue to seek additional federal funding.

(keep with or without revisions) **Comprehensive risk assessments for oil facilities and infrastructure. (recommended revision) Evaluate oil spill risks and potential risk reduction strategies for oil facilities and infrastructure in Cook Inlet, including new risks and potential ecological impacts posed by the expansion of offshore oil industry operations into federal waters of the lower Inlet.**

CIRCAC conducted the Cook Inlet Pipeline Integrity Assessment, but other risks have not been adequately assessed and new risks are coming on-line in the Outer Continental Shelf lease sale areas.

(remove) **Continue to make Cook Inlet RCAC data and information widely accessible.**

CIRCAC has worked hard with AOOS, NOAA and Alaska ShoreZone partners to integrate data and imagery into appropriate portals, the CIRT and GRID. This is regular operating procedure for CIRCAC.

(remove) **Ensure detailed habitat data for all shorelines in Cook Inlet are available, and facilitate their integration and use in oil spill planning and response.**

Data gaps have been filled and served online. CIRCAC provides training opportunities for accessing the ShoreZone data during planning, drills and spills.

(remove) **Support formation of, participation in, and seek funding opportunities for a Cook Inlet area Harbor Safety Committee.**

The Harbor Safety Committee has been established and a Harbor Safety Plan was approved. PROPS will continue to support the HSC.

Priorities added in December 2018

(keep) **Continue seeking additional funding from other sources for non-OPA 90 issues. CIRCAC often has expertise to add to non-crude projects to decrease risks to and improve knowledge of Cook Inlet.**

(keep) **Develop a sustained program to collect and integrate biological and chemical environmental data in the Cook Inlet region, and ensure their use for appropriate governmental and private purposes.**

CIRCAC will continue to work with partners to leverage funding and share expertise.

Priorities added in December 2019

(keep with revisions) **Host OPA 90 and CIRCAC 30th Anniversary celebrations and activities focused on our accomplishments and lessons-learned.**

COVID prevented the anniversary celebration, but the actions could still be pursued as a Council Priority or as goals in the Public Outreach Program.

(recommended revision) **Host CIRCAC “Now and Then” Celebration to highlight CIRCAC accomplishments and lessons learned.**

(keep) **Partner with NOAA, AOOS, NPS, UAF, and others to provide an open-access oil spill trajectory model for Cook Inlet oil spill planning and response, ensuring complex oceanographic processes are captured in order to effectively model oil spill trajectories.**

Ms. Saube said the time is right since NOAA’s Cook Inlet Operational Forecast System circulation and hydrographic model has become operational. PROPS and EMC need the model and AOOS, NOAA, KBRR, NPS and BOEM, National Weather Service and National Ocean Service have high interest.

(keep) **Provide leadership in the oversight and review of any actions potentially impacting State and Federal oil spill regulations and laws.**

Proposed 2021-2026 Council Priorities (New)

Develop an understanding of current and planned activities associated with OCS areas in lower Cook Inlet

Recent interest in the OCS is expanding CIRCAC’s focus to a larger geographic area and a wider range of activities with potentially new risk and environmental impacts.

Compile a comprehensive library of Cook Inlet oil industry infrastructure and activities

CIRCAC often gets calls for data and should compile and update comprehensive information to make it more readily available.

Paul Shadura moved to approve the recommended changes to the Council Priorities, including changed language to #4 “Host CIRCAC “Now and Then” Celebration to highlight CIRCAC accomplishments and lessons learned.” Michael Opheim seconded.

The priorities are equally weighted. Adjustments can be made in the future as necessary.

The motion passed.

7. CALENDARS & MISCELLANEOUS

- AK Marine Science Symposium – Jan. 26-28, 2021 (Virtual)
- PWS RCAC – Jan. 28-29, 2021 (Virtual)
- AK Forum on the Environment – Feb. 8-11, 2021 (Virtual)

*****Closing Comments*****

Molly McCammon thanked the staff, saying she is always amazed at the work they do. The improvements to the Strategic Plan are really helpful. She looks forward to progress in the coming years.

Gary Fandrei appreciated the review of the Strategic Plan, which is an important document that provides valuable information to the board and staff. He recognized all of the work done in the near shore environment. The Strategic Plan will be helpful with the new focus on deeper water environments; he appreciates everyone's work on it.

Carla Stanley agreed the Strategic Plan is an important document. CIRCAC has accomplished a lot. She thanked Ms. Saupe and Mr. Catalano for their hard work during personal challenges.

Robert Peterkin said he loves the Strategic Plan. The review was great; staff is amazing. He would prefer in-person meetings.

Deric Marcorelle stated it was a good meeting. He was glad it could be accomplished virtually in this tough year. He missed meeting in Anchorage.

Michael Opheim agreed it was a good meeting with a lot of information. The meeting platform works well for him.

Paul Shadura said it's definitely different to meet by video conference; he prefers being together for the interactions. The Strategic Plan is a good document, and it's good for the public to see all that CIRCAC has been doing. It is a living document and it's working. He recommended Mr. Cochran bring stakeholders into the fold by getting their suggestions for CIRCAC activities when he makes public visits. He appreciates all the work the staff does. He has served on the Council since 1998.

Walt Sonen concurred that it's been a great meeting. He congratulated Ms. Saupe for the work. He teased Mr. Munger as everyone else is growing hair.

Carla Stanley suggested that the Council go to the Shetland Islands.

John Williams said it was a pleasure working with all of the Council and staff.

Vinnie Catalano thanked Mr. Rombach for all his work. He congratulated him on his semi-retirement and thanked the Council for its kind words and flower arrangement. It's a pleasure knowing each one.

Maddie Jamora expressed appreciation for Mr. Rombach's training and wished him well in his semi-retirement.

Shaylon Cochran also congratulated Mr. Rombach and thanked everyone for their hard work on the Strategic Plan. He looks forward to next year.

Susan Saupe added that Mr. Rombach has been great to work with and has shown incredible patience by way of reminders while always managing to get everything done on time. She thanked the board for all the volunteer work done over the years.

Vaito'a Heaven reiterated that Mr. Rombach patiently helped her as a new hire. Staff will miss him. She wished him a happy retirement.

John Williams added his appreciation for Mr. Rombach's help and service to the Council.

Jerry Rombach joked, "Where's the cake?" He thanked all for challenging him every day and for the opportunities to learn and grow, to rub elbows and hob-knob with such important, sincere and influential people.

Michael Munger sincerely thanked Mr. Rombach for his years, he appreciated his professionalism. The strength of the organization is the staff and the support of the wonderful board. It is remarkable what CIRCAC has done over the last 30 years with a small staff and limited budget.

John Williams said he has enjoyed working with all. He thanked the staff and board for their efforts.

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 PM.