



## *"Village with a Past, City with a Future"*

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June 26, 2017

Rear Admiral Michael McAllister  
Commander, 17<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District  
United States Coast Guard 709 W. 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Juneau, AK 99801

Attn: Lt. Jonathon Dale  
Re: Docket Number USCG-2017-0289

Dear Admiral,

On behalf of the City of Kenai, I would like to express our support for the recertification of the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (CIRCAC).

CIRCAC has been Cook Inlet's most effective organization for promoting programs to prevent spills, enhance safety in both marine transportation and oil facilities operations, and protect Cook Inlet's waters, shorelines, cultural, natural, and wildlife resources.

Since the creation the CIRCAC, as a result of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 stemming from the Exxon Valdez oil spill, no other organization has focused as much attention assessing and mitigating risks in this region. Not only does CIRCAC advocate for better regulatory oversight and safety measures, more importantly, they contribute concrete solutions on how to achieve those goals. This is done through conducting risk assessments, sharing data, developing applicable tools and strategies, evaluating the best available technology, public engagement, and thoroughly reviewing contingencies plans and regulations that prioritize prevention while promoting safety.

Prior to the existence of CIRCAC, little was known about the effects of a potential hydrocarbon release into Cook Inlet waters. In July of 1987, two years before the Exxon Valdez spill, Cook Inlet experienced the Glacier Bay oil spill during the height of the salmon returns to the many drainages that flow into Cook Inlet. Even then, it became evident, given the strong tides and currents of Cook Inlet, that work needed to be done and resources devoted to understanding how best to respond to a spill.

The oil and gas industry is very important to the local and state economies and has co-existed with commercial fishing, sport fishing, and tourism for over 50 years in Cook Inlet. Continuing to prevent, and mitigating the negative effects of a potential release into Cook Inlet, is important to maintaining the relationship between the industry groups in the Cook Inlet basin and CIRCAC has been instrumental in ensuring those goals by accomplishing the following:

- Spearheaded efforts to fund and complete a comprehensive Navigation Risk Assessment for Cook Inlet
- Developed Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) project for Cook Inlet, which led to a statewide program of these site-specific oil spill response plans.
- Compiled an extensive body of research on Cook Inlet's biology, chemistry, geomorphology, contaminants, and oceanography.
- Led the Alaska portion of the National Coastal Assessment in Southcentral Alaska.
- Conducted the first ShoreZone coastal habitat mapping project in Alaska and developed an online data portal, which has since developed into a statewide, multi-organizational partnership. ([www.shorezone.org](http://www.shorezone.org))
- Developed Cook Inlet Response Tool (CIRT) as an online data portal. ([www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org))
- Establish an ice camera network that provides real-time remotely accessed imagery of ice conditions for ice forecasters to increase navigational safety.
- Conducts a robust oil spill Contingency Plan review process and is often the only public voice that weighs in on the complex documents.
- Actively participating in Incident Command System during agency and industry oil spill drills and during accrual response actions.
- Contributed to development of Cook Inlet's first Harbor Safety Plan.

In addition, CIRCAC is expanding public awareness through opening the Tourism Stakeholder Group to include other vested interests in Cook Inlet including tourism marketing councils, regional chamber of commerce, and other travel and tourism related industry representation.

More recently, CIRCAC served as an active participant in the Unified Command for the Platform Anna spill providing local knowledge and expertise to contribute positively to the response. CIRCAC also served as a subject expert in the environmental monitoring plan following the Platform A gas line leak and participated in overflights to monitor the impacts of the leaks.

We look forward to continuing this positive relationship and strongly urge the U.S. Coast Guard to approve CIRCAC's application for recertification.

Thank you for considering our request,



Brian Gabriel Sr.  
Mayor, City of Kenai

Cc: Jerry Rombach, Director of Administration, CIRCAC