

Alaska State Legislature

Session:
Alaska State Capitol, Rm. 104
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Representative Justin Ruffridge District 7 - Kenai/Soldotna

July 28, 2023

Rear Admiral Megan Dean
United States Coast Guard
Commander 17th Coast Guard District
Docket Number: USCG-2023-0392

Rear Admiral Dean:

I am writing in full support of the recertification of the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (CIRCAC). Since its creation in 1990, 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.

CIRCAC has been proactive in working with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) on a suite of regulatory updates, approved in 2021. CIRCAC worked with the agency, industry partners and through various public outreach campaigns to educate and support updates that strengthened the state's spill response rules.

Not only does CIRCAC advocate for better regulatory oversight and safety measures, but they also contribute concrete solutions on how to achieve those goals. This includes conducting risk assessments, sharing data, developing applicable tools and strategies, evaluating best available technology, engaging the public, and thoroughly reviewing contingency plans and regulations that prioritize prevention while promoting safety. No other organization has focused as much attention for as many years to identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks in this region.

Working with industry and multiple local, state, and federal agencies, CIRCAC has expanded its Ice Camera Network. The information provided by these cameras has significantly reduced the risk of an incident in Cook Inlet's dynamic winter conditions and highlights CIRCAC's ability to develop partnerships and share information.

CIRCAC's science program provides valuable data about coastal habitats, physical oceanography, and oil behavior. They recently entered a 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. CIRCAC continues to provide its stakeholders and

the public with an avenue through which they can work with industry and regulators to ensure safe operations in the region.

CIRCAC's accomplishments in the last three years include, but are certainly not limited to:

- Updated Alaska ShoreZone visual data with new surveys along the outer Kenai Peninsula coast
- Received study plan approval from BOEM for data needs for model validation in Cook Inlet
- Advocated for a strengthening of oil spill prevention and response regulations
- Increased public outreach efforts through new, local advertising, exhibits and expanding audiences for its newsletter, website, and social media
- Expanded Geographic Response Information Database (GRID) in scope and accessibility
- Participated on and provide expertise to the Cook Inlet Harbor Safety Committee
- Expanded the Cook Inlet Ice Monitoring Camera Network with modern video technology

Since its inception, CIRCAC has formed and strengthened partnerships and encouraged consensus decision-making. Through this process, CIRCAC brings a varied group of stakeholders together to create environmental monitoring and oil spill prevention programs to promote safe production and transportation of oil in Cook Inlet.

I strongly urge the U.S. Coast Guard to recertify CIRCAC so that it can continue to build on its work and positively impact the future of Cook Inlet.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Justin Ruffridge". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Justin Ruffridge
Representative
District 7
Kenai/Soldotna