



"The mission of the Council is to represent the citizens of Cook Inlet in promoting environmentally safe marine transportation and oil facility operations in Cook Inlet."

News Release

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Alaska Ocean Observing System launches Cook Inlet Response Tool

Tool developed in partnership with Cook Inlet RCAC to aid in emergency response

The Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS) has just released a new data access and mapping application known as the Cook Inlet Response Tool, or CIRT. The tool can be launched through the AOOS website at www.aos.org.

CIRT was developed in partnership with the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (Cook Inlet RCAC) to assist oil spill responders and planners, as well as provide information for researchers, managers, and the general public. While this pilot project focuses on Cook Inlet, aspects of it are immediately available to assist emergency responders working on the Kulluk Tow Incident, the Shell drilling rig currently aground near Kodiak. Developing CIRT has been a priority for both organizations for the past 18 months.

CIRT allows users to:

- Fly the coast and stream high definition video from coastal aerial surveys
- Tap into weather conditions, including wind speed, water level, temperature and other conditions from over 100 real-time sensors
- Visualize climate and oceanographic forecast models across time and depth
- Access geographic response strategies, oil persistence and hundreds of other GIS data sets including information for sensitive areas

"One of the initial goals of CIRT was to provide full streaming video obtained during our ShoreZone aerial surveys in the Cook Inlet area so that emergency responders could virtually fly the remote coastlines online using the highest resolution imagery available," said Susan Saupe, Cook Inlet RCAC's Director of Science and Research. "By teaming up with AOOS, we were able to integrate that imagery with other data sources so that they can be seen together."

Several of those data layers are currently available for the Kodiak response area, including the high resolution coastal imagery, real-time weather data, and wind and ocean current forecast models. CIRT was provided to the Kulluk Tow Incident command team at the early stages of the grounding.

"Although this tool was initially developed as an emergency response tool for Cook Inlet and southcentral Alaska, it has broad application as a decision-support tool for a wide variety of stakeholders, including vessel operators, permittees and private industry," said AOOS Executive Director Molly McCammon. "We look forward to hearing from the public and getting their ideas about how to make this tool even more useful."

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Background: CIRT joins a growing number of Cook Inlet RCAC projects that have become integral to emergency response agencies, such as Geographic Response Strategies, Priority Places of Refuge and the Cook Inlet ice forecasting system. Cook Inlet RCAC initiated the Alaska ShoreZone coastal mapping project in 2001, and completed surveys and mapping of the entire Kodiak Island archipelago’s shorelines in 2005. The ShoreZone program is now a state-wide initiative involving over 30 local, state, and federal agencies. The coastal imagery and habitat data are served online by NOAA at <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/shorezone/>.

Other information made available online through this partnership includes ground-station survey data that provide detailed intertidal and near-shore invertebrate and seaweed species lists for the area. As one of the few organizations that has conducted these species-level surveys in the vicinity of the Kulluk grounding, Cook Inlet RCAC has a unique perspective, including information about one of the only two documented *Macrocystis* kelp beds in the entire Kodiak region that is right around the corner from Sitkalikdak Island in Kiliuda Bay.

About AOOS: As the “eye on Alaska’s coasts and oceans,” AOOS represents a network of critical ocean and coastal observations, data and information products that aid our understanding of the status of Alaska’s marine ecosystem and allow stakeholders to make better decisions about their use of the marine environment. Its mission is to address regional and national needs for ocean information, gather specific data on key coastal and ocean variables, and ensure timely and sustained dissemination and availability of these data. (Source: AOOS Website)



About Cook Inlet RCAC: The Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council's mission is to represent citizens of Cook Inlet in promoting environmentally safe marine transportation and oil facility operations in Cook Inlet and surrounding areas.

Cook Inlet RCAC is the Federally-mandated citizens’ organization, formed under the Federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA90). Its Mission is to represent the citizens of Cook Inlet in promoting environmentally safe marine transportation and oil facility operations in Cook Inlet. We engage in environmental research and monitoring, and oil spill prevention and contingency planning.

For more information about this announcement, or the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council and its programs, contact:

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