



COUNCIL

“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”

BRIEFS

New Exploration & Production Return to Cook Inlet

Much has been written and said about the decline of oil and gas production in the State of Alaska, and Cook Inlet has not escaped that scrutiny. But recent developments have suggested our local waters hold potential for oil and gas deposits, and that has already drawn new planning, permitting, investment ... and naturally, scrutiny.

Cook Inlet RCAC diligently reviewed plans submitted by firms new to Alaska, these waters and the stringent regulatory process in place in Alaska. These activities have kept the Cook Inlet RCAC busy as it pursues its mandates. Our Protocol Committee and Vinnie Catalano, Director of Operations, have spent countless hours reviewing the Oil Discharge and Prevention Contingency Plans these companies have prepared for their Cook Inlet operations. Staff (Vinnie, Executive Director Mike Munger and Director of Public Outreach Jerry Rombach) has participated in numerous oil spill training exercises for local operators, including newcomers Escopeta/Furie, and Cook Inlet Energy, with additional drills planned for all of these companies in 2012. Principals of all of the firms have made presentations to, and taken questions from, the Council Board.

“As a named reviewer of contingency plans by state regulations we are pleased with the level of response the new operators have afforded us as we scrutinize their plans. It can be a difficult relationship, but these folks have been responsive, cooperative and appear truly committed to fulfilling their obligations to Alaska, Cook Inlet and the Inlet stakeholders”, says Catalano.

(see “Challenges” on p. 3)

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2011/12 COUNCIL

MOLLY MCCAMMON
Municipality of Anchorage

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Aquaculture Associations

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CARLA STANLEY
City of Homer

JOHN WILLIAMS
City of Kenai

DERIC MARCORELLE
Environmental Interests

LIZ CHILTON
Kodiak Island Borough

Cook Inlet RCAC

P.O. Box 2029
Kenai, Alaska 99611
PHONE: (907) 283-7222
FAX: (907) 283-6102
WEB: www.circac.org

Directors Spotlight: Liz Chilton to Step Down

The Council heavily depends on the dedication and involvement of its Directors ... appointed or elected by the stakeholder groups they represent. Since 2008, we have been privileged to have had Elizabeth Chilton serving on the Council, representing the Kodiak Island Borough. But her dedication started long before that. Liz’s engagement reflects her love of her community and her deep interest in integrating science with community service. Since 2003, Liz has served on our Environmental Monitoring Committee as a member, Vice Chair and Chairwoman. In 2004, Liz was presented the EMC’s “Volunteer of the Year Award”.



Liz is a Research Fisheries Biologist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. From the University Alaska Fairbanks, School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, Liz did her Graduate work in Fishery Oceanography on the distribution of juvenile flatfish, modelling for temperature, currents and sediment south of Kodiak Island. After a year in Seattle, she returned to Kodiak. For 13 years, Liz has continued her work on groundfish and crab for the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service. She has done extensive trawl survey work along Alaska’s vast coast.

A career-related move will take Liz to Washington State to work in a supervisory capacity with the Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis program for the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. This means that the Cook Inlet RCAC will soon lose her in an official capacity after the Annual Meeting in March, though we know she’ll always be willing to share her knowledge, enthusiasm and dedication. Liz will be hard to replace, though her work will continue to bring her to Anchorage, Kodiak, Dutch Harbor and other Alaska locations.

We trust Liz’s passion for ice hockey, walking her pooch Zach (named after Zachar Bay on Kodiak Island), and world travel will not diminish. How many of us have visited Iceland, the Azores, or Columbia?

We wish Liz well in her new pursuits, and hope the future finds her back in Alaska soon and often. Congratulations and best of luck, Liz!

“Collaborating with agencies, new operators and producers, oil spill response organizations and others affords us the opportunity to present our programs and the tools we’ve developed over the years. That’s all crucial for us to fulfill our mission and our mandates.” This additional activity will have a definite impact on navigation in Cook Inlet, and will necessarily be an element of the Cook Inlet Risk Assessment, currently underway, and underscores the growing value of such Cook Inlet RCAC resources as the Ice Forecasting Network or contaminants research.

Fueling much of the activity was the announcement in 2010 that Escopeta Oil would be bringing a jack-up rig from the Gulf of Mexico to Cook Inlet to begin exploring for natural gas and oil. This rig, the Spartan 151, is the first such platform here in nearly 20 years. Its mission is to explore deeper fields for resources previously deemed too difficult or relatively miniscule to extract. Despite some early struggles with transporting the rig and outfitting it for the very different conditions it would face in Alaska, the Spartan 151 arrived in August, was set in place at the Kitchen Lights Unit #1, and commenced drilling the well in September. By the end of its short season in late October, it had reached a depth of 8,805 feet. The rig is currently in winter lay-up in Port Graham where further retrofitting is underway through a contract with the Port Graham Corporation (see cover photo). Upon its return in the spring, the company will resume drilling to a depth of 16,000 feet. If its request for a four year extension to its permit is granted, the company plans to start the design and construction of a production facility in 2012/13. It expects to spud a second well in their Central Block later this year.

David Hall, CEO of Cook Inlet Energy says its focus is on the Osprey Platform, Kustatan Production Facility, and West Macarthur and West Forelands facilities. Kustatan was re-started in 2011, and is forecast to produce an estimated 5 million bbl. They presently hold 650,000 acres, which was increased by 14.7% in 2011. In 2012, the company intends to pursue a new exploratory gas well, drill 4 “sidetracks” from Osprey (with a possible 13 additional under consideration), and evaluate the possibility of a new crude pipeline to address very high hauling costs. Rig 34 arrived in 2011, and Rig 35 is on the way.

Right after the new year Hilcorp’s acquisition of Chevron’s assets here was approved. Senior Vice President John Barnes addressed the recent Industry Outlook Forum in Soldotna, stating that Hilcorp is the 3rd largest producer in the U.S., has extensive experience in environmentally sensitive areas, and is seeking both oil and gas. Here in Cook Inlet, the company will be active in the Hemlock Reservoir through its Trading Bay unit. There should be a relatively smooth transition, as many of Chevron’s key staff and crews have been retained by Hilcorp.

And what of Buccaneer and Apache? To date, Buccaneer’s focus has been on the development of 66,265 acres, primarily its Kenai Loop onshore gas, with development drilling planned in 2012. According to Jim Watt’s presentation to the Resource Development Council late last year, the offshore Southern Cross unit will consist of 2 wells beginning in 2012; a West Eagle well also in 2012; 2 offshore wells in the Northwest Cook Inlet region; and a pipeline facility. Their LeTourneau 116-class jack-up rig, the Endeavour-Spirit of Alaska, will begin drilling in 2012, under contract to Archer Drilling, to a depth of about 25,000 feet in 300’ water. Its blowout preventer would be at water surface level, vs. on the ocean floor. Mark Landt told the Council Board last year the firm plans to emphasize local hiring; would consider leasing their jack-up rig to others in the Inlet; and planned to winter the rig in lower Cook Inlet.

In remarks delivered at the Forum, Apache General Manager John Hendrix made several key points. As Apache begins to drill in the Hemlock Formation...a largely forgotten reservoir...its mission is to be a “...steward of responsible development”. The company plans to drill two wells in Cook Inlet in 2012. Right now, after holding several public information meetings, the company is ‘shooting seismic’ in the area, both on and offshore.

The ramifications of new oil and gas discoveries are significant and far-reaching. Cook Inlet stakeholders and our partners in the agencies and industry are working closely to ensure the oversight we provide is thorough, effective and always results in the desired outcome.

Alaska Marine Science Symposium

Since 2002, scientists from the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, Canada, and indeed around the world have gathered at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium to present research, abstracts, posters and exhibits. The 2012 Symposium, held the week of January 16th in Anchorage, offered an array of research and knowledge, showcasing ocean research built around three regional themes: Arctic Ocean, Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska. Within each theme were presentations relating to such diverse but connected ocean science topics as: physical oceanography, climate, fishes and invertebrates, marine mammals, seabirds, the benthos, lower trophic levels, local traditional knowledge and socioeconomic research.

A series of presentations resulting from the Cook Inlet RCAC-led Integrated Cook Inlet Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (ICIEMAP), with field work completed in 2008 and 2009, was presented as a series of 7 research posters during an evening special session at the Dena’ina Center. With co-Principal Investigators and Cook Inlet RCAC contractors Mark Savoie, Dr. John Trefrey, William Driskell, Dr. Allan Fukuyama, Tim Robertson, and Dr. Ian Hartwell, Cook Inlet RCAC Director of Science Susan Saupe presented posters that summarized results for various components of the overall ICIEMAP:

- A Collaboration of Four Inlet Contaminant Studies (Overview),
- Statistical Design, Field Studies, Indices, and Analytical Parameters
- Distribution Patterns and Sources for Organic Contaminants
- Distribution Patterns and Sources for Trace Metals
- Hydrocarbon Fingerprinting
- Benthic Infaunal Communities, and
- Sediment Quality Triad Assessment in Kachemak Bay and Kenai Peninsula

In addition, Sue has orchestrated a gallery exhibit “*Coastal Impressions: A Photographic Journey Along Alaska’s Gulf Coast*”. Taken from the Symposium’s agenda, the exhibit “...presents a small selection of the tens of thousands of photographs collected by the ShoreZone Alaska Partnership ... from the extensive salt marshes and wave-cut platforms of lower Cook Inlet to recently discovered bedrock from glacial retreat in Southeast Alaska ... the images were chosen to reflect the diverse, dynamic and often rugged and remote margins where land meets the sea.” (see related story on p. 5) It is the intent of the partners to make *Coastal Impressions* a traveling exhibit in the near future. In fact, it will appear at the Kachemak Bay Science Conference in Homer this March.

Sue’s leadership in the scientific community and the Council’s support of both research and education, mark our ongoing commitment to Cook Inlet and beyond.



Coastal Impressions
A Photographic Journey along
Alaska’s Gulf Coast

This exhibit of vivid, large-format images from Gulf of Alaska shorelines will leave you with unforgettable impressions about the stunning beauty of our complex and wild coast.

Images were selected from thousands of digital photos obtained during Alaska ShoreZone surveys to reflect the diverse, dynamic, and often rugged and remote land-sea margin.

- Salt marshes, wave-cut platforms, rocky headlands, river deltas, coastal lagoons, spits, and more
- Take home an exhibit catalog with detailed annotations for each photograph
- Coffee and tea provided

Exhibit open from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm, January 16-19,
downstairs in the Adventure Room at Hotel Captain Cook

Exhibit sponsored by Cook Inlet RCAC and developed in partnership with
NOAA Fisheries’ AFSC Auke Bay Laboratories and Alaska ShoreZone

ShoreZone Data Mapping

An exciting marriage of science and technology is about to reach fruition. The Cook Inlet Response Tool (CIRT) was demonstrated at both the annual Alaska ShoreZone Partners meeting in October, and the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in January. It is also well on its way to providing a powerful imagery and data visualization tool for oil spill planning and response. CIRT is being developed through a partnership between the Cook Inlet RCAC and the Alaska Ocean Observing System to combine high definition imagery (video and digital stills) and database on coastal habitats, flora, and fauna, with real-time or forecasted meteorological and ocean conditions. A centerpiece of the tool is a new way to view the powerful ShoreZone tools, allowing users for the first time to view high resolution streaming video over the internet.



Since the Cook Inlet RCAC's initial surveys in 2001, ShoreZone has developed into an Alaskan partnership of over 40 local, state and federal agencies and organizations, with NOAA serving up all imagery and data in a manner that integrates all the survey and mapping data collected. The partners meeting is an incredible demonstration of what successful collaborations can achieve. This collection of data is a phenomenal, active, scientific library and its benefits to the scientific community alone are staggering.

CIRT goes further and is demonstrating the power of integrating ShoreZone with other available resources. What does this mean for the stakeholders of Cook Inlet? Simply put, in the event of an oil spill it will bring visual images, baseline habitat information, flora and fauna characteristics, and real-time and forecasted winds and ocean currents directly to the tool belt of the Incident Management Team. Combined with the Ice Forecasting Network developed by the Cook Inlet RCAC and other technologies, tools are in place to more effectively project the path a spill might take; to understand the unique characteristics of the shoreline in that path; and plan appropriate measures to marshal the equipment and manpower necessary to protect environmental, economic and cultural resources. To view the stunning images and get a sense of the scope of the Alaska ShoreZone program, visit www.shorezone.org. CIRT will be provided for vetting to the oil spill planning and response community this spring, and should be available for public access shortly after that.

Vessel Traffic Study Completed

One of the most important components of the Cook Inlet Risk Assessment (CIRA) is the Vessel Traffic Study. The study, completed by David Ely of Cape International, Inc., was released in draft form to the CIRA Advisory Panel in October. These experts offered input at that first meeting, and the report was posted on the CIRA website for public comment. This input has been incorporated into a final study, now available at www.cookinletriskassessment.com. The second meeting of the CIRA Management Team and Advisory Panel was a webinar/teleconference on January 25th. Agenda topics included accepting the final Vessel Traffic Study, as well as a first look at the Baseline Spill and Accident Causality Study methodology prepared by The Glosten Associates. A draft report should be completed at the end of March, with the final report due in June. The next meeting of the Advisory Panel will be held at that time, with a 'Consequence Analysis' workshop tentatively set for September.



AOGCC Considers New Blowout Prevention Measures

The Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council congratulates the Alaska Oil & Gas Conservation Commission (AOGCC) on its thorough review of the state's drilling safety rules in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon incident in the Gulf of Mexico. Cook Inlet RCAC supports and applauds the new blowout control regulations being considered by AOGCC.

In written and verbal comments to AOGCC in March of 2011, RCAC advocated a change in the Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (C-Plan) review process: "...we feel very strongly that the blowout contingency plan should be included in the Contingency Plan review process so that it may be scrutinized by regulatory experts and by all named reviewing entities." This was known to ensure continuity between agencies, and to promote the highest industry standards. Specifically, we endorsed:

- Require operators submit blowout contingency plans along with oil discharge prevention and contingency plans;
- Establish a process to transfer authority to technically review and approve blowout contingency plans to AOGCC;
- AOGCC normal review and approval of blowout contingency plan as part of oil spill discharge contingency plan review; and
- Establish standards for blowout prevention systems and emergency shut down systems.

We have formally recommended this connection between the review of blowout contingency plans and oil discharge prevention and contingency plans in our review of all C-Plans throughout 2011.

Cook Inlet RCAC welcomes the opportunity to work with industry, the regulatory agencies, and stakeholder organizations in promoting environmentally safe marine transportation and oil facility operations in Cook Inlet.

Congratulations!

Cook Inlet RCAC would like to extend its congratulations to several individuals who have made and continue to make significant contributions to the Council and the Cook Inlet area. We're proud of these friends of Cook Inlet RCAC, and add our praise to the chorus.

- Peter Micciche, ConocoPhillips and Mayor of Soldotna – Recognized by the company with its *Lifetime Achievement Award* in February
- Joe Gallagher, Homer Electric Association – First Cook Inlet RCAC Director of Public Outreach, Joe was recognized as the Soldotna Chamber of Commerce's *Business Professional of the Year*
- Jim Butler, Baldwin & Butler, Attorneys at Law – the Kenai Chamber of Commerce saluted Cook Inlet RCAC founding member and current Cook Inlet Risk Assessment Advisory Panel member, as its *Man of the Year* for 2011
- J.R. Wilcox, Cook Inlet Energy - Named one of the *Top Forty Under Forty* by the Alaska Journal of Commerce

Public Involvement Initiatives

Cook Inlet RCAC works hard to share our mission and efforts with the stakeholders and citizens of Cook Inlet. We meet regularly with our elected officials; frequently attend local and state Chamber of Commerce and other community meetings (offering to formally present our organization at such meetings); and recently attended and addressed the audience at the Kenai Peninsula Economic Forecast Forum and Alaska Forum on the Environment.

We share our projects and initiatives on our website (www.circac.org), via Facebook, and in a collaborative manner on such project-specific sites as the ShoreZone initiative and Cook Inlet Risk Assessment. And of course we present news through our own publications and via News Releases, commentaries and features carried by local and statewide media and trade publications.

One strategy we employ is to attend trade shows or expos. These are generally targeted to very specific audiences ... commercial fishing, oil and gas producers, scientific community, or spill response organizations for example. Over just the past few months, we have participated in three important and long-standing events: the Pacific Marine Expo; the Alaska Support Industry Alliance's "Meet Alaska" Conference and Expo; and the Alaska Marine Science Symposium. You may have seen us at one or more of these events.

Why do we pursue such opportunities? As we're not selling a product, gauging success and benefits can be a challenge. How do you measure the applicability to our mission of simply talking with a fisherman from Kodiak about our Beluga whale winter feeding project, or a driller from out-of-state about our Ice Forecasting Network?

While it appears difficult to qualify, our effectiveness may be reflected in the access we're afforded in the Incident Command System during spill training exercises, or the cooperation and responsiveness we receive to comments posed during C-Plan reviews. Regulators regularly seek our perspective on key issues. The scientific community, as suggested in the story on p.4, likewise values our collaboration and funding acumen. Producers know they can count on our perspective to questions on best available technologies.



Finally, attending such expos gives staff the opportunity to become better acquainted with the people, organizations, equipment and practices in the industries and agencies we partner with on a daily basis. If forced to collaborate in the event of a real incident, it's our belief this knowledge, familiarity and trust will serve the stakeholders of Cook Inlet well.



Winter Activities:

- 4th Quarter Council Meeting in Anchorage
- CIRA Advisory Panel meeting
- Oil Spill Drills for Tesoro, Escopeta/Furie & Marathon
- Staff participates in key meetings: Kachemak Bay Science Conference; Pacific Marine Expo; Alaska Support Industry Alliance Expo & Conference; Kenai Peninsula Economic Forecast Forum; Kenai Rotary; Alaska Marine Science Symposium; Soldotna & Kenai Chamber meetings; Alaska Forum on the Environment, and many more.

Answer to Quiz:

The last issue of Council Briefs challenged readers to identify a photo of shoreline flora.

That image may be viewed at the website www.seaweedsfalaska.com, developed by Mandy Lindeberg and sponsored by Cook Inlet RCAC, or also in the popular *Field Guide to Seaweeds of Alaska*.

We can almost hear you saying "Oh, of course it is!" when learning the image was of *Constantinea rosa-marina*.