



# Directors Update

From Carla Stanley

Representing the City of Homer

Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council

The Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (CIRCAC) meets three times a year—in Kenai in April, Anchorage in November/December and, on a rotating basis, Kodiak, Homer or Seldovia in September. We were looking forward to holding this year's September 6th meeting in Seldovia. Regrettably, the community is facing a severe water shortage. We moved our meeting to Homer so as not to tax their already stressed supply. We wish the community the best as it contends with this emergency and will see our friends in Seldovia next September.

In Homer, we received a warm welcome from Mayor Ken Castner, also a former Chair of CIRCAC's PROPS Committee. On the agenda were presentations from Hilcorp Alaska, the U.S. Coast Guard, and Nuka Research. Hilcorp chose to submit their report in writing. Also joining us were Denise Koch, the Director of the Division of Spill Prevention and Response for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), and members of the public.

Denise Koch informed us of the status of ADEC's review of C-Plan regulations. This review will entail a public scoping process beginning in the fall, and CIRCAC is participating in this review. Regarding personnel, ADEC has hired Crystal Smith as the new State On-Scene Coordinator to replace Geoff Merrell.

During the public comment portion of our meeting, Bob Shavelson, Advocacy Director for Cook Inletkeeper and Environmental Representative for Prince William Sound RCAC, and Jim Herbert, who serves on Prince William Sound RCAC's Oil Spill Prevention and Response committee, focused their comments on Hilcorp's seismic testing and acquisition of BP assets. Mr. Shavelson questioned Hilcorp's conclusions that seismic testing was not harmful to wildlife; noting the science and knowledge of seismic impacts are limited but growing. Mr. Herbert stated that Hilcorp's acquisition of BP assets raises many questions for Prince William Sound and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline.

## U.S. Coast Guard Alaska Operations

Captain Sean MacKenzie, Commander Sector Anchorage; Captain Patrick Hilbert, District 17 Chief of Prevention (photo below right); and Lt. Edward "Kahi" Kaaua, Supervisor of the Homer Marine Safety Detachment provided a broad but detailed overview of the U.S. Coast Guard's operations in Alaska, including mission, search and rescue, current and future assets, and jurisdictional responsibilities. Congress has approved six USCG national security cutters to increase America's presence in the Polar region, the Bering Sea and the Arctic to 365 days a year. Captain MacKenzie, while speaking about CIRCAC's work and progress within Cook Inlet commended the Cook Inlet Harbor Safety Committee for taking ownership of the Ice Guidelines formerly managed by the USCG. All the Directors appreciated their presentations.



## Nuka Research, Pipeline Project Update

Tim Robertson of Nuka Research reported steady progress with the Cook Inlet Pipeline Study, having completed Phases 1 and 2 (regulatory framework and a validated inventory). Phase 3— Panel of Experts review and recommendations—is ongoing. Under the charter, the Expert Panel is to recommend measures to reduce risks of failures that could threaten structural integrity. The Panel has met once in person and multiple times by teleconference. They have developed 230 scenarios associated with the potential loss of integrity and are scoring them by likelihood and consequences—environmental, social, and economic impacts. The Panel will review their differences and then meet September 31/October 1 in Anchorage to develop recommendations. We expect a report to be forthcoming by year's end.

With a grant to CIRCAC from the Pipeline Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), Nuka developed a [website](#) with background information on Cook Inlet pipelines, and conducted a survey, public webinar, and public meeting. Questions from the participants pertained to emergency response, information/data, infrastructure, Inspection/Maintenance, Other/General. Nuka's presentation is posted on CIRCAC's web page, [here](#).

## Reports from the Executive Committee and Executive Director

President John Williams reported the organization's finances are sound. The auditor Lambe, Tuter, and Associates found no financial discrepancies during this year's audit.

Executive Director Mike Munger confirmed that the U.S. Coast Guard recertified CIRCAC without qualification for the 28th consecutive year. He spoke in detail about the history of the pipeline assessment, which is nearing completion and noted that Hilcorp was very transparent in sharing pipeline information. Mr. Munger met with Alaska's Congressional Delegation regarding legislation to extend the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund. We are working very closely with PWSRCAC to garner support throughout Congress to get this bill passed. Mr. Munger also spoke in detail regarding the Chapter 11 Bankruptcy filing by Furie Operating Alaska LLC, one of CIRCAC's funding companies. AVTEC will begin administering the new \$2500 joint CIRCAC/Marathon scholarship immediately.

Hilcorp asked Mr. Munger to point out that Hilcorp has set up a hotline number for subsistence users to share information on seismic activity. He said the company is working diligently to decommission Drift River Oil Terminal and that the facility's pipes and storage containers are now oil-free. The oil in the ground is a long-term ADEC remediation clean-up project. CIRCAC was instrumental in advancing the subsea pipeline and Drift River Oil Terminal removal.



## Status of Programs and Projects

Detailed Staff reports are [online](#). Here are some highlights:

### Environmental Monitoring Committee (Sue Saupe, Director of Science and Research)

Ms. Saupe is providing training in the Cook Inlet Response Tool and ShoreZone for ADEC and Marathon this month. She is also in discussion with coastal educators about classroom training. NOAA Coastal and Oceans Resources Center is developing a "Human Impressions" exhibit modeled after the Coastal Impressions ShoreZone Exhibits. There are new reports of range extensions for *Macrocystis kelp* on the other side of Cook Inlet caused by warming temperatures. These beds are very dense and could retain oil during a spill, which could hamper clean-up efforts. The kelp is an essential habitat for forage fish and otters in heavy weather. CIRCAC continues its support of [marine snow research](#) which continued this summer with the addition of sampling on Albatross and Portlock banks off of Kodiak.

Staff worked with contractors and the Protocol Committee to submit reviews for several permits, including the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Marine Mammal Take Permit for Hilcorp activities over the next five years, as well as the seismic work which will begin in a few days. Staff still has concerns that were not resolved by the NMFS. Chief among them, the permit should contain, but does not, a requirement for additional passive acoustic monitoring in Cook Inlet. The permit also proposes, without discussion, a quarter-mile causeway in Chinitna Bay. CIRCAC's technical review found a shocking lack of information on which to base these decisions. CIRCAC's comments are at [www.circac.org/wp-content/uploads/Taking-of-marine-mammals.pdf](http://www.circac.org/wp-content/uploads/Taking-of-marine-mammals.pdf)

CIRCAC is also not satisfied with the APDES General Oil and Gas Permit for Cook Inlet and the Individual Permit for the Osprey Platform which we believe are oversimplified and contain misinformation. The permits would also increase the sources and total contaminant loadings to Cook Inlet. We are awaiting comments to our concerns from ADEC.

### PROPS Committee (Steve "Vinnie" Catalano, Director of Operations)

The Harbor Safety Committee workgroup's annual review of the Harbor Safety Plan is complete. The Ice Monitoring System of Cameras is improved with the installation of two new cameras—one on A Platform and one on Granite Point Platform. Another new camera is in the works for the Tyonek Platform. We are testing the GRID program during a drill on October 26 with Marathon. Mr. Catalano is working with Logistics and the Public Outreach Director in the Joint Information Center. Staff is developing new Geographic Response Strategies for stream crossings along the truck route used by tank trucks carrying crude oil from the BlueCrest Cosmopolitan Facility.

## Administration (Jerry Rombach, Director of Administration)

Board seats with expiring terms in 2020 are Environmental, Alaska Native, Kodiak Island Borough and Kenai Peninsula Borough. The elections process will begin in mid-November. Special interest groups are elected and the Borough seats are appointed.

## Upcoming Meetings and Conferences

September 19, 2019 – Western States Harbor Safety Committee, Long Beach, CA

November 13, 2019 - [Pacific States/BC Task Force](#), Bellingham, WA

November 14, 2019 - [Salish Sea Shared Waters Forum](#), Bellingham, WA

November 21-23 - [Pacific Marine Expo](#), Seattle, WA

December 5 and 6, 2019 – CIRCAC Board of Directors Meeting, Anchorage



Photo by Cindy Sanguinetti