



Update from the Board of Directors
Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council

Grace Merkes, representing the Kenai Peninsula Borough

The Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council met in Anchorage on December 1st and 2nd, 2022. This was our first time back in Anchorage since 2018.

The first day of the meeting was focused on updating CIRCAC's strategic plan. This plan is revisited on a semi-regular basis to track progress on current projects, develop plans for new projects, and refine operational objectives. Science Director Susan Saupe led the discussion, and the organization continues on a good track into the coming year.

A series of presentations was delivered, focused on different aspects of Cook Inlet's winter ice season. Individual topics ranged from United States Coast Guard regulations, to monitoring technology to operations strategies. CIRCAC Director of Operations Steve 'Vinnie' Catalano has been instrumental in establishing the Cook Inlet Ice Camera Monitoring Network, which provides real-time visual data from nearly a dozen locations throughout the Inlet, all based on partnerships developed between industry operators, state and federal regulators, municipalities and others.

Todd Paxton, Cook Inlet Spill Prevention and Response, Inc (CISPRI) General Manager explained to the Council what his organization's response capabilities and responsibilities are during the winter ice season, and in particular the opportunities and operational limits of the Tug Bob Franco, which is owned by Centerline Logistics;

Mary-Beth Schreck, Program Leader for the Sea Ice Analysis Program at the National Weather Service Alaska gave an overview of that program's goals, capabilities and role in forecasting ice conditions;

Captain Leanne Lusk, Commander, Sector Anchorage, United States Coast Guard, explained Ice Guidelines for 2022/2023 and the Coast Guard's role in ensuring vessel safety throughout the winter;

Captain Paul Mehler, Senior Port Captain for Marathon Petroleum Corporation, provided some details about the pre-winter meeting held each year in at AVTEC in Seward. That meeting brings together many of the same groups mentioned above to share information and plans ahead of the coming ice season.

Finally, Captain Debra Cobb, Global Marine Assurance Manager for Marathon explained the marine vessel vetting process for vessels operating in Cook Inlet during ice season. Captain Cobb also shared her personal account of an on-water incident that resulted in fatalities among her shipmates and injuries to

herself, which drove home the importance of constant vigilance at each step of a vessel's journey into and out of Cook Inlet during ice season.

The Council will hold its Annual Meeting on April 14, 2023 in Kenai, at which time elections for board members will be held. Three seats are up for reelection this year: Kenai Peninsula Borough, Kodiak Island Borough, Alaska Native Groups and Environmental Groups. Please contact the CIRCAC office at 907-283-7222 for more information about participating in the elections process.