

## 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 held its regular meeting December 5th and 6th in Anchorage.

During the first day of meetings, the Council approved the special election of Brent Johnson. Mr. Johnson will represent the Commercial Fishing group on the Board. He brings more than 50 years of knowledge and experience in the local fishing community and has served on the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly since 2014 and currently serves as Assembly President. We are excited to welcome him to the Council.

On Friday, the Council received updates from several of its Ex-Officio members, including the US Coast Guard. Captain Christopher Culpepper, Commanding Officer Sector Western Alaska and US Arctic, explained some changes coming to USCG stations in Homer and Seward. Current-generation Cutters stationed there will be decommissioned and replaced with newer, 154-foot vessels along with larger crews. Those staffing changes are expected to happen early next year.

Givey Kochanowski, Alaska Regional Director for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) spoke to the Council about the Bureau's environment program, intended to provide decision makers with the appropriate science to ensure offshore energy production happens safely and responsibly. He noted new studies and pilot projects within the National Energy Laboratory focused on renewable sources, such as wind, tidal, and wave, all of which have potential in Cook Inlet. Those programs focus on integrating marine and social sciences, biology, and traditional knowledge.

Cook Inlet Spill Prevention and Response, Inc. (CISPRI) General Manager Todd Paxton gave an update on his organization's plans for potentially replacing one of its primary response vessels, the Perseverance. That 207-foot ship, built in 1976, could be replaced by a new or repurposed vessel. CISPRI has also recently updated its registration as a primary contractor to provide Oil Spill Response Organization (OSRO) services beyond Cook Inlet.

The Council also heard reports from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Alaska Sea Ice Coordinator Michael Lawson gave an overview of the Cook Inlet Ice Camera Network, and how it's deployed in forecasting models and its importance in observation and data-gathering. CIRCAC staff developed the idea for and established the network nearly 20 years ago. One of the many planning and response improvements adopted after the grounding of the Seabulk Pride in 2006 was to provide real-time views of ice conditions. The network now includes nine cameras positioned at strategic points from the mouth of the Kenai River to the Don Young Port of Alaska. NOAA's Alaska Regional Preparedness Coordinator and Scientific Support Coordinator for the Alaska Regional Response Team, Liza Sanden made the Council aware of new virtual training opportunities for Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment Techniques (SCAT) coming up in the Spring.

Steve Ribuffo, Port Director for the Don Young Port of Alaska in Anchorage updated the Council on the facility's Petroleum and Cement Terminal construction. Completed in 2022, that terminal represents part of a long term modernization plan that is being completed in phases. In 2025, work will continue on Phase II – North Extension Stabilization, which will expand the port's capacity in the future. Other work will include demolition and replacement of cargo terminals and a second North Extension Stabilization project.

The Council also heard an operations update from Captain Jeff Brue, Global Marine Operations Manager for Marathon Petroleum.

The Council will hold its Annual Meeting on April 4th in Kenai.