

Board of Directors and Staff Update

The Cook Inlet RCAC Board of Directors wrapped up the year with two-days of meetings in Anchorage on December 4 and 5. We devoted the first day and part of the second to reviewing and updating our [Strategic Plan](#). This is an important exercise, because it reflects the work we have completed to date, and refocuses our efforts going forward. Once our changes are incorporated, we will post the revised Strategic Plan on our website. The second day's sessions revolved around a final report from Tim Robertson, Nuka Research, on the Cook Inlet Navigational Risk Assessment, an update from USCG Captain of the Port Paul Mehler III, and Mark Tourneau with Hilcorp Alaska, who reported on the company's [findings](#) on the Baker platform fire.



Capt. Paul Mehler, III, US Coast Guard—Capt. Mehler commended the response to the Baker platform fire, particularly singling out the fire-fighting capabilities of the *Discovery* and *Endeavor*, which were quickly on scene. Capt. Mehler also credited Cook Inlet RCAC for our participation within the Unified Command System, and talked about lessons learned.

The US Coast Guard is currently participating in the formation of a Cook Inlet Area Harbor Safety Committee. Capt. Mehler told the Council that Harbor Safety Committees—a key recommendation from the Maritime Risk Assessment—have had a great impact throughout the country, and he strongly supports one for Cook Inlet and encouraged Cook Inlet RCAC's involvement.

Ice guidelines: The USCG is currently working on a best practice check list for the ice guidelines.

Alaska LNG: The US Coast Guard has jurisdiction and rules for the marine transfer area and for security. They are currently working with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and will be discussing waterways security issues with industry.

Tim Robertson, Nuka Research—Nuka Research was the lead contractor for the Cook Inlet Maritime Risk Assessment Project, and Tim Robertson provided an update to the board on the project's final report and findings. The Cook Inlet risk assessment used the same National Academy of Science Transportation Board methodology that was used in the Aleutians Island Risk Assessment. Nuka Research is currently reviewing and drafting responses to comments that were submitted and will send them to the Management Team when finalized. The final report will be issued by the end of the year. Among the report's most sobering conclusions: even moderate spills would have significant impacts in Cook Inlet. The final draft report is posted on the Cook Inlet Risk Assessment [website](#).

Mark Tourneau, Hilcorp Alaska LLC—Mark Tourneau, head of environmental safety at Hilcorp Alaska, LLC, shared the company's findings on the Baker platform fire (October 2, 2014) and briefed the Council on the corrective action taken following the incident. Four crew members were aboard the platform when the fire broke out. Damage to the lower section of the platform was a total loss, but the *Discovery* and *Endeavor* work boats which arrived on-scene kept the diesel and fuel tanks cool and protected. Hilcorp determined that the most probable cause of the fire was a 1200 watt heater, original from 1960s installation, and associated wiring inside the wall. As corrective action, Hilcorp checked all similar heaters on other platforms for heating and electrical issues, scanned the walls with wiring with a heat gun, and verified electrical components. Hilcorp concluded that well control was maintained throughout the incident, no hydro-

carbons were released or spilled, minimum process equipment was damaged, and water cannons caused the primary damage, not the fire. Most importantly, the crew was safely evacuated after attempting without success to put out the fire. The fireboats, under the jurisdiction of the Nikiski Fire Department, did an outstanding job. The platform has been shut in since the event.

2014 Committees and Programs Highlights:

PROPS (Prevention, Response, Operations and Safety) Committee—was granted \$70,000 from the State of Alaska to expand and upgrade the Ice Forecasting Network of cameras. Additionally the [Alaska Ocean Observing System](#) (AOOS) funded the installation of a camera at the mouth of the Kenai River that provides publically viewable images through the AOOS website and the City of Kenai [website](#). PROPS commissioned an update to the 2005 “Dismantling and Removal of Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms and Restoration of the Impacted Environment in Alaska’s Cook Inlet” whitepaper. The Committee retained Bob Favretto and John Bauer and added two new public members, Jim McHale and Robert Reges of Anchorage. PROPS reviewed the Council’s Strategic Plan along with the EMC.

Protocol Control Committee— reviewed changes to the Unified Plan Dispersant Use Guidelines, U.S. Coast Preemption for Certain Regulations, and BlueCrest Alaska Operating LLC Cook Inlet Offshore Exploratory Drilling Program Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (OCDP), Cook Inlet Energy OCDP for exploration, Tesoro Cook Inlet Vessel Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan, and Consumer Price Index Adjustments to the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90) Limits of Liability.

Environmental Monitoring Committee (EMC)— completed and submitted winter beluga whale prey study final report to the Kenai Peninsula Borough; continued development of [Cook Inlet Response Tool](#) (CIRT) for improved integration and visualization of Cook Inlet spatial data and imagery; provided pre-drill training to industry on using the Alaska Shore-Zone website and CIRT for planning and response; worked with contractors to re-write our 2000 Intertidal Reconnaissance Survey Report in light of more recent understanding of Cook Inlet chemistry and habitats; participated in long-term monitoring program for nearshore marine resources of Katmai National Park; participating on organizing committee for the *State of the Science for Dispersants in Arctic Waters Initiative* for the Coastal Response Research Center; continued development of Discharge Monitoring Report on-line database for Produced Water discharges to Cook Inlet; provided presentations on our scientific studies, coastal habitat mapping, and web-based database tools at over 20 science conferences and other events.

Public Outreach—Preparations are under way to commemorate the organization’s 25th anniversary since OPA 90. Among other events, a Coastal Impressions exhibit is planned for May to September 2015 at the Kenai Convention and Visitors Center.

Administration —Following an extensive review and public comment period, the Council earned recertification from the U.S. Coast Guard. The Council has begun its process for filling the seats on its Board of Directors set to expire in early 2015. Those seats belong to certified aquaculture associations, commercial fishing groups, and the cities of Kenai, Homer and Kodiak. As part of that process, we are also soliciting commercial fishing organizations to become certified as a member and actively engaged in the work of the Council, and to participate in the election process. For more information, contact Jerry Rombach at 283-7222.