

# **Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee**

## **Managing Board Meeting Summary**

**December 8, 2023**  
**8:30 am – 10:30 am (AKST)**

### **Board Attendees:**

Shari Coleman, Secretary/Treasurer  
Captain Buddy Custard (USCG, Ret.),  
President  
Peggy McLaughlin, Vice President/WSC  
Chairwoman

Captain Christopher Culpepper, USCG  
CDR Scott Farr, USCG  
CDR John Downing, USCG  
CPO Stephen Braun, USCG

### **Ex Officio:**

Bernie Nowicki, ADEC  
Jeanette Alas, ADF&G  
LT Caroline Wilkinson, NOAA  
Aaron Poe, ABSI

### **Others:**

CWO Paul Jarrett, USCG  
Angela Matz, USFWS  
MST2 Elizabeth Burges, USCG  
Sierra Fletcher, Nuka Research  
Haley Griffin, Nuka Research

### **Call to Order and Approval of Agenda**

The December meeting of the AIWSC Managing Board was called to order at 8:41am (AKST) by Captain Buddy Custard.

The attendees then took turns introducing themselves and their affiliations to the group.

**Motion Ms. Coleman, Ms. McLaughlin to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved by non-objection.**

### **Approval of Meeting Summary September 7, 2023**

**Motion Ms. Coleman, Ms. McLaughlin to approve the meeting Minutes of September 7, 2023, as presented. Motion approved by non-objection.**

### **Review Action Items**

Captain Custard stated that the establishment of a registered agent for the WSC is ongoing. No other action items arose from the discussion.

### **Old Business**

#### **New Bank Account**

Captain Custard reported that an account for the WSC has been opened at Key Bank and that he is currently the sole authorizer. For Ms. Coleman and Ms. McLaughlin to become additional authorizers of the account, follow-up paperwork will need to be completed. He also stated that Alaska Chadux will be writing a check to be deposited into the account, and that industry partners will be looked to for funds.

#### **AIWSC Registered Agent**

Captain Custard reported that the committee was involuntarily dissolved by the State of Alaska and as of this week, the Committee remains in a state of dissolution due to the retirement of the registered agent in Kenai formally used by the WSC. He stated that the \$30 dues were paid to the State and the biennial report paperwork has been filled out to re-instate the Committee. The last

step is to identify and establish a registered agent, which Captain Custard stated could be the same agent used by Alaska Chadux.

### **Bylaws**

Ms. McLaughlin stated that the Board will review the Bylaws to ensure they are up-to-date and accurate with the mission of the WSC, once operations pick up again. No further action taken.

### **Insurance**

Captain Custard stated that once funds are deposited into the bank, insurance can be pursued for the WSC. Ms. McLaughlin added that some of the Board members may already be covered by insurance offered by their other positions. Captain Custard offered to look into the insurance used by Alaska Chadux to obtain quotes on what insurance might cost for the WSC.

### **Facilitator's Report**

Ms. Griffin reported that Nuka Research has been working with the Managing Board since mid-May to help re-establish Committee members and get operations running again. Both Ex Officio members have been identified and the Committee roster updated to reflect members that have indicated the intent to continue serving in their respective seats. She listed the current primary seat vacancies, which include Commercial Fishing Vessels <60 feet, Cargo Ships, Oil Spill Response, P&I Clubs, Alaska Native Interest, Vessel monitoring and tracking, and the At-Large seats. Two applications were submitted over the seat vacancy solicitation period, one from Seth Chase (Barges and Associated Tugs) and Matthew Odum (Oil Spill Response Organization).

Ms. Fletcher also reported that she had sent a draft contract for facilitation services to Captain Custard, for the Board's consideration when appropriate. Captain Custard gave the meeting participants context on Nuka Research's involvement since the start of the organization and with other committees throughout Alaska. Captain Custard will send out the contract from Ms. Fletcher to the Board.

### **Funding**

Ms. McLaughlin stated that a contract with Nuka Research is overdue and suggested that possible funding could be obtained through damage funds from the Selendang Ayu grounding. Ms. Matz asked if this funding was specific for the WSC and Ms. McLaughlin replied that the Committee is eligible to obtain a portion of these funds to continue implementing its mission, although the funds aren't likely to be distributed in the near future.

Mr. Poe expressed his frustration with the lack of progress between entities in establishing a disbursement process for the NRDA funds and Ms. Alas provided background on the issues surrounding this incident and processes. Mr. Poe stated that Abbie Lyons was working with him in Senator Murkowski's office on this issue and will have good background knowledge of the issue. CDR Downing reached out to Ms. Lyons and confirmed that she has contacts for Senator Murkowski's office. Captain Culpepper stated that he will engage with Ms. Lyons for information. Ms. Matz offered to reach out to the NRDA funding coordinator for information as well. Ms. Coleman stated that she can touch base with a contact in ADEC on this issue, and Mr. Poe will provide the individual's contact information. He also suggested that the WSC could send a letter to the State in favor of moving things forward.

Another possible source of funding that AIWSC meets the requirements to obtain is within the cruise ship head tax. Captain Custard suggested that the Committee could approach Mayor Peter Micciche for more context as he was a key player involved in the establishment of this funding process. Ms. McLaughlin suggested that overall, goals need to be set when determining the Committee's budget and each request for funding should encompass specific costs to accomplish specific goals. The contract from Nuka can be used to maintain a schedule of accomplishing outstanding tasks.

## Waterways Safety Plan

Captain Custard stated that the Plan needs to be reviewed and revised as appropriate to be applied in real-world situations. Ms. McLaughlin added that an established budget will play a role in this goal being effectively implemented.

## Membership Committee and Workgroups

**Motion Ms. McLaughlin, Ms. Coleman to ratify Resolution 23-02, listing committee member reappointments. Motion approved by non-objection.**

**Motion Ms. Coleman, Ms. McLaughlin to ratify Resolution 23-03, appointing Captain Seth Chase to the primary Barges and Associated Tugs seat and Matthew Odum to the primary Oil Spill Response Organization seat. Motion approved by non-objection.**

Captain Custard offered to reach out to colleagues at the Marine Exchange regarding the Vessel Tracking seat vacancy. Ms. McLaughlin suggested conducting outreach to the Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska for the Native Interest stakeholder seat, followed by outreach to Karen Pletnikoff. Captain Culpepper offered to reach out via the tribal engagement representative in the US Coast Guard who works with the Qawalangin Tribe. Mr. Poe suggested reaching out to the Island of St. Paul as well. Vacancies on the Managing Board will be tabled for a future meeting.

## New Business

### Next Committee Meeting/Steps Forward

Captain Custard asked the group to consider what the priorities and next steps are in the Committee moving forward. Ms. McLaughlin stated that the emergency towing system has not been activated and that it needs to be drilled. The training video also need to be reviewed and updated. She spoke to reviewing the Committee's purpose and what the organization was established for as a top priority. The Waterways Safety Plan should be methodically reviewed because technology is changing and can in-turn, affect how information in the Plan is displayed (e.g., NOAA transition to electronic navigation charts).

Ms. McLaughlin pointed out that if the Board is looking to reactivate the Committee, focused goals need to be identified in the agenda. It might mean that the Committee meets more than quarterly in smaller groups to start off, so that progress on the Plan can be made and remain relevant. Climate change, fisheries and fisheries grounds, and international relationships are just some of the changes projected to have an effect on the operations of WSC. She also expressed her desire for an individual with cargo experience in the Aleutians to fill the Cargo seat on the Committee.

Captain Custard agreed that meetings can be held virtually. Ms. McLaughlin added that an in-person meeting can be held once a year, with smaller, more focused meetings being held to lead up to a larger meeting. She suggested that the Board should carve out an hour in February, March, and April with the Committee members to identify goals and define pieces that need to be in place (i.e., establishing a budget).

Captain Culpepper suggested to solicit input by reaching out to the stakeholders ahead of time. He spoke to the evolving maritime security levels with respect to China and Russia, cybersecurity threats, and the incorporation of digital selective calling, e-curves, and other digital developments as important areas to keep in mind when establishing goals and operations moving forward in the Committee. Ms. McLaughlin agreed that maritime safety and security will be an important agenda item for the Committee to consider.

Captain Custard stated that there are a large number of innocent passage vessels in the region and that the Waterways Safety Plan is applicable to them as well. Ms. McLaughlin reported that the Marine Exchange Alaska emergency response protocols have been activated in the past for a vessel and successfully prevented a similar incident to the *Selendang Ayu*. Marine Exchange recently made calls via satellite to Unalaska and will be a key entity to involve on the Committee. Captain Culpepper added that VHF connectivity is limited in certain areas and cell phone/satellite usage will be the next big win along the Aleutian chain.

LT Wilkinson offered to help with the switch to Electronic Navigational Charts and bringing forward other resources within NOAA to the WSC. NOAA also has a ports system and elevated observations for weather that can be catered to a specific area. Ms. McLaughlin stated that AOOS is interested in supporting the Committee and contribute ideas as well, however, is unable to be a full partner for the time being due to personnel constraints.

Ms. Matz made the Board aware that the Alaska National Maritime Refuge is reinvigorating their Rat Campaign. Part of the Campaign is planning and budgeting for eradicating rats on Great Sitkin Island. The Stop Rats website has also been revived, helping to spread information to mariners on how rats can be checked for and controlled on their ships. Invasive rats are a significant concern among the Aleutian Islands and related to vessel incident response.

Mr. Poe spoke to his work with Marine Exchange Alaska and Kawerak to develop Arctic Watch and their plan to create a voluntary vessel traffic management system. He suggested that Captain Steve White could present a status at the first Committee meeting on this work. He also reported working with the Skipper Science program on St. Paul Island and engaging with the National Weather Service and NOAA to get observations around deck freeze warnings which will improve forecasts for vessels in impacted areas.

Captain Culpepper informed the group that the National Harbor Safety Committee Conference will be held in Chicago on March 20-21, 2024. Captain Custard stated that the conference is being revitalized, and that he is on the planning board and will be a moderator for the emergency vessel response planning panel. Registration has not yet opened, but this will be a good opportunity for members of the AIWSC to attend. The conference will be beneficial in looking to other safety committees for best practices and lessons learned. There will be representation from different regions across the country, and Captain White will be presenting as well.

### **Review Action Items & Next Steps**

Captain Custard thanked the participants for their enthusiasm and dedication in helping to get the WSC running again.

- Captain Custard will coordinate with Aaron Poe regarding a contribution from ABSI to the WSC.
- Captain Custard will establish his organization as the registered agent for the WSC and send the required the paperwork to the State. *complete*
- Captain Custard will look into insurance rates for the WSC and gather quotes on potential costs. *Tabled until funds are obtained.*
- Ms. Matz will reach out for an update from the NRDA funding coordinator at USFWS on the status of Selendang Ayu damage funds.
- Captain Culpepper will engage with Ms. Lyons for background information on the Selendang Ayu/NRDA process.
- Ms. Coleman will touch base with a contact in ADEC on the status of Selendang Ayu damage funds. *complete*
- Captain Custard will send the Board the contract from Nuka Research for review. *complete*

- Captain Custard will reach out to Marine Exchange Alaska, P&I Clubs, and Vessel Tracking to encourage more individuals to join the WSC. *ongoing*
- Nuka and the Board will conduct outreach to the Qawalangin Tribe and Ms. Pletnikoff for applicants to the Native Interest seat on the WSC.
- Ms. Griffin will send out a seat vacancy announcement. *complete*
- Ms. Griffin will send Resolutions 23-02 and 23-03 to Ms. Coleman for signature. *complete*
- Captain Custard will send out the agenda for the National HSC Conference in 2024. *complete*
- Ms. Griffin will send out a Doodle poll to Committee members for their availability in February for a meeting. *complete*

### **Set Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Managing Board will take place on January 17<sup>th</sup> from 9am – 10am (AKST) on Microsoft Teams.

### **Adjourn**

Motion Ms. Coleman, Ms. McLaughlin to adjourn the meeting at 10:11am. Meeting adjourned.

### **Meeting Materials:**

1. Meeting Summary – September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023
2. Updated Committee Roster
3. Resolutions
  - a. 23-02 Committee Reappointments
  - b. 23-03 Committee Appointments
4. Resumes and Letters of Interest
  - a. Captain Seth Chase
  - b. Matt Odum