

Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee Managing Board Meeting Summary

June 9, 2026

11:00 am – 12:00 pm AKT

Managing Board Members:

Captain Buddy Custard (USCG, Ret.), President
Peggy McLaughlin, Vice President/WSC Chair
Shari Coleman, Secretary/Treasurer
Martha Grabowski, Board Member
Mayor Joe Bereskin, Board Member

Others:

Haley Griffin, Nuka Research
Sierra Fletcher, Nuka Research

Ex Officio Members:

LCDR Caroline Wilkinson, NOAA
Nadine Kochuten, ABSI
Captain Christopher Culpepper, USCG
Captain Joel Carse, USCG
LT Brett Woodward, USCG
CIV Daniel Payne, USCG

Call to Order and Approval of Agenda

The June 2026 meeting of the Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee (AIWSC) Managing Board was called to order at 11:03am by AIWSC President, Buddy Custard.

**Motion Martha Grabowski, Joe Bereskin to approve the June 9, 2026, meeting agenda.
Motion approved by non-objection.**

Approval of Meeting Summary of March 19, 2026

Motion Martha Grabowski, Peggy McLaughlin to approve the March 19, 2026, meeting summary minutes. Motion approved by non-objection.

New U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port Welcome

Buddy introduced himself and provided an overview of the AIWSC. He explained that the AIWSC is a 501(c)(3) organization governed by a Managing Board and Committee. The Managing Board focuses on funding, recruitment, and committee retention. Nuka Research serves as the committee coordinator, providing administrative support and managing meetings.

Ex Officio members participate in both Board and Committee meetings in a non-voting capacity. Board members and Ex Officio representatives introduced themselves and their backgrounds. Other Ex Officio members usually present include representatives from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Buddy is the president of the Managing Board, and Peggy McLaughlin serves as Committee Chair. Recent committee efforts include updates to the Waterways Safety Plan (WSP), developing guidance on storm avoidance and other navigational issues. A work group continues to review and update the WSP, which remains a living document.

Captain Culpepper introduced Captain Joel Carse and noted that the Change in Command ceremony would take place on June 12. He announced that CDR Christine Brown had transferred to Hawaii and would be succeeded by CDR Abbie Lyons as Chief of Prevention. Captain Culpepper expressed appreciation for the AIWSC's coordination efforts, including the storm avoidance guidance. Captain Carse introduced himself and expressed his commitment to working with the committee to support safe and resilient waterways in the region.

Financial Report

Buddy reported the AIWSC has a balance of \$15,783 and no outstanding bills. The organization has received donations and grant funding from the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA). The next invoice from Nuka Research is expected in July.

Facilitator's Report

Haley Griffin reported that Nuka continues to participate in tri-weekly SWIFR calls and maintain the AIWSC website and roster. Sierra Fletcher reported that offshore routing measures are being developed off the coast of Haida Gwaii. Increased LNG and LPG tanker traffic is anticipated in the region in the coming years, presenting opportunities for information sharing and coordination.

Ex Officio Member Roundtable

LCDR Caroline Wilkinson reported that the NOAA Ship *Fairweather* recently began hydrographic surveys near St. Matthew Island, following a grounding in 2023. NOAA is charting the area for potential underwater obstructions. She also highlighted a [joint NOAA-USCG effort](#) to survey the navigation channel from False Pass to Bechevin Bay and restore navigation buoys. Additional charting work is underway near Kodiak. Lcdr Wilkinson mentioned the FY27 [Brennan Ocean Mapping Fund Program](#), which provides NOAA funding with a cost share requirement (70:30) for selected mapping projects. Anyone with mapping needs should reach out.

LT Brett Woodward reported the recent Bering Strait WSC Exploratory Meeting in Nome. Dan Payne stated that the USCG's Arctic and Western Alaska Salvage Plan has been finalized and signed, while the Marine Firefighting (MFF) Plan remains under development. A MFF working group meeting with the Cook Inlet Harbor Safety Committee (CIHSC) is scheduled for July 16 to share information about these plans. AIWSC members are invited to participate.

Captain Culpepper reported that through USCG Arctic District's partnership with NOAA, 30 buoys were reinstalled in Bechevin Bay. He also discussed efforts to restore the mooring buoy in Dutch Harbor, through collaboration with the Dutch Harbor Port Director and Harbormaster. It was noted that several Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) grants were announced in April and May for Alaska ports and encouraged the group to pursue funding opportunities.

Captain Culpepper also reported that USCG Cutter *Storis* recently conducted the first phase of an underway refueling initiative, one that will help reduce limitations for refueling. A fast response cutter will deploy to Bristol Bay to support fisheries enforcement and Coast Guard operations. A PORTS assessment is underway to identify operational gaps, vulnerabilities, and resource needs across Alaska ports. He highlighted ongoing efforts by the Marine Exchange of Alaska, 1-Call Alaska, and Alaska Chadux Network to identify vessels entering Areas To Be Avoided (ATBAs). Buddy thanked Captain Culpepper for his leadership and support of the AIWSC.

Nadine Kochuten reported plans to collect solid waste management data in Aleut communities as part of the SWIFR project. She also described a pilot project proposal developed with APIA to demonstrate solid waste removal in one community. Remaining funding from the [Adapt Alaska Coasts](#) project will support climate adaptation workshops in partnership with the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), with a focus on emergency preparedness, hazard mitigation, and recovery planning. Additional work is underway to support Tribal partnerships, Coast Stewardship initiatives, and continued development of the Guardians program.

New Business

Sierra reported that the SWIFR project team seeks increased AIWSC involvement through an ad hoc work group or similar approach. Sierra and Haley will prepare a summary describing the project, anticipated discussion topics, and expectations for participants.

Committee Appointment

Steven Gabelein applied for the Alternate At Large seat. Members noted his longstanding involvement with the AIWSC, knowledge of Aleutian Islands maritime issues, and current role with Gallagher Marine Systems.

Motion Martha Grabowski, Joe Bereskin to approve Resolution 26-02 appointing James McNamara to the primary P&I Clubs seat. Motion approved by non-objection.

Closing Comments

Buddy offered to meet with Captain Carse to provide additional background on the AIWSC. The Board welcomed Captain Carse and thanked Captain Culpepper for his leadership, collaboration, and contributions to the AIWSC.

Review Action Items & Next Steps

- Haley will:
 - Prepare and distribute a draft meeting summary.
 - Send Resolution 26-02 to Shari for signature.
 - Update the AIWSC roster and website.
 - Advise Steven Gabelein of his appointment to the Alternate At Large seat.
 - Work with Peggy to identify a date for the fall committee meeting.
 - Work with the AIWSC Managing Board to identify a date for the next Board meeting.
 - Work with Sierra to prepare a summary and expectations for the SWIFR project.

Set Next Meeting

The next Managing Board meeting will be scheduled in September, a week or two in advance of the fall Committee meeting. After a date is identified for the Committee meeting, Haley will work with the Board to identify a date for their next meeting. Thursdays are preferable for some members.

Adjourn

Motion Shari Coleman, Martha Grabowski to adjourn the meeting at 11:57am. Meeting adjourned.

Meeting Materials:

1. Committee Roster (updated March 19, 2026)
2. Draft Meeting Summary – March 19, 2026
3. Committee Vacancy Application – Steven Gabelein, Alternate At Large
4. Resolution 26-02 – Committee Appointment