

Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee Meeting Summary

November 4, 2025

12:00pm – 2:00pm (AKST) via Teleconference

Committee Members Present

Chris Woodley – At Sea Fish Processors, Primary
Steven Gabelein – Passenger Vessels, Primary
Patrick Burns – Barges & Associated Tugs, Alternate
Captain Chris Iszler – Assist Tugs, Primary
Branden Kroon – Assist Tugs, Alternate
Ernie Weiss – Local Government, Primary
Jennifer Tungul – Terminal Operators, Primary
Matthew Odum – Oil Spill Response, Primary
Andrew Hartsig – Conservation Organization, Primary
Karen Pletnikoff – Subsistence User, Primary
Shannon Carroll – At Large, Primary
Captain Steve White – Vessel Monitoring & Tracking, Primary
Jordan Boghosian – Vessel Monitoring & Tracking, Alternate

Managing Board

Peggy McLaughlin, Vice-President & WSC Chair
Shari Coleman, Secretary/Treasurer
Mayor Joe Bereskin, Member
Martha Grabowski, Member

Ex Officio

Ethan Nichols, ADF&G
Nadine Kochuten, ABSI
U.S. Coast Guard
CDR Christine Brown
BMC Stephen Braun
LT Brett Woodward
MST1 Zachary Martin

Other

Sierra Fletcher, Nuka Research
Haley Griffin, Nuka Research
Chris Svencer, Resolve/1-Call
Kristina Tirman, Ocean Conservancy

The eleventh meeting of the Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee (AIWSC) was called to order at 12:02 PM AKST by AIWSC Chair, Peggy McLaughlin.

Ms. McLaughlin reviewed the agenda, proposing to amend the agenda by removing Todd Duke's Emergency Response work group report and updating the SWIFR project presenter to Nadine Kochuten. Captain Steve White asked if the USCG could provide information on the recent incident with the fishing vessel *Great Pacific*. CDR Christine Brown stated that she could provide an update during the USCG's Ex Officio report.

Motion Martha Grabowski, Captain Steve White to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passes with no objection.

Motion Andrew Hartsig, Captain White to approve the meeting summary from May 27, 2025, as presented. Motion passes with no objection.

Introductions and Opening Comments

Haley Griffin welcomed new Committee members and conducted roll call. Ms. McLaughlin expressed appreciation for everyone's participation and welcomed the new members as well.

Ex Officio Reports

USCG

CDR Christine Brown thanked everyone for maintaining engagement during the federal shutdown, noting the importance of continued collaboration. She provided an update on the *F/V Great Pacific*, a fishing vessel reported disabled and drifting unmanned in the Gulf of Alaska. The vessel was towed to port by the tug *Betty* for assessment of damages and potential spill risks, with additional support routed from MSU Valdez. Christine noted she would confirm how close the vessel came to shore. Branden Kroon reported the vessel had drifted within a few miles of Cape St. Elias. Christine added that due to furloughs, many civilian functions—such as processing Certificates of Financial Responsibility and Merchant Mariner Credentials—are on hold. Active-duty personnel are coordinating with the National Maritime and Vessel Movement Centers to continue document verification.

Following questions from Chris Woodley, Christine added information to the chat that the *Great Pacific* carried 23,527 gallons of diesel, 503 gallons of lube oil, 104 gallons of waste oil, and 2,351 gallons of

hydraulic fluid. The vessel did not fall under Non-Tank Vessel Response Plan (NTVRP) requirements due to its tonnage. It came within three nautical miles of Kayak Island, and no Emergency Towing System (ETS) was deployed due to the incompatibility of available equipment.

ADF&G

Ethan Nichols reported ongoing crab fisheries, including Aleutian Islands golden king crab, Bristol Bay red king crab, and Bering Sea Tanner crab fisheries. The Eastern Aleutian golden king crab fishery involves two vessels with confidential harvest data and is expected to conclude over the next few months. The Bristol Bay fishery saw a 16% increase from last year, with 82% of the quota harvested (33 vessels, 2.2 million lbs). The Bering Tanner crab fishery began recently, with a 36% reduction in the eastern quota and a 125% increase in the western quota. So far, limited landings have occurred for the eastern quota, totaling less than 100,000 thousand lbs. About 35 vessels are active this season—slightly more than last year—with additional snow crab activity expected later this winter.

ABSI

Nadine Kochuten reported that Aaron Poe participated in this year’s Arctic Circle Assembly. ABSI has just completed Adapt Alaska’s fourth coastal climate adaptation workshop, focused on nature-based solutions. She thanked APIA for hosting the workshop. Ongoing efforts include submitting for funding to evaluate the dock in Atka for repairs or replacement, working with APIA, organizations and communities in the region on solid waste management, and pursuing lake and stream restoration in Atka. Several lakes on the island that once supported salmon have dried, and multiple streams rerouted during military activity are being assessed for restoration to their natural paths. Collaboration also continues with the Aleutian Pribilof Guardians and Unanga Tribes on regional resilience projects.

Work Group Reports

Waterways Safety Plan (WSP)

Steven Gabelein reviewed the sections of the WSP that have been updated, potential new sections to be added into the plan, and sections that haven’t yet been reviewed. He discussed avoiding duplication across plan sections and the need for subject-matter expertise in reviewing the outstanding plan sections. Ms. McLaughlin reminded members that the “Standards of Care” section differs from the general information included in the WSP. Sierra proposed reviewing and approving the WSP in phases, working with the group to establish an update and review timeline. Once all work group members are able to participate again, a meeting will be scheduled. Ms. Pletnikoff and Ms. McLaughlin thanked Steven and the work group for their continued commitment to this process.

Storm Avoidance

Captain White provided an overview of the Guidance for Vessel Storm Avoidance in the Aleutian Islands document and thanked the work group members for their contributions to its development. The guidance outlines concerns related to vessel transits in the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands such as a lack of resources and communications and contains best practices for preventing waterway users from getting into dangerous situations. Dissemination methods of the document remain under discussion. Captain White suggested sharing this information through the AIWSC members, with weather routing companies, and possibly through partnerships with the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association (PMSA) and west coast cargo carriers. Chris Woodley emphasized the importance of outreach to vessels under innocent passage.

Motion Martha Grabowski, Andrew Hartsig to approve the document *Guidance for Vessel Storm Avoidance in the Aleutian Islands*. Motion passes with no objection.

Managing Board Report

In Captain Custard’s absence, Ms. Griffin reported that the Committee’s bank account holds just over \$5,200. Recent amendments to the AIWSC Bylaws were approved by the Board at their October 30th meeting with no objections. The updated bylaws document will be distributed to the committee.

Facilitator’s Report

Ms. Griffin reported that Nuka Research has participated in meetings throughout the summer and fall with APIA, ABSI and other partners in support of APIA’s SWIFR project. She and Sierra Fletcher have also assisted with several meetings of the WSP work group, the plan update process and maintained the AIWSC website. She asked members to reach out if they notice any missing or outdated information.

Introduction to SWIFR

Ms. Kochuten introduced APIA's Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) project initiative, funded by the EPA to enhance regional recycling and solid waste management across the Aleutian Islands. The project aims to protect public health in Aleut communities through the improvement of waste management practices. APIA is working with partners at ABSI, the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island (ACSPI), Aleut Corporation, Aleut International Association (AIA), Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska to align with existing IGAP programs in the region.

A community waste survey is being developed to identify volumes and types of waste (e.g., vehicles, drums, tires) and to explore transportation and removal solutions. The project timeline includes developing a Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) Plan and launching a demonstration project in 2026-7 showcasing an effective waste management strategy. The group discussed potential engagement with Unalaska's yearly backhaul program or another ongoing project. The project planning team meets every three weeks to maintain progress and communication. Ms. McLaughlin noted that this initiative is supporting AIWSC activities and administrative needs, emphasizing that this collaboration is a natural fit since waste management issues in the region directly involve the maritime industry.

MST1 Zachary Martin asked whether establishing an Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) facility in Unalaska would be helpful. Ms. Pletnikoff noted that such a facility could be beneficial in this project if it could also support waste management efforts and requested a follow-up discussion with him to explore this further. Ms. Kochuten proposed forming a subcommittee under the AIWSC to focus on SWIFR activities and participate in project meetings. Ms. Pletnikoff emphasized the need for specific recyclable material volumes to make efforts affordable and expressed appreciation for industry partnerships to provide input on how to achieve cost-effective operations. Ms. Fletcher will coordinate follow-up discussions with the AIWSC as more specific needs arise.

New Business

Establishment of a New Forecasting Zone for Akutan Pass

Ms. McLaughlin reported discussion within the National Weather Service (NWS) in establishing a new forecasting zone in the Aleutian Islands. Shari Coleman shared that during a recent Aleutian and Pribilof Islands Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) meeting, a suggestion was made to separate the Unimak Pass and Akutan Island forecasting zone from one around Unalaska Island. Ms. McLaughlin observed that these changes may affect alignment with the WSP and recommended inviting the NWS to a future meeting.

Closing Comments

Ms. McLaughlin expressed appreciation towards the group for their time and engagement on the AIWSC.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will take place in early spring. A doodle poll will be sent out to determine a date.

Review Action Items

- The Waterways Safety Plan work group will schedule a meeting to develop a timeline for phased review and approval of the updated WSP.
- The Storm Avoidance work group will establish a dissemination strategy for distributing the Storm Avoidance Guidance document.
- Ms. Griffin will:
 - Finalize and distribute the Guidance for Vessel Storm Avoidance in the Aleutian Islands.
 - Distribute the amended Bylaws document.
 - Reach out to Aviva Braun at the NWS regarding updated Aleutian forecast zones and schedule a presentation at a future AIWSC meeting.
 - Share sections of the Waterways Safety Plan needing review.
 - Draft a meeting summary for the Committee's review.
 - Send a Doodle Poll to the Committee to determine availability for the next meeting.

Motion Captain White, Chris Iszler to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 1:16 PM AKST.

Meeting Materials: 1) Committee Roster, 2) May 27, 2025, Meeting Summary, 3) Draft Storm Avoidance Guidance Document, and 4) Waste Management in the Aleutians SWIFR Flyer