

Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee Managing Board Meeting Summary

August 15, 2024

10:00 – 11:00 am (AKDT)

Board Attendees:

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

Bernie Nowicki, ADEC

Bridget Crokus, USFWS

Captain Christopher Culpepper, US Coast Guard

MST2 Elizabeth Burges, US Coast Guard

Others:

Nadine Kochuten, ABSI

Aaron Poe, ABSI

LTJG Brett Woodward, US Coast Guard

Sierra Fletcher, Nuka Research

Haley Griffin, Nuka Research

Call to Order and Approval of Agenda

The August meeting of the AIWSC Managing Board was called to order at 10:06 am (AKDT) by Captain Buddy Custard.

Motion Captain Custard, Peggy McLaughlin to approve the amended agenda as presented. Motion approved by non-objection.

Approval of Meeting Summary May 13, 2024

Ms. McLaughlin asked to review the document before making a motion. The draft meeting summary was briefly shared on-screen for review.

Motion Ms. McLaughlin, Captain Custard to approve the May 13, 2024, meeting summary minutes. Motion approved by non-objection.

Old Business

Review of Bylaws

Captain Custard began by highlighting Article 4 of the Bylaws pertaining to the Board of Directors. He pointed out that the document includes the process in which Directors may be elected and term lengths, but it does not include information on how many terms a Director can serve. He then suggested that the Board exchange emails to update the language in this section and discuss other sections that may also need to be updated.

Managing Board Vacancy

Captain Custard stated that a goal on the Managing Board is to backfill the current vacancy. He suggested this could be accomplished by reaching out to the committee members for interest, then potentially advertising for additional seats to further expand the Board. Ms. McLaughlin agreed while emphasizing that a process will have to be established to appoint additional Board Members. Ms. Griffin will prepare email language for the Board to review in soliciting interest to fill the vacant Board seat.

Financial Report

Captain Custard stated his intent to create a digital financial report and circulate it to the group prior to board meetings in the future. Since the AIWSC is a volunteer organization, the Managing Board needs to solicit donations. To date, Alaska Chadux and Resolve Marine have made donations,

and Resolve's check is currently being processed by Key Bank. ABSI will also be making a contribution to the Committee. Captain Custard reported that these contributions will aid in paying off a significant portion of the outstanding invoices from Nuka Research, but additional donations are needed.

Next year the Board will seek to work with the Alaska legislature to obtain funding from the Cruise Ship Head Tax Fund. Captain Custard held conversations this year with lobbyists, but the funding request couldn't be pushed through the legislative session. Ms. McLaughlin added that Unalaska has lobbyists that support the city's interests, so she will provide the City Council with an update on what the AIWSC means to the region and what has been accomplished to gain potential support for funding.

In the meeting chat, Mr. Poe suggested pursuing funding through the offices of Alaskan Senators Sullivan or Murkowski or Representative Peltola. Captain Custard concurred, pointing out that volunteer funding is still needed to prove that funds are originating from various sources.

The Board will work with Nuka Research on updating the information sheet created previously to describe the purpose and value of the AIWSC. This can be used for both state and federal audiences.

Ms. McLaughlin stated a continued interest in pursuing *Selendang Ayu* restoration funds, as the Committee's work has aided numerous distressed vessels in the region since its inception. The Board will, however, need to highlight the AIWSC's record of accomplishments and the current activity levels of the Committee, including the work groups.

The Board will also work with Nuka Research to send updated request letters to the entities that haven't contributed this year.

New Business

Ex Officio Member Changes & Roundtable

Mr. Poe introduced Nadine Kochuten to the group as the new primary Ex Officio member for the Aleutian and Bering Sea Initiative (ABSI). Ms. Kochuten is the new Coordinator for ABSI and she sat previously on the ABSI Committee as the Coordinator for Aleut International Association (AIA), working with the region's 13 Aleut Tribes. Mr. Poe stated his interest in future collaboration with the Committee, and Ms. Kochuten expressed her excitement for getting to know the Committee members. Ms. McLaughlin thanked Ms. Kochuten for bringing her local knowledge and expertise to the Committee.

Ms. Crokus stated that the Alaska Maritime Wildlife Refuge and another agency have been monitoring a few recent incidents involving vessel groundings in the region, highlighting the importance waterway safety. Mr. Nowicki added that one of the vessels near St. Matthews Island has begun to break up. Ms. Crokus replied that the sea state is not allowing the vessel to be recovered or fuel to be lightered, so approximately 1,500 gallons of diesel could be released. Mr. Nowicki concluded his time by expressing his appreciation for the Committee still being active and towards Nadine for bringing her local knowledge to the Committee.

Captain Culpepper reported recent turn over within the USCG, including CDR Christine Brown replacing CDR John Downing in the Prevention Department, and LTJG Brett Woodward replacing LT William Mason in Waterways Management. The Dutch Harbor Marine Safety Unit also has a new commanding officer, Larry Shalice. He reported that he continues to work with Ms. McLaughlin to put together a general Incident Command System (ICS) training for Dutch Harbor, suggesting that the USCG could do a presentation on the ICS structure and aspects of training for the Committee.

Captain Culpepper also spoke to the Alaska Delegation currently traveling and visiting many of the units. One topic being discussed frequently is the Russian/Chinese surface activity in the

Bering Sea, to which movements are being closely monitored. Closure of the port operating location in Cold Bay has approached for the season and operations have been transferred to Kotzebue. Regarding the vessel break up, Captain Culpepper reported that there was no sheen, but the salvage plan and operational coordination was sound. Around 15,000 pounds of halibut was also released from the boat.

Captain Culpepper stated that the GRS in the region are being validated at a fairly rapid rate, and a range of resources including commercial and chartered aircrafts are being used to test the GRS. LTJG Woodward introduced himself to the group, stating that he reported from Sector San Francisco and is excited to be a part of the Committee. Captain Custard mentioned that the Committee would be interested in a presentation from the USCG. Ms. McLaughlin welcomed LTJG Woodward to the Committee and thanked him for bringing his expertise to the group.

Committee Meeting Preparation & Review

Captain Custard provided an overview of the WSC meeting in May, informing Ms. McLaughlin that three work groups were stood up to tackle various issues, including: the Emergency Response work group, chaired by Todd Duke; the Storm Avoidance work group, chaired by MXAK and Captain Steve White; and the Waterways Safety Plan (WSP) work group, chaired by Steven Gabelein. The Emergency Response work group aims to hold a meeting in the next month, while the other two work groups have had the chance to meet already.

Ms. McLaughlin stated that it will be good to get updates from both work groups at the Committee meeting as they might have language to present to the Committee for review and incorporation into the WSP. She also mentioned that the severe weather guidelines in the WSP now may need to be reviewed and replaced by the USCG. Other agenda items for the Committee meeting will include an update on Managing Board activities, a financial status update, and the potential presentation from the USCG. Ms. McLaughlin thanked Captain Custard for leading the May Committee meeting and welcomed the new members.

Review Action Items & Next Steps

- The Board will work with Nuka Research to develop a document describing the purpose of the AIWSC and its value. This will be used for future advocacy at the state and federal levels.
- The Board will work with Nuka Research to send updated request letters to the entities that haven't contributed this year.
- Ms. Griffin will send email language to the Board for soliciting interest across the Committee to backfill the board vacancy.
- Ms. Griffin will send out a doodle poll for December to obtain availability for the next Managing Board meeting.

Set Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Managing Board will take place in December. Ms. McLaughlin suggested holding the meeting around the Alaska Municipal League Conference (Dec. 9-13) in Anchorage.

Adjourn

Motion Ms. McLaughlin, Ms. Coleman to adjourn the meeting at 10:56am. Meeting adjourned.

Meeting Materials:

1. Meeting Summary – May 13, 2024
2. Committee Bylaws