

Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee Managing Board Meeting Summary

December 10, 2024

11:00 am – 12:00 pm (AKST)

Board Attendees:

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

Ex-Officio:

Chief Stephen Braun, US Coast Guard

LTJG Brett Woodward, US Coast Guard

LT Caroline Wilkinson, NOAA

Others:

Sierra Fletcher, Nuka Research

Haley Griffin, Nuka Research

Call to Order

The December meeting of the AIWSC Managing Board was called to order at 10:05 am (AKDT) by Captain Buddy Custard.

Approval of Agenda and Meeting Summary August 15, 2024

The Board did not have enough members in attendance for a quorum, therefore, approval of the meeting agenda and August 15, 2024, meeting summary was tabled until the next Board meeting.

Old Business

Managing Board Vacancies and Chair/Vice-Chair Positions

Ms. McLaughlin observed the importance of increasing the membership of the Board to avoid quorum issues at future meetings. She suggested that Alvin Osterback, Mayor of the Aleutians East Borough, would fit the role and be willing to join. Ms. Fletcher stated that the Vice-Chair seat on the Board has been vacant for around a year, which if filled, would bring the Board back up to the full number of members. Ms. Griffin will work with Captain Custard to update and disseminate a document soliciting interest for the vacant Board position in January 2025, and Ms. McLaughlin will forward the information to Mayor Osterback. She emphasized that the individual who fills the position of Vice-Chair on the Committee itself must be knowledgeable in the processes of the AIWSC. Captain Custard offered to fill the Committee Vice-Chair position.

Financial Report

Captain Custard reviewed the amount of funding received in 2024 and outstanding costs the AIWSC still owes to Nuka Research, which is approximately \$6,000. Nuka will not be charging any more to the AIWSC this year. Ms. Fletcher expressed appreciation that the AIWSC is still in a ramp up stage and that efforts are being made to obtain funding. Captain Custard suggested claiming the \$6,000 as a write off for contributed time on Nuka's taxes in 2025.

2025 Budget and Plans for Fundraising

Various opportunities and avenues for funding were discussed. The Denali Commission grants were mentioned as a potential option, and it was stated that no feedback has yet been provided on the Selendang Ayu Restoration funds that the Managing Board wrote a comment letter on in October. Ms. Fletcher added that Karen Pletnikoff provided an update that APIA will be moving forward to seek a subaward to the AIWSC as part APIA's waste management project now starting. Ms. Fletcher will speak with Karen regarding the grant and report back to the AIWSC. Captain Custard stated the desire to approach the legislature about obtaining funds through state grants.

The Marine Exchange of Alaska is attempting to revitalize the Arctic WSC under the Arctic Watch program. There are no WSC in Southeast Alaska or Prince William Sound but discussions of interest in both places were reported. Ms. McLaughlin suggested leveraging WSCs through the Alaska Association of Harbormasters and Port Administrators because it is in the best interest of the state to fund the committees. The U.S. Coast Guard recently revitalized the WSC Conference, creating a national committee of members across the nation. Ms. McLaughlin will talk to Bryce Edgmon at the Alaska Legislature regarding funding WSCs and the benefit of supporting new committees. Captain Custard stated he will reach out to Mayor Peter Micciche about potential collaboration between the AIWSC and Cook Inlet Harbor Safety Committee (CIHSC) to obtain funding.

Captain Custard will work with Nuka Research to revise an outreach “1-pager” that could be used to seek support for HSCs/WSCs statewide. The Board and Ex-Officio members will review the document. It is important to highlight real-world examples of how the AIWSC has been valuable, including cases such as the Genius Star XI and Pan Viva, the current efforts of the Storm Avoidance work group to develop vessel guidance, and the impact of ports of refuge in the region. The document will include specific narratives to make the case for funding. An issue that continues to be raised is that not all designated PPORs are still viable, one reason being that the commodities on a vessel are sometimes unknown and could potentially be harmful to the surrounding communities.

Facilitator’s Report

Ms. Griffin reported that a seat vacancy announcement will be created to solicit interest from individuals to apply for vacant member seats. This announcement will be disseminated in January 2025 in addition to the Board vacancy announcement. She stated that Kelly Drummond, the Skipper Science Partnership Program Manager, reached out to her with information on their program and a project they’re doing with the National Weather Service (NWS) on freezing spray predictions. Kelly asked if there was potential to collaborate with the AIWSC through a presentation at a future meeting. The Board expressed interest in having this presentation at the next AIWSC meeting, and Ms. Griffin will reach out to Kelly to gauge her availability.

Ms. Fletcher reported that the CIHSC recently had a presentation on tsunamis in Cook Inlet, and through the conversation the NWS stated their goal to disseminate this information to committees. She suggested having those individuals participate at an AIWSC meeting in 2025. Ms. McLaughlin added that there have been similar conversations with a volcanic advisory group and suggested holding a series of presentations on different types of natural disasters at future meetings.

Ex-Officio Member Roundtable

LT Wilkinson reported that the language for Areas to Be Avoided (ATBA) in the nautical charts for the Bering Strait measures does not match the language for the Aleutians ATBA. NOAA has proposed to change the Nunivak and St. Lawrence Islands language to match that of the Aleutian Islands, which states that ATBAs are applicable only for vessels “solely in transit.” LTJG Woodward stated that while there is currently not a committee in SE Alaska, he could contact LT Catherine Cavender to discuss the potential need for a committee in the region.

Review Action Items & Next Steps

- The Board will continue researching funding opportunities.
- Captain Custard will continue discussions with the Alaska legislature on AIWSC funding.
- Ms. Griffin will work with Captain Custard to update and send out solicitation for vacant Board and Committee positions in January 2025. Ms. McLaughlin will forward Mayor Osterback the information to apply for a Board position.
- Ms. Fletcher will speak with Karen Pletnikoff about the APIA waste management grant.

- Captain Custard will work with Nuka Research to develop a document highlighting the AIWSC's value to Alaska for future funding advocacy. The Board and Ex-Officio members will review the document.
- Ms. McLaughlin will talk to Bryce Edgmon regarding funding WSCs and the benefits of supporting the creation of committees currently missing, then draft a letter for Captain Custard's review.
- Captain Custard will contact Mayor Peter Micciche about potential AIWSC and CIHSC collaboration for funding.
- Ms. Griffin will invite Kelly Drummond to present at the January 23, 2025, AIWSC meeting.
- Ms. Griffin will send a doodle poll for February 2025 to set the next Board meeting.
- The Board will approve the agenda for this meeting and August 15, 2024, summary at the next Board meeting.

Set Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Managing Board will take place in February 2025. Buddy and Peggy concurred that a meeting would be beneficial to have while the legislature was still in session.

Adjourn

Motion Ms. McLaughlin, Captain Custard to adjourn the meeting at 11:53am. Meeting adjourned.

Meeting Materials:

1. Meeting Summary – August 15, 2024
2. Committee Chair and Vice-Chair Duties
3. AIWSC 1-pager
4. Committee Charter [separate attachment]