

Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee

Managing Board Meeting Summary

January 20, 2026, 10:00 am – 11:00 am 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

Ex Officio Members:

Bridget Crokus, USFWS
Nadine Kochuten, ABSI
LT Annabelle Gagnon, USCG

Others:

Haley Griffin, Nuka Research

Call to Order and Approval of Agenda

The January 2026 meeting of the AIWSC Managing Board was called to order at 10:02 am by AIWSC President, Captain Buddy Custard. Haley Griffin noted the addition of three new USCG Ex Officio members on the attendance list, to be included on all future AIWSC communications.

Motion Martha Grabowski, Peggy McLaughlin to approve the agenda as amended. Motion approved by non-objection.

Approval of Meeting Summary of October 30, 2025

Motion Shari Coleman, Ms. McLaughlin to approve the October 30, 2025, meeting summary minutes. Motion approved by non-objection.

Financial Report

Captain Custard reported that the AIWSC has \$10,202 in its bank account, largely from an APIA grant, with one outstanding invoice to Nuka Research. He noted that Ocean Conservancy also contributed funds last year and stated that he and Ms. Griffin will draft a letter to solicit additional contributions from Committee members. Ms. McLaughlin suggested creating a membership program with annual dues, and Captain Custard agreed the topic should be discussed at the next Board meeting. He emphasized the need for funding beyond the time-limited APIA grant. The Cook Inlet Harbor Safety Committee's contribution structure was noted as a potential model to follow.

Facilitator's Report

Ms. Griffin reported that the AIWSC website remains current and a 30-day seat vacancy announcement will be distributed to the public in the coming days. Efforts are also underway to reengage the Waterways Safety Plan (WSP) Work Group to update the Plan, which has not been revised since 2019. She proposed establishing a January-based contribution cycle with recognition of contributing and past-supporting organizations on the website.

Ex Officio Member Roundtable

LT Annabelle Gagnon expressed appreciation for joining the Committee and asked about the update schedule of the WSP. Ms. Griffin explained that the current effort is a major update, with routine annual updates anticipated afterward. LT Gagnon also shared updates from a Dutch Harbor meeting on severe weather guidelines, noting that contact information is being revised due to outdated phone systems. Peggy suggested holding annual reviews of the guidelines, and LT Gagnon asked whether AIWSC would be an appropriate forum for document distribution, to which Captain Custard replied that it would. Ms. Griffin will connect LT Gagnon with Captain Steve White and Dave Arzt regarding the storm avoidance document and severe weather guidelines.

Nadine Kochuten reported that APIA is working with AIWSC and ABSI on a regional Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) project, as well as coordinating with tribes and communities on developing hazard mitigation plans. She noted that the efforts to develop these plans could be

tied in to the work being done by the USCG. Progress has been slightly delayed with the SWIFR project due to outreach and logistical challenges, but ABSI is planning to host an event on January 28 during AMSS at the Captain Cook Hotel to increase engagement. ABSI and APIA will then engage the AIWSC. Ms. Kochuten also discussed ideas for sustaining membership and funding, including exploring geofencing tools to share AIWSC information with mariners entering the region. Ms. Griffin will work with Captain Custard to further explore the feasibility of using these tools.

Bridget Crokus emphasized the importance of renewed rat-prevention messaging, noting reduced outreach since the end of the state rat prevention plan in 2015–2016 and subsequent reductions in funding. She shared updates on rat vessel inspection protocols put in place, and a recent vessel grounding on St. George Island and interagency response efforts (i.e., USFWS, NMFS, and USCG) that have brought renewed attention to rat-free initiatives. Rat prevention is being addressed in the WSP update, and the vessel inspection protocols could be linked into the Plan. She encouraged the group to attend the Alaska Forum on the Environment (AFE) conference in February.

Old Business

Captain Custard noted plans to follow up with William Wright of the International Group of P&I Clubs regarding Committee participation. He also reported that Frank Vargas has retired from the Committee and that new candidates are being sought, particularly to represent commercial fishing and Alaska Native interests. Suggestions included outreach to Mr. Vargas' replacement at American Seafoods (Commercial Fishing), Ben Corwin at Aleut Corporation (AK Native Interest), and Bill Moore at the American Club (P&I Clubs).

Spring 2026 Committee Meeting Preparation

The Board discussed scheduling the Spring 2026 AIWSC meeting for March 31 to take place after the National Harbor Safety Conference (March 24–25). Proposed topics included reviewing Waterways Safety Plan edits and inviting Aviva Braun to discuss National Weather Service forecasting changes in the Aleutians.

Motion Captain Custard, Ms. Grabowski to add Ex Officio members to the AIWSC roster: CDR Lane Munroe, LT Annabelle Gagnon, and MST2 Alan Young. Motion approved by non-objection.

Review Action Items & Next Steps

- Captain Custard will:
 - Recontact William Wright regarding the Primary P&I Clubs seat.
 - Contact Mr. Vargas' replacement regarding the Primary Commercial Fishing seat.
- Nadine will contact Ben Corwin regarding the Primary AK Native Interest seat.
- Ms. Griffin will:
 - Work with Captain Custard to draft a contribution solicitation letter.
 - Work with Captain Custard to explore geofencing capabilities.
 - Connect LT Gagnon with Captain White and Mr. Arzt.
 - Invite Aviva Braun to present at the spring AIWSC meeting.
 - Update the AIWSC roster and website.
 - Prepare and distribute a draft meeting summary.

Set Next Meeting

The next Managing Board meeting will be scheduled for March 19, 2026, from 12 – 1pm AKT.

Adjourn

Motion Ms. Grabowski, Ms. McLaughlin to adjourn the meeting at 10:51 am. Meeting adjourned.

Meeting Materials:

1. Committee Roster (updated December 22, 2025)
2. Meeting Summary – October 30, 2025