

Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee

Managing Board Meeting Summary

March 19, 2026, 12:00 pm – 1:00 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

Others:

Haley Griffin, Nuka Research

Ex Officio Members:

Captain Christopher Culpepper, USCG
CDR Lane Munroe, USCG
LT Annabelle Gagnon, USCG
LCDR Caroline Wilkinson, NOAA
Bridget Crokus, USFWS
Bernie Nowicki, ADEC

Call to Order and Approval of Agenda

The March 2026 meeting of the Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee (AIWSC) Managing Board was called to order at 12:02 pm by AIWSC President, Buddy Custard.

Motion Shari Coleman, Peggy McLaughlin to approve the March 19, 2026, meeting agenda. Motion approved by non-objection.

Approval of Meeting Summary of January 20, 2026

Motion Martha Grabowski, Shari Coleman to approve the January 20, 2026, meeting summary minutes. Motion approved by non-objection.

Financial Report

Buddy Custard reported the AIWSC has \$3,602 in its bank account and has paid 2025 Q4 dues to Nuka Research. An invoice still needs to be sent to the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA) for this quarter. Two checks from Matson and the Marine Exchange of Alaska have been received in the mail and will be deposited. Although APIA funding is in place, it is limited to two years, so additional donations must be solicited.

Peggy asked about Selendang Ayu settlement funds. The AIWSC submitted a support letter for Harbor/Waterways Safety Committees in the region, and a proposal is being developed to determine funding allocations. Buddy will follow up on the status of the settlement funds.

Facilitator's Report

Ms. Griffin reported the 30-day vacancy announcement solicitation period has ended, though applications are still welcome. Two individuals expressed interest, and one has submitted their application. She also reported that the website remains up to date.

Ex Officio Member Roundtable

Captain Christopher Culpepper reported U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) involvement in Operation Epic Fury, with Iran being a leading concern. The next Area Maritime Security Committee meeting is April 9. Key personnel, including John Farr, the Marine Transportation System Recovery Unit and Cyber Systems Specialists have been recalled to support this work. Priorities include evaluating the shift from MARSEC 1 to MARSEC 2 and associated resources needed. Leadership changes are expected among the DHS Secretary and USCG senior-most appointed official at the end of March.

Activity continues across the Aleutians, including development of the Western Alaska Oil Spill Planning Criteria and Alternate Planning Criteria (APC) updates, despite federal funding delays. USCG Cutter *Storis* will deploy soon, supporting operational evolutions and future ice breaker capabilities planning. Infrastructure work also continues to repair moorages in Kodiak, and support response cutters in Seward and Sitka. USCG Cutter *Frederick Mann* is in final commissioning.

Cold Bay experienced a significant power outage, requiring temporary relocation of air crews and helicopters to Kodiak; repairs are ongoing. Air station Kodiak remains fully operational for search and rescue operations. Approximately 30 personnel are also undergoing Incident Management Team operations to support future exercises and incidents.

On a proposed Waterways Safety Committee for the Bering Strait region, USCG, Marine Exchange of Alaska (through Arctic Watch), and Nuka Research are organizing a hybrid exploratory meeting on May 19. The effort will focus on identifying local leadership, gathering regional stakeholders, and using lessons learned from the previously formed Arctic WSC, informed by Arctic Watch data and NDAA traffic studies. A long term goal is to enable these safety committees in Alaska to share resources and processes with one another. A registration link will be distributed soon.

Captain Culpepper will depart District 17 in June to assume the role of USCG Director of Law Enforcement, Maritime Security, and Defense Operations in Washington D.C. A change of command ceremony will take place on June 12 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER). The Board expressed appreciation for his leadership and collaboration.

LCDR Caroline Wilkinson reported Dutch Harbor charts have been updated to reflect new dredging areas. Conversations are ongoing with the U.S. Navy and Denali Commission to map Adak and Sweeper Cove. NOAA continues to seek priority hydrographic survey areas. Peggy stated that there were a few locations in need of surveys and will share them with LCDR Wilkinson.

The Arctic Council's working group, Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), is working with the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission to distribute navigation guidance for Arctic marine areas, which details the operation of international codes for ships in polar waters. LCDR Wilkinson will present this guidance at the March 31 committee meeting.

Bridget Crokus reported progress in filling the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Oil Spill Deputy Coordinator position through a lateral transfer. The agency looks to advertise for new positions over the next few months as well with additional lateral transfers.

LT Annabelle Gagnon noted ongoing Aids to Navigation issues near Bailey's Ledge, with one unlit aid and one temporary unlit aid. Temporary lights are being installed with USCG Cutter *Cyprus*. Permanent repairs cannot occur until July, when the Aids to Navigation Cutter is redeployed. LT Gagnon's 1-year extension at MSU Dutch Harbor has been approved. The group offered their congratulations.

Old Business

Outreach was conducted for several vacant seats, including representatives from Alaska Maritime Agencies (alternate Ship's Agents), American Seafoods and Trident Seafoods (primary Commercial Fishing), and the Aleut Corporation (primary Alaska Native Interest). Steven Gabelein has vacated his seat but expressed interest in filling the vacant At Large seat. Buddy will continue outreach to American Seafoods and Trident Seafoods.

New Business

Committee Appointment

Martha approached Bill Moore at the American P&I Clubs regarding the vacant P&I Clubs seats, and Bill recommended James "Jamie" McNamara. He has extensive maritime experience across operations, from hands-on vessel and operational roles to senior management positions. He currently serves as Claims Executive at American P&I Clubs. Peggy emphasized the importance of Aleutians-specific experience amongst committee members. Martha acknowledged this but noted Jamie's commitment in joining the AIWSC and suggested the alternate P&I Clubs seat is filled by an

individual with Alaska-specific experience. Buddy added that P&I Clubs often manage risks and fleets for companies that operate worldwide, so he will quickly learn the unique needs of the region.

Motion Buddy Custard, Peggy McLaughlin to approve Resolution 26-01 appointing James McNamara to the primary P&I Clubs seat. Motion approved by non-objection.

Distribution of Guidance for Storm Avoidance in the Aleutian Islands

Haley proposed posting the *Guidance for Vessel Storm Avoidance in the Aleutian Islands* on the AIWSC website and distributing it via mailing lists and through the work group. The Board concurred with this distribution plan. Buddy stated that this document can be distributed to APC providers through Alaska Chadux and recommended reaching out to Todd Duke for additional distribution. A significant portion of the vessel operators will be covered through these channels..

Contribution Cycle Discussion

Haley proposed a January-based contribution cycle with recognition of contributing and past-supporting organizations on the AIWSC website. Shari noted that with fiscal years differing across organizations, their ability to contribute may depend on the timing of the request. Buddy suggested resending the request in June. Long-term funding strategies may include a joint proposal with the other Alaska committees to the state during next year's legislative session and utilizing Washington State's cost-share system, along with pursuing Selendang Ayu funding.

Spring 2026 Committee Meeting Preparation

Peggy cannot attend the March 31 committee meeting. Buddy is willing to chair on her behalf. Peggy requested a planning meeting with Buddy to review the agenda. Buddy will also share insights from the National Harbor Safety (NHS) Conference.

Closing Comments

The Board expressed appreciation for Captain Culpepper's leadership, collaboration, and contributions to the AIWSC. Captain Culpepper thanked the group.

Review Action Items & Next Steps

- Buddy will follow up on the status of the Selendang Ayu funding proposal.
- Peggy will send recommended survey/charting locations to LCDR Wilkinson.
- Ms. Griffin will:
 - Prepare and distribute a draft meeting summary.
 - Notify James McNamara of his appointment to the AIWSC.
 - Send Resolution 26-01 to Shari for signature.
 - Update the AIWSC roster and website.
 - Implement the Storm Avoidance guidance distribution plan.
 - Schedule a planning meeting with Peggy and Buddy for the March 31 AIWSC meeting.

Set Next Meeting

The next Managing Board meeting will be scheduled for June 9, 2026, from 12:00 – 1:00pm AKT.

Adjourn

Motion Martha Grabowski, Peggy McLaughlin to adjourn the meeting at 1:09pm. Meeting adjourned.

Meeting Materials:

1. Committee Roster (updated January 20, 2026)
2. Draft Meeting Summary – January 20, 2026
3. Committee Vacancy Application – James McNamara, Primary P&I Clubs
4. Resolution 26-01 – Committee Appointment
5. Draft Committee Meeting Agenda – March 31, 2026