

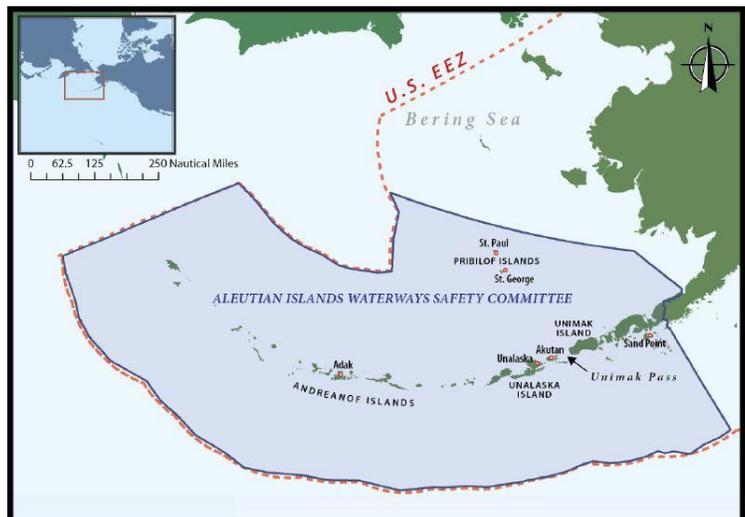


Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee Holds Initial Meeting; A Commercial Fishing Vessel Seat is Still Vacant

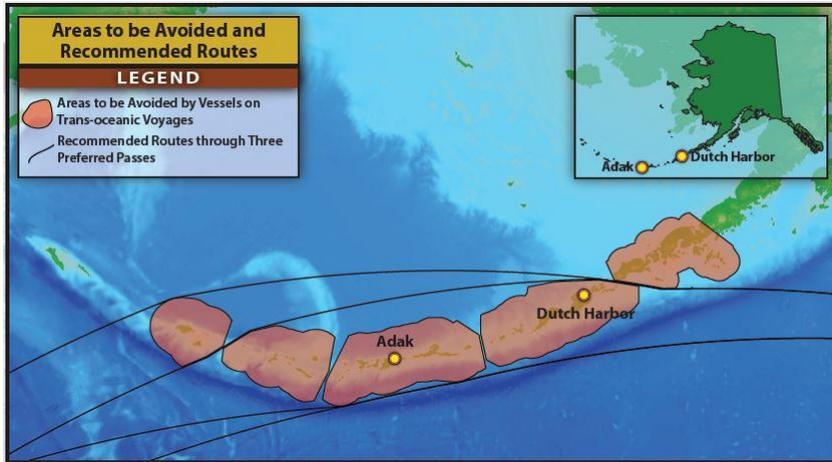
By Ernie Weiss, AEB Natural Resources Director

The Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee (AIWSC) held their first meeting February 28th at the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association conference room in Anchorage. The AIWSC expects to provide a public forum to discuss waterway safety and to establish best practices for safe operations for both local and transiting vessels. The AIWSC will develop a Waterways Safety Plan for the Aleutian Islands.

The geographic scope of the committee includes the entire Aleutians East Borough to the east, extending to the 200-mile limit of the exclusive economic zone surrounding the Aleutian Islands, and includes waters surrounding the Pribilof Islands. Unimak Pass is the busiest transit passage in the region, as it is the shortest route from the northwest U.S. and Canada to China, Japan & South Korea. Around 5,000 vessels transit through Unimak Pass each year, including many container ships and bulk-cargo vessels. Akutan is the closest community to Unimak Pass.



The AIWSC was established after a recommendation of the Aleutian Islands Risk



Assessment in 2014, which also recommended 5 areas to be avoided and a spill prevention and response system for the Aleutian Islands, including an emergency tow vessel to be located in either Adak or Dutch Harbor.

The AIWSC is only the second waterways safety committee in

the nation; the first being the Arctic Waterways Safety Committee. There is a Board of Directors that governs the work of the committee. Akutan Mayor Joe Bereskin is one of the five members of the Board of Directors. At this first meeting, the committee established two workgroups, the Navigation workgroup and the Water Safety workgroup.

There are 21 designated seats on the committee, each with a corresponding alternate for the seat. Four seats on the Committee are currently vacant, including the Under 60-foot Commercial Fishing Vessel seat. Most of the Alternate seats are also open. Currently there is no representation by the Aleutians East Borough on the Committee.

To apply for a seat on the committee, applicants should submit a letter of interest, along with a resume to Sara Nichols of Nuka Research at sara@nukaresearch.com. Applicants for the vessel operation seats must have documented maritime expertise. For more information, please go to www.aleutianislandswsc.org.

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