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***Arctic Waterways Safety Committee Holds First Public Meeting
Committee to begin draft of Waterways Safety Plan***

The Arctic Waterways Safety Committee (AWSC) today held its first public, full committee meeting at Dena'ina Convention Center in Anchorage, Alaska with the purpose of building the framework for development of a Waterways Safety Plan for Arctic waterways.

“The formation of this committee and the collaboration involved between all the participants is groundbreaking,” said Chairman Willie Goodwin, also the Chairman of the Arctic Marine Mammal Coalition. “As subsistence hunters, the coastal communities in Alaska are extremely dependent on the ocean for our food security. Working together with other user groups, we hope to develop best practices to improve safety and provide benefit for us all.”

Items for discussion included the role of Alaska Marine Pilots and Aids to Navigation in Arctic Waters, Current Practices in Lightering in Arctic Waters, Review of Coast Pilot Sections on Marine Mammal Subsistence Hunting, Review of Traffic Management Provisions of the Open Water Season Conflict Avoidance Agreement, and Proposed Bathymetric Surveys for the Bering Strait and Northern Waters.

“With the combined experience of over 80 years working in Alaska, Crowley and Bowhead have always strived for continual improvement in operational best practices,” said Jim Dwight of Bowhead Transport and Greg Pavellas of Crowley Petroleum

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Distribution. “Our priorities, including the safety of our people, protection of the environment, and respect of the culture of our stakeholders have enabled us to serve the communities to the highest standards of care.”

Additionally, the Committee invited John Veentjer, President of Puget Sound Harbor Safety Committee, to provide information on the formation and function of Harbor/Waterways Safety Committees. “I’m pleased to provide the AWSC with any institutional knowledge I can to make this process easier for the Committee,” said Veentjer. “Alaska has approximately half the Nation’s coast line and it’s an important, yet daunting task to develop a safety plan for a coastline this large, even the Arctic component of it.”

The U.S. Coast Guard also provided an Overview of Alternative Planning Criteria. “I commend the stakeholders for their initiative to come together to form the Alaska Arctic Waterways Safety Committee,” said Captain Paul Mehler, III, Captain of the Port, Western Alaska. “This collaborative organization is an excellent mechanism for vetting common maritime transportation system issues with a stronger voice to a higher level effectively and efficiently. The USCG looks forward to working with this committee. ”

Meeting materials can be found on the AWSC website at www.arcticwaterways.org.

About AWSC

The AWSC was established in October 2014 as a self-governing multi-stakeholder group focused on creating best practices to ensure a safe, efficient, and predictable operating environment for all users of the arctic waterways.

www.arcticwaterways.org

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