Cook Inlet RCAC

"Only when local citizens are involved in the process will the trust develop that is necessary to change the present system from confrontation to consensus."

-Oil Pollution Act of 1990

First I want to thank you for showing an interest in the regional citizens advisory council or RCAC model. You're going to hear a lot of information about development, both the advantages and disadvantages. RCAC's don't typically take a stance on development one way or another. Where we stake our claim is in the process. The people decide whether they want development or not. If the people decide they want development to occur, we help ensure that the development occurs responsibly. We are first and foremost citizens representing the public's interest.

I hope that when I've finished, you will understand three things:

Our Mission, Our Structure, Our Projects

The basis for much of what the Council does, what it does, can be traced back to the mandates or directives in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, or, as you'll hear me mention again,OPA 90.

The US Congress created OPA 90 after the Exxon Valdez spill. It is a broad law that includes provisions for creating the two RCAC's in Alaska, one in Prince William Sound and one in Cook Inlet.

OPA 90 stated that in forming the RCACs, it hoped to eliminate the complacency which allowed the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill disaster to occur.

The obvious challenge for the RCAC is to encourage improvements while developing the trust that can only occur in an atmosphere of cooperation, rather than confrontation.

Creation of the RCACs

March 24, 1989

- April 1989-Sullom Voe Visit
- Alyeska Citizens Advisory Committee
- Regional Citizens Advisory Council Incorporated Dec 1989
- Oil Pollution Act of 1990
- Demonstration Projects
- PWS and Cook Inlet RCACs both certified as Alternative Groups
- Annual Recertification

Even before the Exxon Valdez ran aground, a group of local citizens were working to form an oversight committee because of the potential for oil spill in PWS.

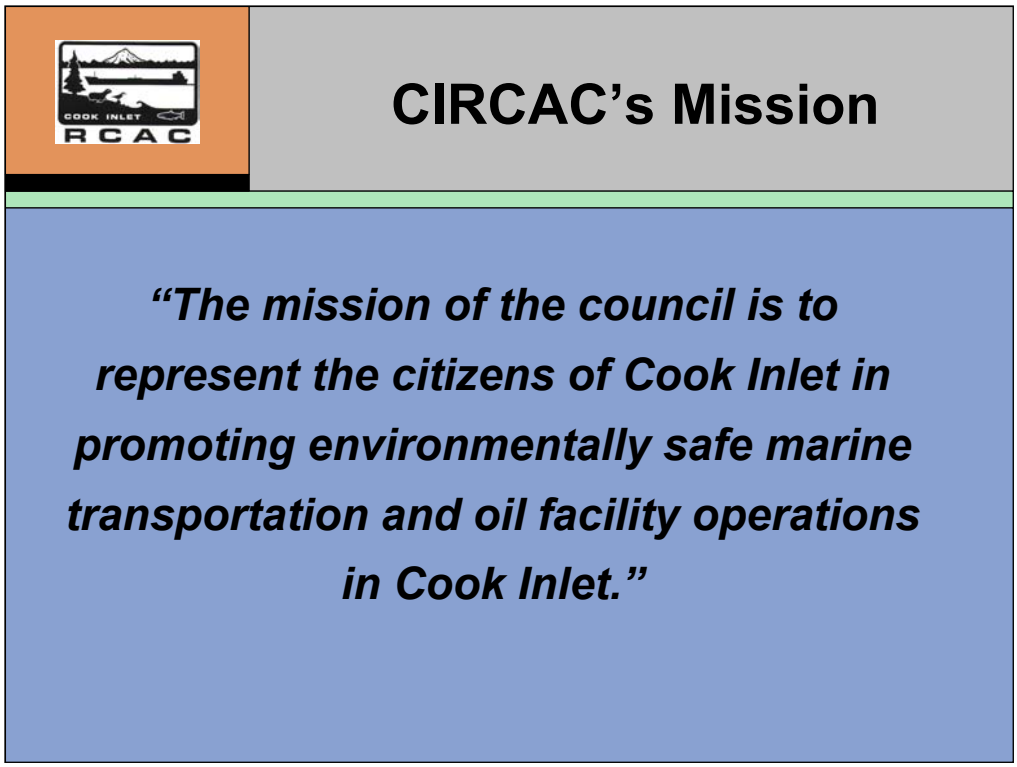
Disaster often precedes Action and true to history, the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill occurred before the work could be formalized.

After the Exxon Spill, citizens from our region traveled to Sullom Voe in Scotland's Shetland Islands to learn about the system they had developed for citizen oversight.

Shortly thereafter, OPA 90 set up PWS and CIRCAC as demonstration projects...models to other areas where an organization such as ours might be effective.

There is often strong interest from people fom other regions where there is active or potential oil development and we are often contacted for more information. In the last year from British Columbia, Sakahlin (Russia), the State of Maine, Eastern Europe.

CIRCAC's Early history was tough and required persistence to become the successful organization that it is today.



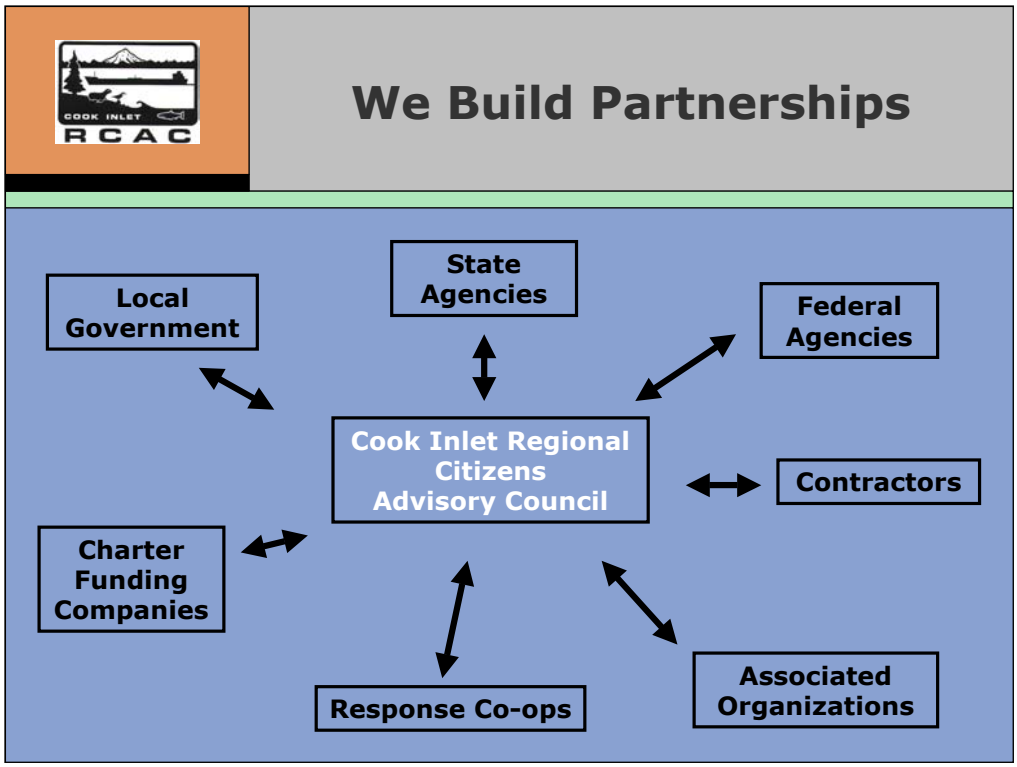
Once established, CIRCAC set out to accomplish its mission:

…to represent the citizens (read the slide)

OPA 90 identifies numerous specific duties, or mandates, that dictate who we are and what we do.

So, while OPA 90 provides the specifics, this mission statement guides our day to day actions.

To address this mission, we have to be able to "play well with others."



To that end, we communicate on a number of issues with many agencies and organizations with interests in or concerns about crude oil production and transport.

Ex-Officio members of the Council include representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard, Alaska DEC, NOAA, DNR, EPA, Division of Emergency Services, and MMS.

There are a host of other organizations that work with the Council including:

Response Co-ops

Research Reserves

Universities

And others.

CIRCAC Members

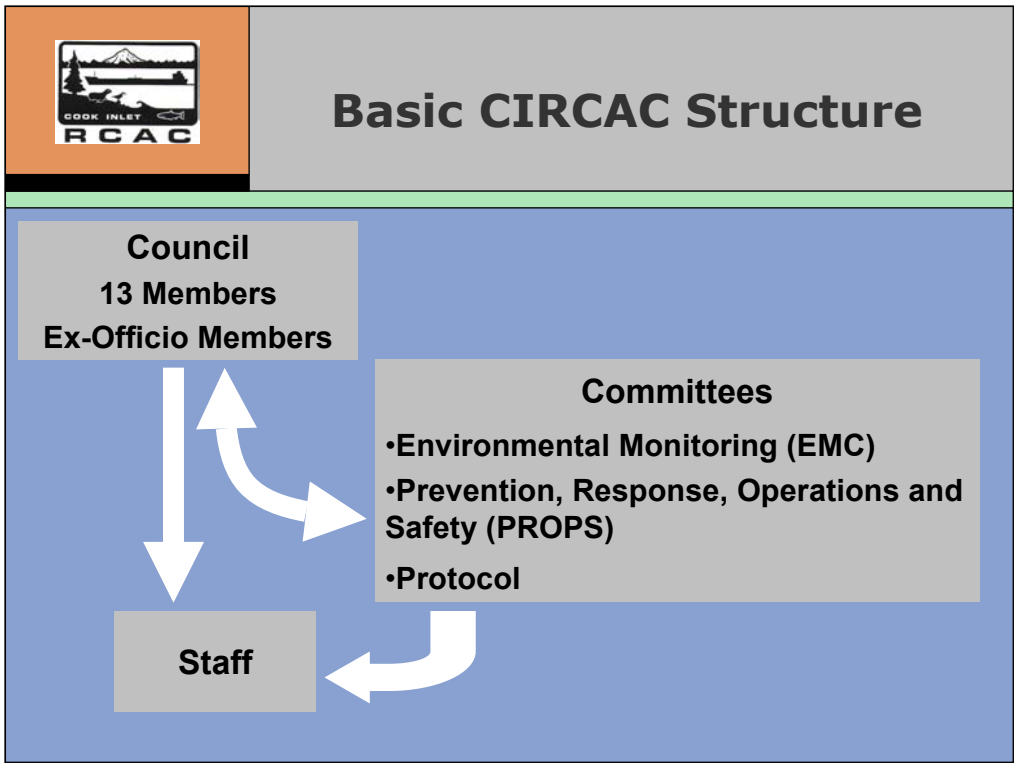
- City of Kenai
- City of Homer
- City of Seldovia
- City of Kodiak
- Kenai Peninsula Borough
- Kodiak Island Borough
- Municipality of Anchorage
- Commercial Fishing
- Recreational
- Environmental
- Alaska Native Orgs.
- Aquaculture
- State Chamber of Commerce

Our CONSTITUENCY is DIVERSE, and the composition of the Council itself is designed to be as representative as possible of our communities, villages, and their various special interests.

This broad representation, specifically outlined in OPA 90, ensures that the work of the Council does not become too representative of any one special interest.

The Bad News is: With this much diversity, consensus can sometimes be difficult to achieve.

The Good News is: With this much diversity, a fair representation of the citizens of the region is guaranteed.



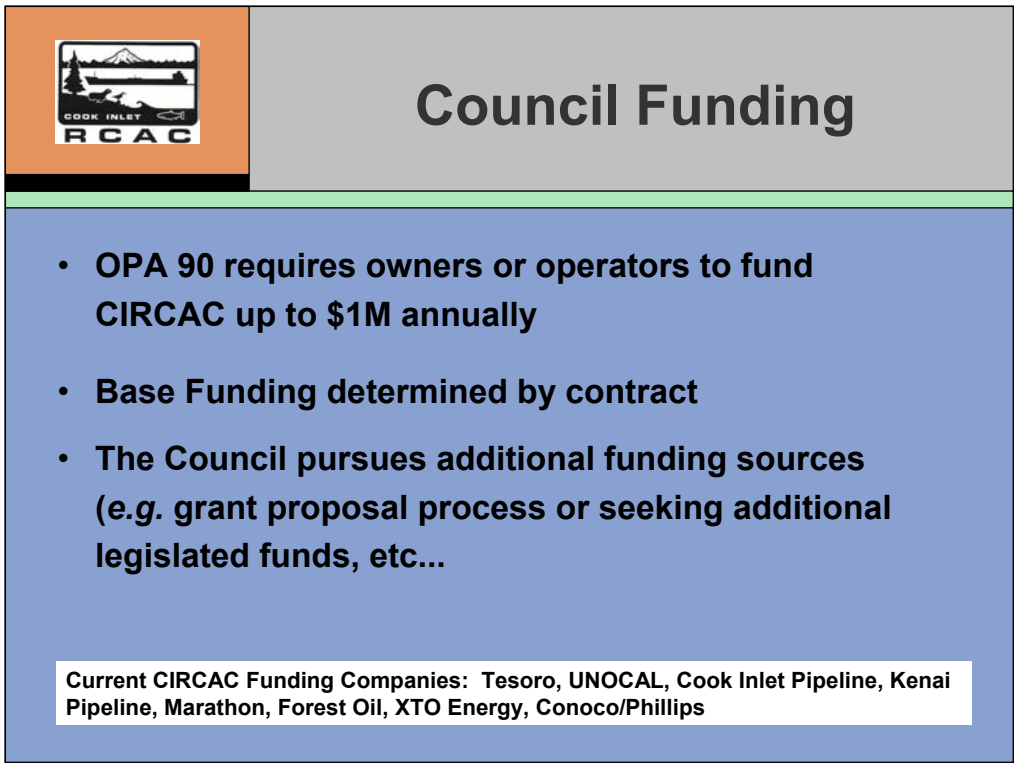
Again, the basic structure of the Council is 13 members and additional Ex-officio (non-voting) members. This Council is responsible for the overall activities of the Council.

At the working level, there are three committees that help the Council fulfill its mission: the Envirionmental monitoring Committee (EMC), the Prevention, Response, Operations and Safety, or PROPS,committee, and the Protocol committee.

The Committees are include members of the public; volunteers who submit resumes of their qualifications and express an interest in serving the public in this way. Members of the board of directors are also on the committees.

Typically, committee members have some experience or special interest that makes their work on the committee particularly valuable. (They may have ENGINEERING, ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES, OILFIELD OPERATIONS, COMMERCIAL or SUBSISTENCE FISHING EXPERIENCE)

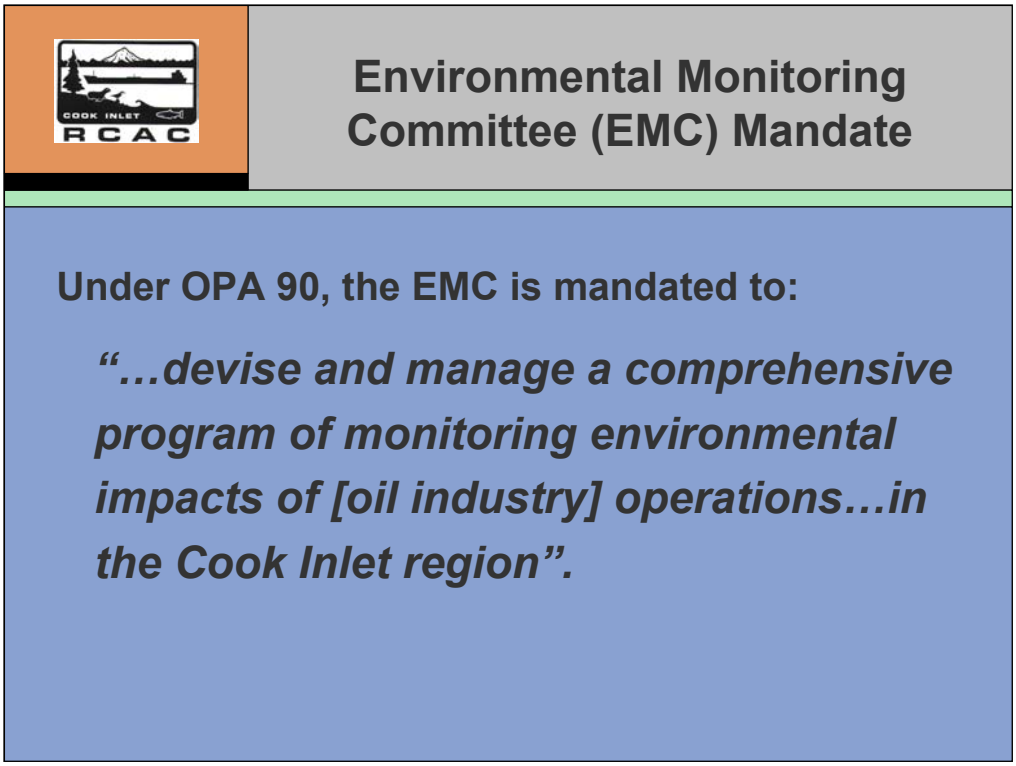
Six staff members round out the organization as a whole. Much of our work is also conducted through independent contractors or researchers who work closely with our staff.



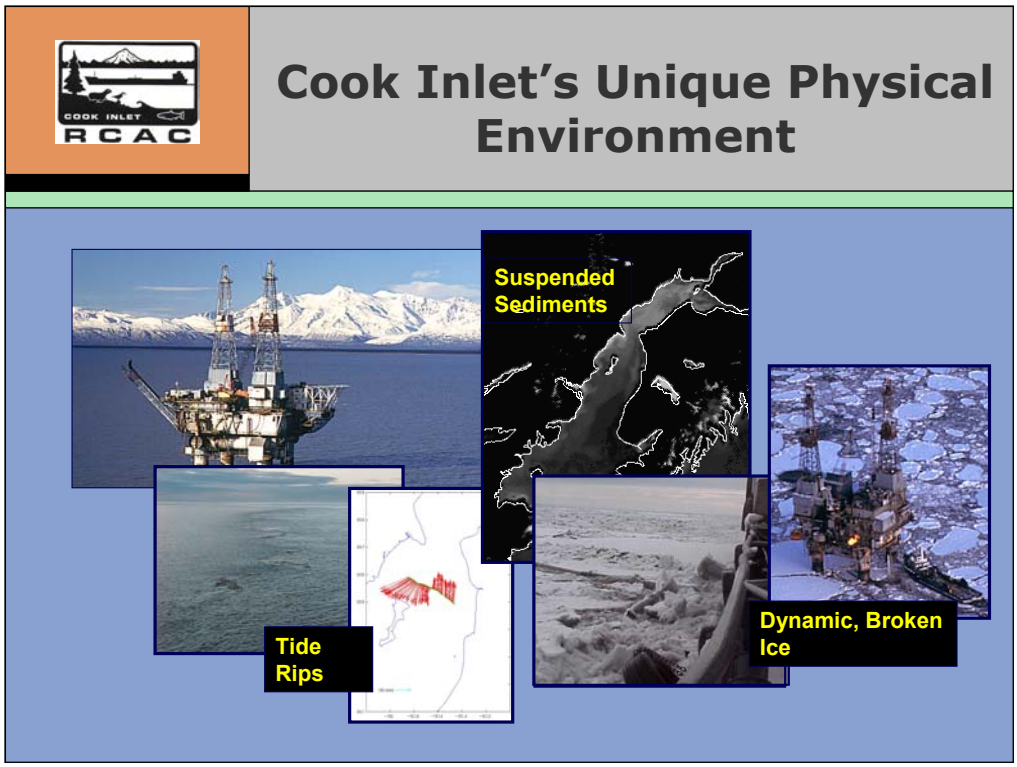
The work of the Council costs money AND a contract with the operators in Cook Inlet is the basis for that funding. The USCG oversees the contract negotations to ensure that a fair and workable agreement is made between the Cook Inlet RCAC and our industry funders.

We have been successful in obtaining addition funds through competetive grant proposals to various funding agencies and we also partner with organizations to share resources and work through In-Kind exchanges with them.

In this way, we've been able to leverage pockets of funding into larger projects with a common objective and accomplish much more than we would have otherwise.


COOK INLET
RCAC
Environmental Monitoring Committee (EMC) Mandate
Under OPA 90, the EMC is mandated to:
"…devise and manage a comprehensive program of monitoring environmental impacts of [oil industry] operations…in the Cook Inlet region".

Read slide.



The OPA 90 mandate would be a substantial task to undertake in any environment.

In Cook Inlet, they are monumental

Complexities of water dynamics and the many different uses of the Inlet rival any coastal waterway in the world.

Environmental Monitoring



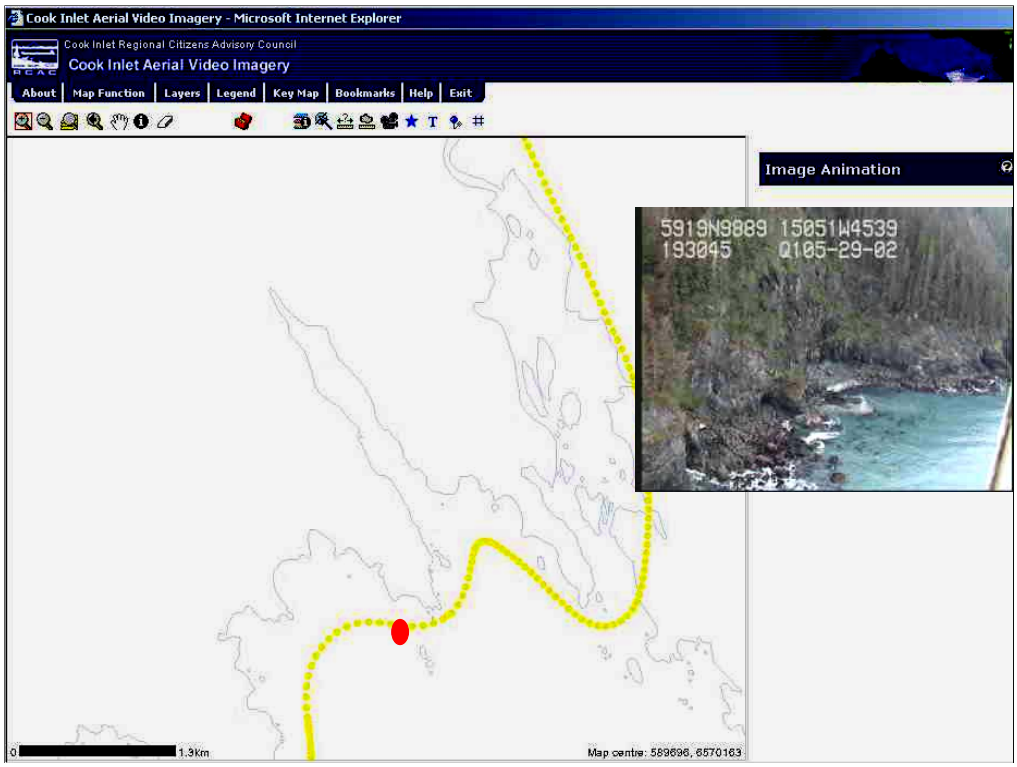

- Conducting background contaminant studies on the sea bottom and on the beaches. These include surveys to
  - describe habitat and species
  - identify sentinel species and populations
  - analyze contaminant concentrations in animal tissues and sediment
- Building a "Hydrocarbon Source Database"

Some of our projects include: (read slide)

Sentinel populations are organisms that can give us early warning of problems with hydrocarbons and other contaminants.

One of our more ambitious projects is Shorezone Mapping. The company that first developed this technique is actually a Canadian company, Coastal and Ocean Resources, Inc. headed by Dr. John Harper.

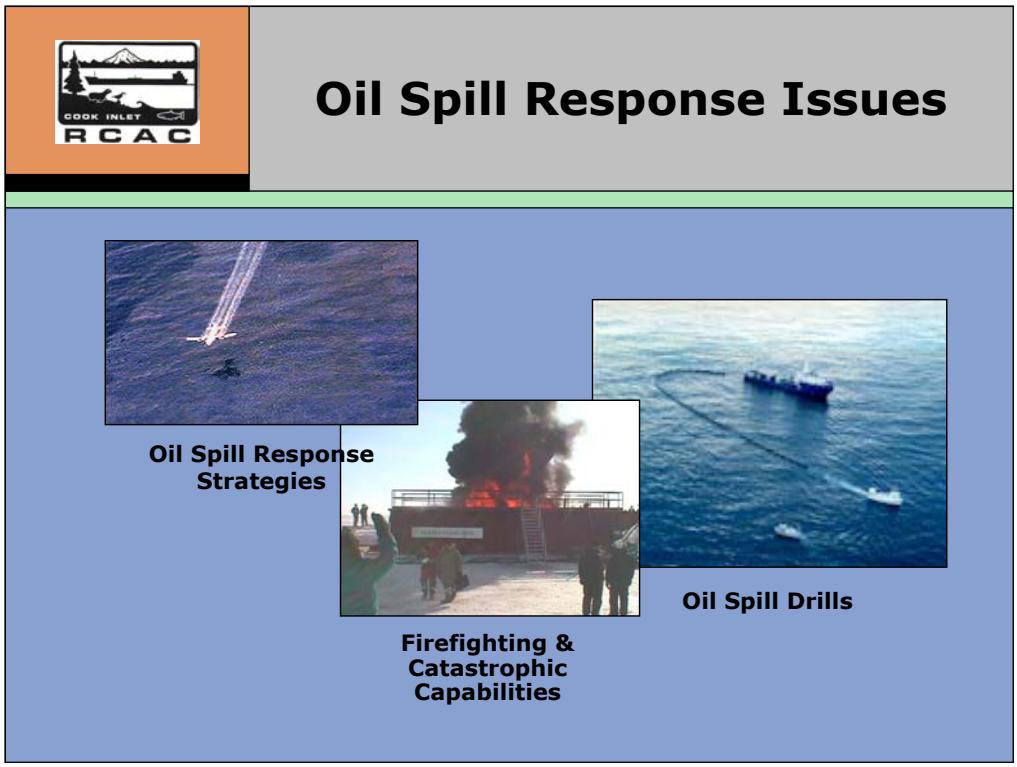
These images give us detailed information about the ecology and substrate of our coastlines.



Images of hundreds of miles of coastline have been made available on the web from these surveys, allowing people to "fly" along using the video.

(Click on the image to start the video.)

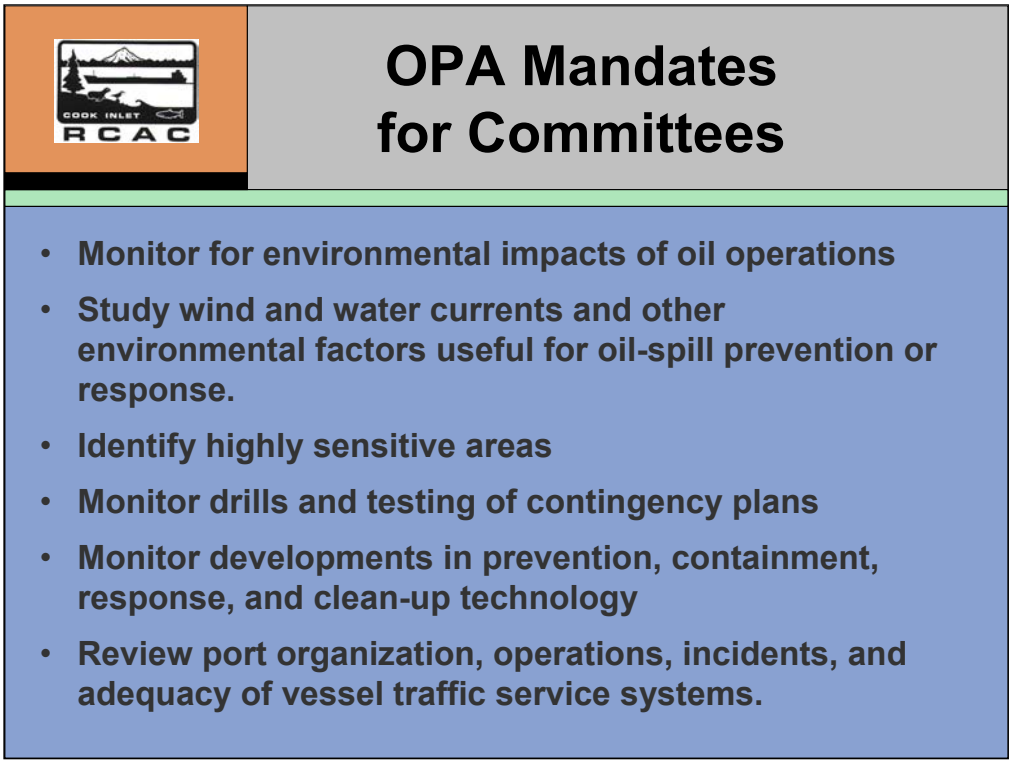
Our coastal surveys include mapping certain types of data from helicopters and other, more detailed information collected during on-the-ground surveys. These surveys give us detailed information that is then entered into a database. Researchers and spill responders will be able to use the database and imagery together for a broad range of objectives.



Since the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, citizens, regulators, and industry have all been much more aggressive in their pursuit of better response technology and greater spill preparedness.

OPA 90 gives citizens a stronger voice in monitoring these advances to ensure that the same complacency that led to the Exxon spill does not occur again.

The Committee formed to address these issues is the Prevention, Response, Operations, and Safety, or "PROPS" Committee.



The PROPS committee works to ensure safe marine transportation and facility operations that involve crude oil.

To accomplish this,the committee participates and monitors oil spill drills that test the effectiveness of the responsible parties; to look at other projects that can help decrease response time during an oil discharge

The committee also tries to identify potential problems such as a marine fires and pipeline integrity issues before they manifest in disaster.

Oil Spill Drills

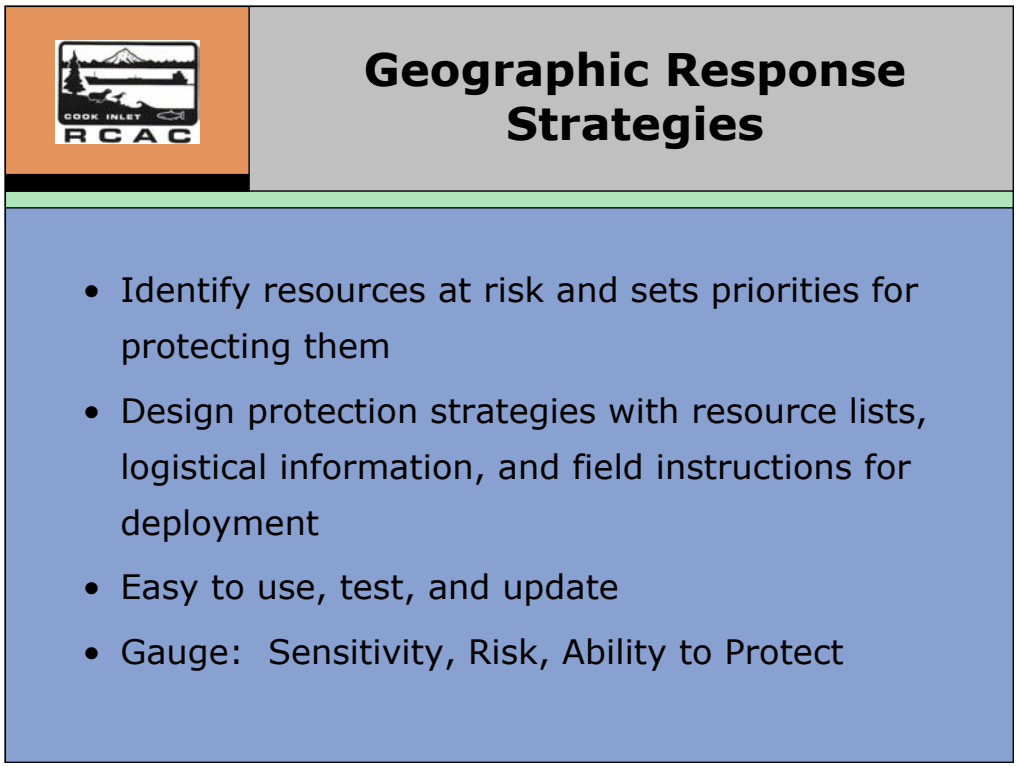
- **Tabletop and Event-oriented**
- **Ensure effective command**
- **Responders train with equipment**

Through the Spill Drill Monitoring Project, CIRCAC monitors response to ensure adherence to approved contingency plans. We monitor the various phases of the command structure to observe its effectiveness.

Drills are also a good time to familiarize responders with equipment that can be cumbersome or dangerous to operate.

Following the drills, CIRCAC makes recommendations for change through written comments we provide to the responsible party. We have a good relationship with the operators in Cook Inlet and our comments are seriously considered.

Often drills are held at CISPRI headquarters in Nikiski. However, we also attend drills in the Lower Cook Inlet and last fall we participated in the Co-op exercises off Ship Creek and Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage.



Our Geographic Response Strategies project is another example of how citizens, agencies, and industry can work together to protect Cook Inlet from the disaster of an oil discharge. Over the past 4 years, CIRCAC has been the catalyst behind the a group of stakeholders that selects environmentally sensitive sites and provides the required equipment recommendations to protect these areas in the event of an oil spill.

Simple Goals: **Identify resources, Design protection strategies, and make them easy to use, test and update.**

Something responders and scientists have noticed when reviewing previous spills is that currents, tides, and a number of other factors determine whether a location will likely be affected.

Some locations have greater value to fisheries and wildlife. And of course, not all locations can be protected. So the workgroup needed criteria for selecting sites. In short, they looked for: environmental sensitivity, risk of oil spill impact, ability to protect. Throughout the Cook Inlet region, we've identified over 125 different environmentally sensitive areas that are in need of special attention.

This and the following slide shows the GRS for the Kenai River.

Point out the key boom features.

You can see that equipment has not only been listed, it is also an instruction sheet for the correct deployment of the equipment.

Documents have to be useful in the field and so format is important:

Size = 11x17

Use Color Maps and Actual Photos of sites

One Page front and back per site

Bulleted presentation of requirements or technical information

Firefighting & Catastrophic Capabilities

- *M/V Keta* fire. Seldovia marina, summer 2003
- *M/V Greatland* (TOTE) fire at the Port of Anchorage

One of the most ambitious projects of 2003, the Marine Firefighting Manual got under weigh last fall. Each year, marine fires have the potential to claim lives and valuable property in Alaska and release harmful pollutants into the air and water.

Because marine fires are infrequent, sometimes occur far from services, and require special training to address, fighting one can be an especially difficult and dangerous task. Our goals in the project are to:

identify resources and expertise

identify deficiencies in response capability

provide an incident command checklist for response

indentify regional, national, and international marine firefighting capabilities

To achieve these goals, we assembled a workgroup modeled after the successful GRS process using an expert to facilitate the meetings a group decision making.

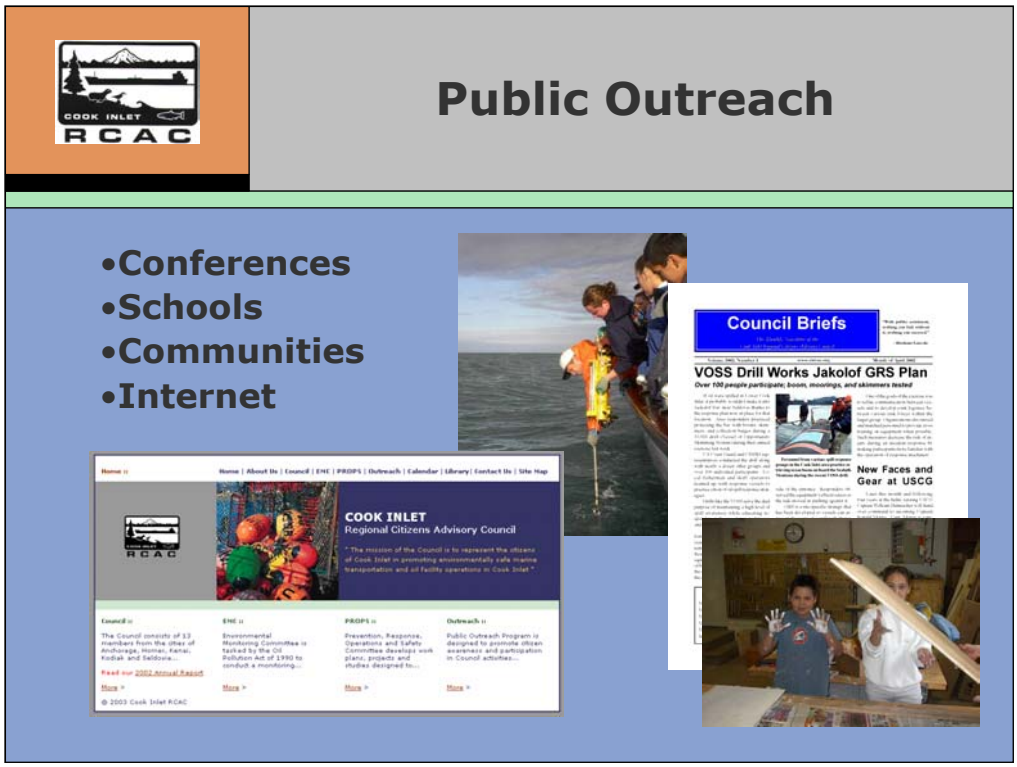
The Protocol Committee deals with time sensitive issues on behalf of the council. The committee is comprised of 5 directors.

The bulk of the committee's work deals with submitting comments and concerns in the review of State of Alaska Oil discharge prevention and Contingency plans.

These plans are required by the oil production and transport companies operating in the state of Alaska.

By state regulation CIRCAC is a named reviewer of these plans, which gives us an status nearly equal to a state agency.

The committee also comments on federal contingency plans, proposed federal rules, state and federal permits that affect oil operations in Cook Inlet.



In early 2003, Cook Inlet RCAC re-launched its web site, www.circac.org. The site has several new features ,easy to read type, reorganized content, an events calendar, a document library, and links to member organizations' web sites.

We also use newsletters, press releases, conferences, and visits to schools and community meetings such as Rotary and City Council meetings, to talk with citizens and share information on our projects.

Though sensible coordination and partnering with other organization, we have been able to get a tremendous amount of research accomplished.

The structure of the organization has been beneficial in initiating and completing projects

A focal point to address concerns

A logical cost effective means to for citizens to be heard by governmental agencies.

Agencies have an avenue to deal with Citizens concerns early in the process before concerns turn into major issues

Having the RCAC looking over your shoulder makes agencies pay more attention

As you can see:

Our Mission is well defined and established in law.

Our Structure is lean and represents the broad interests of citizens living in the region.

Our Projects are specific and address the mandates of the law.

Thank you for you attention. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.