

STATE OF ALASKA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
DIVISION OF CORPORATIONS, BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING

## **BOARD OF MARINE PILOTS**

**CONDENSED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD JANUARY 21, 2026**

**These draft minutes were prepared by the staff of the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing. They have not been reviewed or approved by the Board.**

**By authority of AS 08.01.070(2) and in compliance with the provisions of AS 44.62, Article 6, a scheduled meeting of the Board of Marine Pilots was held on January 21, 2026, at the Alaska Energy Authority Building, 813 W Northern Lights Blvd, Anchorage, AK**

<b>Date:</b>	January 21, 2026
<b>Time:</b>	9:01 a.m.
<b>Location:</b>	Alaska Energy Authority Building: 813 W Northern Lights Blvd, Anchorage, AK
<b>Board Members Present:</b>	Chair Curtis Thayer, Captain Edward (Ed) Sinclair, Captain James Cunningham, Les Cronk, Andrew Mew, Joseph (Joe) Tougas, Don Habeger
<b>Board Members Absent:</b>	
<b>Division/SOA Staff Present:</b>	Renee Carabajal (Marine Pilot Coordinator), Melissa Dumas (Administrative Operations Manager), Patrick Kase (Investigator 3)
<b>Present from the Public:</b>	Jenni Sitton (SWAPA), Jessie Li (SEAPA), David Artz (AMP), Tiffany Keefe (SEAPA), Jon Cornelius (SEAPA), Mark Lundamo (SEAPA), Robert Dersham (SEAPA), Mike Tibbles (ASA), Paul Axelson (NPMI), Kris Mackie (SEAPA), Ashley Wieber (NPMI), Brian Olson (USCG), Abbie Lyons (USCG), Caroline Wilkinson (NOAA), Eric Chamberlin (ASA/PCL), Rick Erickson (CLAA), Luke Hasenbank (ALAMAR/CLAA)

Review Agenda		
<b>Brief Discussion:</b>	There was no discussion to amend the agenda.	
<b>Motion:</b>	Move to adjourn (First: Sinclair; Second: Habeger).	
<b>Discussion:</b>	No discussion, the board approved the motion by roll-call vote.	
Recorded Votes (roll call):	Cronk - Yes	Mew - Yes
	Cunningham - Yes	Tougas - Yes
	Sinclair – Yes	Habeger - Yes
		Thayer - Yes
Ethics Disclosures		
<b>Brief Discussion:</b>	There were no ethical disclosures by any board members or staff.	

Review/Approve Minutes: October 15, 2025, Special teleconference December 2, 2025		
Brief Discussion:	No discussion	
Motion:	Move to accept October 15, 2025, and December 2, 2025 (special teleconference) meeting minutes as written. (First: Habeger; Second: Mew).	
Discussion:	With nothing to discuss, the board approved the motion by roll-call vote.	
Recorded Votes:	Cronk - Yes	Mew - Yes
	Cunningham - Yes	Tougas - Yes
	Sinclair – Yes	Habeger - Yes
		Thayer - Yes
Public Comment		
Brief Discussion:	Lt. Commander Caroline Wilkinson from NOAA addressed the board during public comment with a brief update on surveying and charting efforts in Alaska. The S102 product, which applies bathymetry to the new S100 chart standard, is rolling out in Southeast Alaska. They expect to release version 3.0 soon, transitioning from testing to maintenance. A key improvement is that you no longer need to download each chart individually; instead, you can toggle it on in CIQ for easier access. The full rollout for the rest of Alaska is anticipated around 2027. So far, they have surveyed the Port of Valdez, parts of Revelgado, and Glacier Bay, with plans to return to Revelgado in 2026. They are currently updating the Dutch Harbor deepening and widening on the charts, with updates expected within the next week or two. Lastly, both of their new survey vessels, the Surveyor and the Navigator, have had their keels laid, with one home-ported in Ketchikan to improve survey efficiency, especially since the current vessels are from the 1960s. These new vessels will feature advanced autonomous technology.	
Association Reports		
SEAPA	Captain Kris Mackie, SEAPA President, provided a report for SEAPA. SEAPA has 46 fully licensed pilots, 18 deputy pilots, and 15 trainees. They have 4 deputy pilots in the process of upgrading to full pilot licenses. SEAPA is on target to meet the dispatch needs for 2026. By the beginning of the 2026 cruise season, 5 of the deputy pilots should obtain their full pilot licenses.	
AMP	Captain David Artz of Alaska Marine Pilots provided the AMP report for Western Alaska. Captain Phil Brady from Florida passed away on 01/128/2026 – he fell from a ladder disembarking a vessel. AMP has 8 full pilots and 1 deputy pilot who is almost ready to apply for full pilot licensure. They have 1 pilot in training with SWAPA, to be transferred to Region 2. Currently, 5 individuals are in the training program, 3 of whom are in the hands-on portion.  AMP is following the progress of its 2 regulatory amendment proposals: 1 approved by the Board in October 2023, and the other approved in April 2025. He spoke briefly regarding the issues with federal pilotage, deferring to A. Lyons, who will talk later in the meeting. The Dutch Harbor dredging is complete. AMP conducted simulators with the Army Corps of Engineers for the Port of Nome expansion project back in October; the project is changing based on cost estimates received.	

SWAPA	Jenni Sitton, Business Manager for SWAPA, provided the association report. SWAPA has 11 full-member pilots qualified for Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs) with 6 deputy pilots, 1 of whom has applied to upgrade to full pilot licensure. 1 complete pilot retired earlier this month. They have 1 pilot in the process of transferring from AMP, Region 3. They have 7 in the training program; 3 are in hands-on training. One had been held back from performing these maneuvers because his federal pilotage endorsement was restricted to tug and barge. Still, that issue has been resolved, so they look forward to him continuing his training. Cruise traffic this summer is expected to increase. They are looking at more cruise vessels in Valdez and in Whittier. They are looking at building a new all-weather pilot boat for Prince William Sound. This is due to expected increases in shipping from the Willow project. That should be at peak production in 2029. She presented an amendment to the SWAPA bylaws for the board’s consideration. The amendment changes the age restriction for their transitional retirement program.	
SWAPA Bylaws amendment		
Brief Discussion:	No discussion	
Motion:	Move to accept the SWAPA bylaws amendment regarding their transitional retirement program as written. (First: Sinclair; Second: Cronk).	
Discussion:	With nothing to discuss, the board approved the motion by roll-call vote.	
Recorded Votes:	Cronk - Yes	Mew - Yes
	Cunningham - Yes	Tougas - Yes
	Sinclair – Yes	Habeger - Yes
		Thayer - Yes
After consideration for efficiency and time management, the board moved Agenda Item #7, Application Review, to the end of the meeting. As the following scheduled agenda item was set for 10:00 am, the board chose to move forward with agenda items that could be addressed.		
Updates from Marine Pilot Coordinator (FPC applications 2020-2025 and exam provider)		
MPC updates	MPC Carabajal provided a brief report comparing the number of foreign pleasure craft exemption applications received each year from 2020 – 2025. There were a few years when the numbers were down, but that went back up last year, with 21 vessels applying in calendar year 2025. 6 of the vessels that applied in 2025 had fees of \$5000 or higher, which significantly increased revenue.  The division contracted with ProV, an exam provider based in Utah, to manage the exam question databases and remotely administer exams. There were no start-up costs with moving to this exam provider, unlike with the previous provider, which did not work out. MPC Carabajal has submitted all question banks, except Region 3. That question bank will be submitted next week. ProV anticipates being able to administer exams by March.  There was a discussion regarding costs and options if the board does not want exams to be proctored remotely. MPC Carabajal will coordinate with board members to test the new exam system during the scheduled April exams so they can see how it works and determine whether they wish to make it an option for the Local Knowledge Exams.	
Division Update		
	Administrative Operations Manager, Melissa Dumas, joined the meeting to review the end-of-year FY2025 and 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter fiscal reports with the board. She provided a detailed review of revenue and expenses for the program for fiscal year 2025, which ended	

	06/30/2026; the program ended the year with \$ 426,995 in revenue after expenses of \$132,396. She briefly went over the 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter report for FY26; the program received \$16,950 in revenue with \$69,420 in expenses, leaving a balance of \$374,525.
<b>Investigative Report</b>	
	Investigator 3 Patrick Kase provided the investigative report for the time period of October 9, 2025, through January 8, 2026, to the board. There are no closed cases, because he had closed everything in the prior quarter. There is one open case that opened at the end of 2025. This is for unlicensed practice or activity. For disclosure purposes, as the board is interested in additional details, this concerns allegations that a vessel was operating in compulsory waters without a licensed pilot aboard. That case is still open in the complaint stage, where investigations are addressing it with the respondents and obtaining their explanation. He hopes to have a resolution on that one shortly.
<b>US Coast Guard Update; Changes to Federal Pilotage</b>	
	<p>Abbie Lyons, Chief of Inspections for the USCG Sector Western Alaska and US Arctic and USCG Chief Bryan Olson joined to discuss changes to the federal pilotage. Ms. Lyons addressed the board first. Thad Wagner will be the new RAC Director, replacing Dan Reyes, who retired this summer. Thad has experience as a bosun in the Coast Guard and has worked on ships here, which will help. She thanked Brian Olson for covering this area during the transition. They have faced several licensing issues with the National Maritime Center (NMC). Senator Sullivan's staff is meeting with the NMC to address these problems. It is important to clarify the roles of the local Officer in Charge of Marine Inspections (OCMI) and the licensing OCMI at the NMC, particularly regarding first-class pilotage. Some updates about first-class pilotage in Western Alaska:</p> <p><b>**Round Trips:**</b> They are planning to remove the 75% route requirement that made grading difficult and define a round trip as a journey between geographic boundaries to a suitable facility.</p> <p><b>**Hours of Darkness:**</b> They will allow more flexibility in accounting for hours of darkness. Applicants can provide proof of limited visibility from weather conditions.</p> <p><b>**Designated Routes:**</b> They will drop routes like Kazikoff, Togiak, Nushigak, Naknik, St. Paul, and Icy Bay from federal pilotage routes due to low traffic. These routes will still be included in pilot training under the purview of the regional associations but will not be required by the local OCMI.</p> <p><b>**Review Cycle:**</b> They will now review our protocols every 2 to 3 years instead of every 30 years.</p> <p>For Uzinki and Saldovia, they will assess whether to limit requirements to AMHS operators, given low traffic on other vessels.</p> <p>Chief Olson answered questions from the board regarding potential changes in Southeast, which does not currently have a lack of vessel traffic. He asked that captains submitting round-trip reports for pilotage ensure their forms are legible so that the reports can be counted towards the requirements.</p>
<b>Schedule Future Meeting Date(s)</b>	
<b>Brief Discussion:</b>	After discussion, the board decided to hold their 2026 summer teleconference on July 29 <sup>th</sup> , 2026, with the Local Knowledge Exam scheduled for July 28, 2026. The board's fall meeting will be October 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2026, in Anchorage with exams being held October 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2026. The scheduled April 29 <sup>th</sup> , 2026 meeting will be in Sitka at the Sitka Fine Arts Camp and exams will be at the Sitka Public Library on April 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2026. MPC Carabajal requested that the board consider where they may be interested in holding their April 2027 meeting as the division will soon be working on the FY2027 travel plan. After a short discussion, it was determined that the board would meet in Cordova, AK for the April 2027 meeting.

**AO360 – Review and approval of the board’s plan for regulatory reduction**

**Brief Discussion:** Captain Sinclair reviewed the plan that the sub-committee worked on at the December 16, 2025, meeting with assistance from MPC Carabajal. The plan exceeds the reduction targets that AO360 requires. The sub-committee reviewed the list of regulations and discussed each one; most were straightforward changes. All changes come with the caveat that the public process for regulatory amendments will still apply, with communication with associations, industry stakeholders, and the public before any changes are finalized. The sub-committee was mindful of the potential of negative consequences for some changes. There are 3 regulation amendments on the plan that were projects previously approved by the board that are listed as priorities for 2026, and a late addition at the request of Captain Cunningham to allow the USCG medical evaluation form to be submitted in place of the form provided by the division for renewals.

**Motion:** Move to accept the plan drafted by the appointed subcommittee for regulatory reduction with priorities for 2026 and 2027 as presented. (First: Habeger; Second: Cronk).

**Discussion:** With nothing to discuss, the board approved the motion by roll-call vote.

<b>Recorded Votes:</b>	Cronk - Yes	Mew - Yes
	Cunningham - Yes	Tougas - Yes
	Sinclair – Yes	Habeger - Yes
		Thayer - Yes

**Brief Discussion:** Captain Sinclair asked whether there were any options to address the proposed amendment to 12 AAC 56.082(c) by AMP, approved by the Board at the October 2023 meeting, and placed on hold by AO358. MPC Carabajal addressed the board and public, letting them know that due to circumstances unknown to her, as she was not the MPC at that time, this proposed regulations project had not been submitted to the division regulations specialist following its approval. She let the board know they could request that she submit an AO358 waiver, which could potentially allow the project to move forward. If the waiver is not approved, the amendment will remain a high priority for 2026 regulations projects under the AO360 plan that the board just approved.

**Motion:** Move that MPC Carabajal should submit an AO358 waiver request to allow the proposed amendment to 12 AAC 56.082(c) as approved by the board in October 2023 to move forward in the regulations process. (First: Sinclair; Second: Cronk).

**Discussion:** With nothing to discuss, the board approved the motion by roll-call vote.

<b>Recorded Votes:</b>	Cronk - Yes	Mew - Yes
	Cunningham - Yes	Tougas - Yes
	Sinclair – Yes	Habeger - Yes
		Thayer - Yes

Application Review – Executive Session		
<b>Motion:</b> <b>Off Record: 10:45 am</b> <b>Return to Record: 11:15 am</b>	I, Ed Sinclair, move that the Alaska State Board of Marine Pilots enter into executive session in accordance with AS 44.62.310(c), and Alaska Constitutional Right to Privacy Provisions, for the purpose of discussing subjects that tend to prejudice the reputation and character of any person, provided the person may request a public discussion; and matters which by law, municipal charter, or ordinance are required to be confidential. Board staff, Renee Carabajal, to remain. (First: Sinclair; Second: Mew).	
<b>Discussion:</b>	With nothing to discuss, the board approved the motion by roll-call vote.	
<b>Recorded Votes:</b>	Cronk - Yes	Mew - Yes
	Cunningham - Yes	Tougas - Yes
	Sinclair – Yes	Habeger - Yes
		Thayer - Yes
<b>Motion:</b> Move to approve the Region 1 Marine Pilot applications with unlimited tonnage. Captain Tiffany Keefe, #126946 Captain Kathryn Miller, # 147160 Captain Mitchell Potter; # 147168 Captain Jeffery Varney, # 147164 (First: Mew; Second: Cronk).		
<b>Discussion:</b>	With nothing to discuss, the board approved the motion by roll-call vote.	
<b>Recorded Votes:</b>	Cronk - Yes	Mew - Yes
	Cunningham - Yes	Tougas - Yes
	Sinclair – Yes	Habeger - Yes
		Thayer - Yes
<b>Motion:</b> Move to approve the Marine Pilot application for Captain Christopher Lemon, # 142760, for Region 2 with unlimited tonnage and VLCC (Very Large Crude Container) Endorsement.(First: Mew; Second: Habeger).		
<b>Discussion:</b>	With nothing to discuss, the board approved the motion by roll-call vote.	
<b>Recorded Votes:</b>	Cronk - Yes	Mew - Yes
	Cunningham - Yes	Tougas - Yes
	Sinclair – Yes	Habeger - Yes
		Thayer - Yes
<b>Board Comments:</b> Chair Thayer opened the floor for board member comments. Board members thanked Les Cronk for his years of service to the board and industry, as he is retiring and his term on the board will end in March. Joe Tougas was also thanked for his service on the board; he does not intend to apply for another term. Board members thanked MPC Carabajal for her work and professionalism; they appreciate how quickly she responds to them and others.		
<b>Adjourn:</b>		
<b>Brief Discussion:</b> <b>Off Record at 11:27 am</b>	Having completed all scheduled business on the agenda, the board adjourned.	
<b>Motion:</b>	Move to adjourn (First: Cronk; Second: Sinclair).	

<b>Discussion:</b>	With nothing to discuss, the board approved the motion via roll call vote.	
Recorded Votes (roll call):	Cronk - Yes	Mew - Yes
	Cunningham - Yes	Tougas - Yes
	Sinclair – Yes	Habeger - Yes
		Thayer - Yes
Date Final Minutes Approved by the Board: _____ Meeting _____ OnBoard		