

# U.S. COAST GUARD



## SECTOR ANCHORAGE YEAR IN REVIEW 2013

## SECTOR COMMANDER



Captain Paul Mehler III

Captain Paul Mehler III assumed command of Coast Guard Sector Anchorage in June of 2012 and is responsible for the execution of Coast Guard missions throughout Western Alaska, the Service's largest and most geographically diverse area of responsibility. Captain Mehler serves as the Captain of the Port, Federal On-Scene Coordinator, Federal Maritime Security Coordinator, Officer in Charge of Marine Inspections, and the region's Search and Rescue Coordinator.

Responsible for over 650 active duty, reserve and auxiliary personnel and maintains operational control of a Marine Safety Unit, three Marine Safety Detachments, three 110' (WPB's) Patrol Boats, a Small Boat Station, Aids to Navigation Team, and a Sector Field Office. His regulatory responsibilities include a military strategic port, offshore oil exploration/production, cruise ship and fishing industry, severe weather and ice operations and the Trans Alaska Pipeline System.

Captain Mehler is a graduate of Massachusetts Maritime Academy with a Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation. He holds a Master's of Science degree in Quality Systems Management and is certified as a Green Belt in Six Sigma. A Coast Guard Licensed Unlimited Third Mate. Prior to joining the US Coast Guard he worked as an analyst for the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS).

## AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

Sector Anchorage has the largest geographical Area of Responsibility in the nation, which includes the oil rich North Slope, Bering Sea, Chukchi Sea, Bristol Bay (with the world's largest run of sockeye salmon), Kodiak Island, Kenai Peninsula, and the Aleutian Islands. This Area of Responsibility encompasses 460 regulated waterfront facilities, 550 Inspected Commercial Vessels, 4,000 Fishing Vessels, and an average of 400 Pollution and 200 Search and Rescue cases annually.



- Marine Safety Unit Valdez
- Sector Field Office Valdez
- Station Valdez
- Marine Safety Detachments
  - Kodiak
  - Homer
  - Dutch Harbor
- Aids to Navigation Team Kodiak
- Coast Guard Cutters
  - CGC ROANOKE ISLAND
  - CGC MUSTANG
  - CGC LONG ISLAND

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Outreach, education and community service are as much a part of the calling for Sector Anchorage Coast Guardsman as the traditional mission set. In 2013, Sector personnel devoted their time on and off duty to a variety of activities including teaching in schools, cooking a Thanksgiving meal, and plunging into the icy Alaskan waters for a good cause.



*Left:*  
Auxiliarists and Active Duty work side by side at an educational booth at the 2013 Great Alaska Sportsmans Show

*Right:*  
As the snow melted and spring arrived, Sector members joined the Anchorage community for the annual Creek Cleanup, picking up trash and debris at Westchester Lagoon to ensure everyone could enjoy clean public park space.



*Left:*  
Volunteers with the Honor Guard at Sector Anchorage regularly participated in funerals and memorial services to render honors to military members who have passed this year.



## ROLES AND MISSIONS

The United States Coast Guard is a multi-mission maritime service within the Department of Homeland Security and one of the nation's five uniformed services. Our core missions in Western Alaska and the Arctic focus on promoting and enhancing the safety and security of the Maritime Transportation System and serving as stewards of the environment.



### Mission of Coast Guard Sector Anchorage

Ensure the Safety, Security and Stewardship (protecting the environment while facilitating commerce) of Western Alaska and the Arctic.



*Left:*  
Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano addresses members of Coast Guard Sector Anchorage at the Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson National Guard Armory, July 1, 2013.

## MARITIME SECURITY

### Area Maritime Security Committee

The Western Alaska Area Maritime Security Committee (WAAMSC) is a team of 30 representatives from Federal, State and local government organizations, maritime industry, and volunteer organizations that play a pivotal role in mitigating threats and vulnerabilities throughout the Western Alaska Geographic Area of Responsibility (AOR) through interagency, intergovernmental and public/private sector cooperative efforts. Seven regional subcommittees have been established to support the WAAMSC.

Increasing maritime traffic and the acceleration of human activity in the Arctic mean increased risks and a host of other threats to the safety and security of the region. WAAMSC members are proactively addressing these growing risks through multiple interagency programs. WAAMSC members participated in the *Alaska and the New Maritime Arctic Workshop*, and the *Week of the Arctic* activities sponsored by the Institute of the North which featured plenary and small group sessions developing innovative and practical solutions for critical Arctic safety and security issues.

Maritime security forces played a critical role in providing for the safe and secure transit, port visit and commissioning ceremony for the **USS Anchorage (LPD 23)** during its May, 2013 visit to Alaska. A cooperative task force comprised of Federal, State, local agencies and port authorities coordinated the land and waterborne security on the Port of Anchorage and selected portions of the local waterway.

## NOTABLE CASES

Only hours before the New Year, at 8:48 p.m. on December 31, 2012, the conical drilling unit KULLUK grounded at a location between the north end of Ocean Bay and Partition Cove near Sitkalidak Island.



*Left:*

The conical drilling unit KULLUK sits aground on the southeast shore of Sitkalidak Island about 40 miles southwest of Kodiak City, Alaska, in 40 mph winds and 20-foot seas U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Sara Francis.

*Right:*

Rear Admiral Thomas Ostebo, commander, 17th Coast Guard District, observes the KULLUK from an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter during a second overflight Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2013.



Coast Guard Sector Anchorage, State of Alaska, Kodiak Island Borough, Shell, and Edison Chouest Offshore established a Unified Command in response to the incident. Over the first few weeks of 2013 more than 700 responders were called to action.

The KULLUK was refloated at 10:10 p.m. on January 6, 2013 and relocated to a place of refuge (Kiliuda Bay) for additional salvage and damage assessment. Throughout the incident, no lives were lost and a major pollution incident was prevented.

## VESSEL INSPECTIONS

With one of the harshest operating environments in the world and the largest Captain of the Port Zone in the Coast Guard, the Sector Anchorage Commercial Vessel Safety program is vital to the safety and security of the people and environment in Western Alaska.



*Above:* TUSTUMENA Dry-Dock. Sector Anchorage Marine Inspectors spent 11 months deployed in Seward inspecting and overseeing over \$6.5 million dollars in repairs, ensuring the vessel's safety for the crew and thousands of passengers who ride aboard each week as it transits the unforgivable waters of the Gulf of Alaska.



*Left:* Marine Inspectors attended the Anchor Handling Towing Supply (AHTS) vessel AIVIQ following the vessel's loss of propulsion while towing the drill rig KULLUK in December of 2012. Inspectors assisted in the investigation of the casualty and oversaw subsequent repairs.

Right: As sea ice melts, vessel activity in the Arctic is increasing, demanding a greater Coast Guard presence in the Arctic. In the summer of 2013, Foreign Vessel Examiners completed the first cruise ship inspection off the coast of Barrow in the Chukchi Sea.



## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

As the Federal On-Scene Coordinator for the largest area of responsibility in the Coast Guard, Sector Anchorage relies heavily on its partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies. Sector Anchorage works in concert with these partner agencies to develop, exercise, and review plans for response operations in the challenging Alaskan environment.



*Above:*

A diver making preparations for salvage and lightering operations during the fishing vessel LONE STAR Response in the Igushik River near Dillingham AK.

### **F/V Lone Star Salvage & Lightering**

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, The F/V LONE STAR suffered a casualty which caused the vessel to sink with approximately 11,000 gallons of oil products onboard. Sector Anchorage immediately began working with Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and various other agencies to prevent a catastrophic pollution incident. Response crews worked through extreme tides and currents, and near zero underwater visibility to remove fuel from the vessel; this interagency response operation successfully mitigated the pollution threat.

## BOATING SAFETY

Sector Anchorage works closely with state and federal law enforcement agencies, including the Alaska State Troopers, Alaska State Parks, and National Marine Fisheries Service, to enforce recreational boating safety laws. Sector Anchorage crews patrol major ports along the Kenai Peninsula, Prince William Sound, and popular inland water bodies in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley during peak recreational boating periods and major marine events. The largest of these events is the opening of the Kenai River Personal Dip-net Fishery season, where thousands of anglers feverishly flood 3.5 miles of the Kenai River in hopes of stocking their freezers with prized sockeye salmon. In 2013, over 140 boardings were conducted on recreational vessels to ensure full compliance with safety equipment carriage requirements.

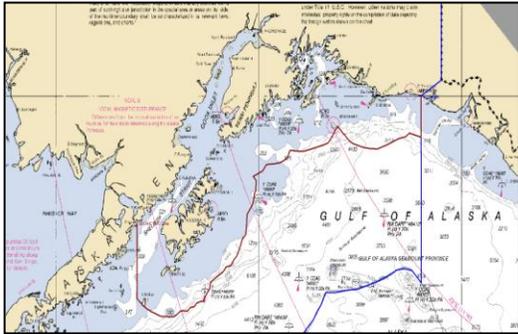


**Nome Gold Dredgers**

In the summer of 2013, Sector Anchorage continued working with state and local agencies to improve the safety of vessels engaged in dredging for gold off the coast of Nome, AK. Sector personnel, assisted by D17 boating safety examiners, performed multiple summer outreach trips, offering recreational dockside examinations to help operators understand and comply with vessel safety regulations. CGC SPAR, CGC NAUSHON and Sector personnel then followed up with safety boardings to ensure continued compliance. Sector Anchorage anticipates that the gold dredge fleet will continue to grow, drawing fortune-seekers with bigger, more sophisticated dredges.

# SEARCH AND RESCUE

During 2013, Sector Anchorage, along with a multitude of partner agencies, coordinated 163 search and rescue cases saving or assisting nearly 400 lives and an estimated \$9 million in property.



*Left:*  
Sector Anchorage is responsible for all maritime and aeronautical search and rescue events occurring in waters west of 142 00' W to 156 00'W. This also includes the bays, sounds, inlets and straits to 50 NM off shore of the mainland and Kodiak Island including Shelikof Strait to Cape Igvak.

*Right:*  
Sector Anchorage prides ourselves on cooperation with our other maritime partners and nowhere is that more evident than in our prosecution of search and rescue. The Anchorage Fire Department light rescue boat backs out from the launch during a major search on Monday morning, October 7, 2013, for a 28-year-old man who fell off a skiff into the water near Anchorage.



*Left:*  
The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter LONG ISLAND passes a tow line to the pleasure craft MYSTERY LADY during a rescue near Seward. The crew of the LONG ISLAND deftly navigated through 12 foot seas for more than four hours and prevented the MYSTERY LADY from running aground.

## INVESTIGATIONS

Sector Anchorage is responsible for investigating marine casualties involving domestic and foreign commercial vessels that operate on the labyrinthine rivers and challenging seas of Western Alaska. Federal regulations mandate that the Coast Guard investigate accidents in order to distil lessons and identify trends that will shape future prevention efforts.

Sector's Investigating Officers, in conjunction with personnel from the three Marine Safety Detachments (MSDs), conducted 168 investigations during 2013. Half of these investigations focused on mariner injuries (including seven mariner deaths). Another



quarter stemmed from steering or propulsion failures. The remaining portion included groundings, collisions and other incidents adversely affecting a vessels' fitness for service. Two thirds of the vessels involved in reportable marine casualties were commercial fishing vessels.

The Investigations Division also initiated 36 enforcements in 2013. A third of enforcements took the form of fines; a sixth involved suspending or revoking merchant mariner credentials; and half were formal written warnings. The purpose of these enforcements is to compel compliance with regulations protecting life, property and the marine environment.

## WATERWAYS AND FACILITIES

### Ice Operating Procedures

Each winter Cook Inlet Alaska partially freezes over, creating one of the most unique and challenging vessel operating areas in the world due to thick ice, extreme weather, and a tidal flux of over 30 feet. The Coast Guard, in an alliance with local maritime operators, developed the Cook Inlet Ice Operating Procedures; a culmination of best practices for mitigating risk to life, property, and the environment. In 2013, Sector Anchorage conducted 15 vessel ice examinations to ensure compliance with the procedures, reviewed more than 50 vessel ice voyage plans, and tracked over a 100 vessel transits in Cook Inlet.



*Above:* Container ship transiting Cook Inlet

### Facility Inspections

Sector Anchorage Facility all over Western Alaska and multiple logistical issues to inspections are conducted. focus on pollution regulations as well as safety. Facility Inspectors container inspections and outs. In 2013, Sector conducted approximately inspections, 27 facility security inspections, over 200 container inspections, and processed 27 explosive permits.



Inspectors travel overcome ensure facility The inspections prevention occupational also conduct explosive load- Anchorage 100 facility inspections, and

## PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS

### Sub-Area Contingency Plans

Sector Anchorage is responsible for eight of Alaska's ten Subareas. The Subarea contingency plans incorporate key provisions of local government response developed by Local Emergency Planning Committees and applicable information from industry facility/vessel response plans developed in accordance with Federal and State planning requirements.



Each of the Subarea contingency plans addresses responses to an average most probable discharge, a maximum most probable discharge, and a worst case discharge, including discharges from fire or explosion. Each plan is drafted and updated by individual Subarea Committees. The Subarea Committee is a spill preparedness and planning body made up of Federal, State, and local agency representatives.

The Bristol Bay and Western Alaska Subarea plans were completely updated and promulgated in February of 2013. Additionally, a comprehensive risk assessment for the Aleutians Islands was started in late 2013, and is scheduled to be completed early 2014.

## SECTOR ANCHORAGE CONTACTS

**Main Phone** (907) 428-4200  
Command Administrative Assistance 4147  
Command Fax 4114

### Sector Command Center

24-Hour Emergencies (907) 428-4100  
National Response Center (800) 424-8802

### Sector Departments

Response Department (907) 428-4148  
Presentation Department 4149  
Logistics Department 4121  
Command Senior Chief 4146  
Public Affairs 4140  
Domestic Vessel Inspections 4161  
Investigations Division 4164  
Waterways Management 4173  
Facility Inspections 4152  
Port Security 4215  
Enforcement 4175  
Contingency Planning 4214  
Intelligence 4178

### Sector Units

Marine Safety Unit Valdez (907) 835-7200  
Sector Field Office Valdez 834-5370  
Coast Guard Cutter Long Island 834-5300  
Coast Guard Cutter Roanoke Island 235-5336  
Coast Guard Cutter Mustang 224-5202  
Station Valdez 834-5350  
Marine Safety Detachment Dutch Harbor 581-3466  
Marine Safety Detachment Homer 235-3292  
Marine Safety Detachment Kodiak 486-5918  
Aids to Navigation Team Kodiak 487-5161