



# Alaska Information Scuttlebutt

Winter 2024

*Providing information, communications, and services to promote safe, secure, efficient, and environmentally responsible maritime operations.*



## Arctic Watch Partners Meeting: Forging Connections and Shaping the Future of Sea Traffic Management in the Arctic

In the ever-evolving landscape of Arctic maritime activity, MXAK embarked on an extraordinary endeavor—**Arctic Watch**. Anchored in cutting-edge technology and fortified by **collaborative partnerships with indigenous communities, NGOs, the maritime industry, and government entities**, Arctic Watch stands as a beacon of safety, environmental stewardship, and regional resilience in the Arctic's vast expanse.

[As vessel transits through the Bering Strait continue](#)

to rise, the need for a comprehensive and dynamic maritime management system is becoming increasingly urgent. At its heart, Arctic Watch recognizes the strategic significance of the Bering Strait. This pivotal maritime corridor, a tapestry of biodiversity and culture, serves as a bridge connecting the Pacific and Arctic Oceans. It demands a proactive response to protect the treasures held.



The recent **Arctic Watch Partners' Meeting** held in mid-January in Juneau, was a resounding success. Over 30 regional partners, including community leaders and revered elders from Arctic communities, gathered to discuss concerns, brainstorm solutions, and chart a course toward a more resilient Arctic future. The meeting was more than just an event; it built relationships, shared knowledge, and demonstrated the collective power of cooperation and mutual support.

MXAK had the privilege of sitting down with these invaluable partners, hearing their insights, and shared resources available to address their concerns. The meeting illuminated the subsistence way of life and the delicate balance of nature and nurture in the face of changing climates. It underscored how technological capabilities can support, inform, and potentially save lives, all while building upon the incredible stewardship of Alaska's indigenous peoples.

We met with legislators, focused on community concerns and issues, and formulated the vision for Arctic Watch hand-in-hand with the region's dedicated stewards. This meeting was a remarkable chapter in the Arctic Watch journey, and it marks just the beginning of something extraordinary.

Arctic Watch is now poised to take the next steps, including securing long-term funding and outreach for a project that promises lasting positive impacts in the region. We are immensely thankful to all the community leaders, elders, and tribal delegates who joined us, helping us meet the needs of the region and identify solutions. Together, we are shaping the future of the Arctic, working toward a common good with an enduring legacy.

To learn more about Arctic Watch and stay informed about this vital initiative, visit the [Arctic Watch website](#).



**Rep. Neal Foster** met with some of the Arctic Watch Partners and walked us through the legislative process in House Finance.



Taking time before the joint session, **Sen. Donny Olson** was able to meet with Arctic Watch Partners and Constituents for our community reception. We were also joined by **RADM Megan Dean (USCG District 17)** who gave uplifting welcome remarks at the Buoy Deck.



Steve White led us through the focus sessions as we broke out into small groups to discuss issues in the **Bering Strait and Norton Sound**.



After a long week - we enjoyed a little "slice of life" breaking bread and sharing stories. This led to Steve breaking out his "highly coveted" MXAK Pizza Cutters which almost had us all falling over with laughter and joy.

## Captain White Goes to Washington! Navigating Advocacy, Collaboration, and Innovation



In a whirlwind two-week span, **Captain Steve White** (USCG ret.) embarked on a journey that exemplified the core values of the **Marine Exchange of Alaska (MXAK)** advocacy, collaboration, and innovation. His mission: to amplify the voice of MXAK on Capitol Hill, and far beyond.





MXAK had a special opportunity to meet with **Sen. Dan Sullivan** in his office under the Capitol. He took the time to meet with us in person in between Senate floor votes. It was an impactful conversation with him and his staff outlining capabilities and strategic importance of MXAK's work.

### Advocacy on Capitol Hill

Captain White's voyage commenced in the heart of the nation's capital, where he engaged with some of Alaska's most influential voices in government. His meetings with **Representative Mary Peltola, Senators Murkowski and Sullivan** and **key congressional committees** underscored the pivotal role that MXAK plays in safeguarding one-third of the nation's coastlines.

A high point of this venture was the rare privilege to explore the hallowed halls of the U.S. Capitol itself. In a moment that felt almost cinematic, Captain White, ventured into the inner sanctum of Senator Sullivan's hideaway office beneath the Capitol dome. Here, he expressed gratitude for our delegation's service and fostered discussions on continued collaboration to advance our vital mission.



In the Denali Room, MXAK connected with hard

L to R: Kevin King, Capt. Mark Vislay, Steve White, and Rich Frattarelli.

**USCGA Class of '94'** celebrated the induction of **Captain Mark Vislay** into the **USCGA Hall of Heroes**. During Hurricane Katrina, Capt. Vislay distinguished himself flying emergency response personnel through winds exceeding 50 knots. Demonstrating exceptional aeronautical skills he also navigated roof top level flying, utility infrastructure, and even more challenging rescue scenarios at night. Ultimately saving 167 storm victims. See the full story [here](#).

Captain Vislay also served three tours in Alaska, including Operations Officer at Air Station Kodiak. There he served with another class of '94 classmate, MXAK's very own **Chief Operating Officer, John Hollingsworth**. You might see them in old episodes of the "Coast Guard Alaska" show. Captain Vislay also served as the Commanding Officer at Air Station Sitka.

### MISNA Gathering: Collaboration Across Continents

Captain White's odyssey culminated in the vibrant city of **New Orleans**, where he attended the **Annual Maritime Information Services of North America (MISNA)** meeting, a convergence of Marine Exchanges from across the continent. As the current President of MISNA, he chaired the meeting of the other Marine Exchanges and liked minded organizations who are driving innovation and progress to protect the maritime community throughout the nation.

At the MISNA gathering, maritime leaders from the U.S. and beyond converged to discuss strategies for protecting our coasts and enhancing maritime safety. Captain White's participation underscored MXAK's role in the ongoing mission to innovate and adapt to an ever-evolving maritime landscape.



**Meeting Metal of Honor Recipient: James "Doc" McCloughan**. While in route to the MISNA Conference in New Orleans, MXAK's Executive Director, Steve White, and MXAK's Chief Operating Officer, John Hollingsworth, had the distinct privilege of meeting "Doc" McCloughan, a true American hero.

working Alaskans in **Sen. Murkowski's office**. We've been able to work on some challenging issues and identify unique solutions through working together. We also got to admire "**Walter**" the **63-pound King Salmon** Sen. Murkowski caught on the Kenai River. L to R: Edric, Grace Kubitz, Lt. Amanda Klawinski, and Capt. White

### Revisiting Coast Guard Roots

From Washington, Captain White embarked on a detour to New London, Connecticut—hallowed ground for him as a proud alumnus of the **U.S. Coast Guard Academy**. Along with honoring Coast Guard heroes Captain White met with the Academy's CASP Program Director, Captain Tony Russell (USCG ret.) where they discussed the **impact of hosting USCG Academy cadets at MXAK over the past three years**. This academic partnership continues to strengthen our ties with the next generation of maritime leaders.

The trip also allowed Captain White an opportunity to visit with his son, Luke, who is now in his first year at the Coast Guard Academy—continuing the legacy of service within the White family.



Doc, a combat medic during the Vietnam War, exemplified selfless courage by risking his life to save others under enemy fire. His bravery earned him the prestigious Medal of Honor. It was an extraordinary coincidence, as they crossed paths during a gathering of all 65 living Medal of Honor Recipients. Truly an inspiring encounter.

### A Journey of Resilience and Purpose

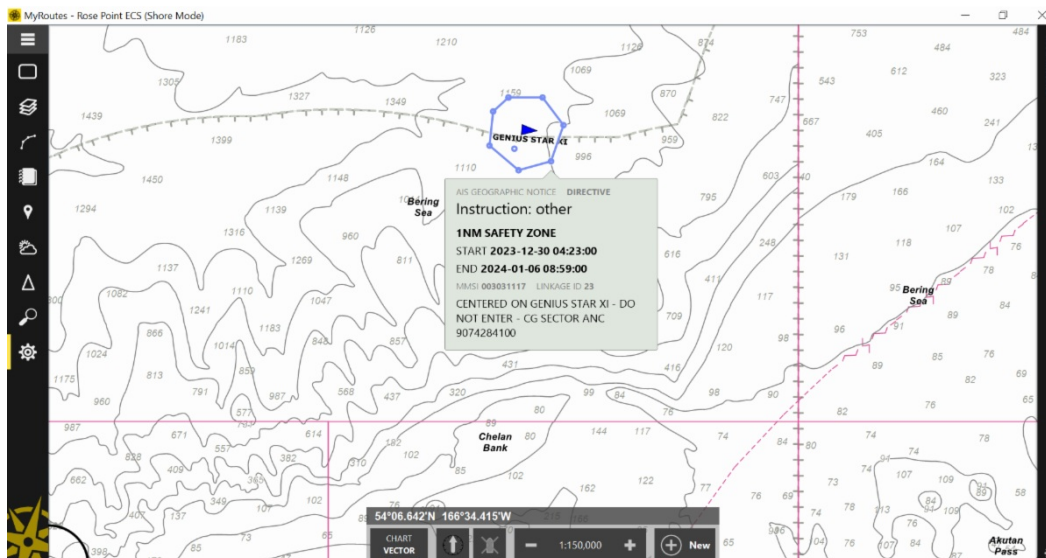
Captain White's journey epitomizes MXAK's unwavering dedication to safeguarding Alaska's waters and supporting the nation's maritime interests. Advocacy, collaboration, and innovation remain the guiding stars of our mission, ensuring that our coasts remain safe and resilient.

As we chart our course forward we do so with a renewed commitment to our purpose: to protect, to innovate, and to serve—always with an eye to the horizon, where our nation's safety and security lie.

The MXAK crew forges ahead with pride, purpose, and an unwavering dedication to the maritime communities we serve. Together, we navigate the seas of advocacy, collaboration, and innovation to ensure that our mission remains steadfast and true.

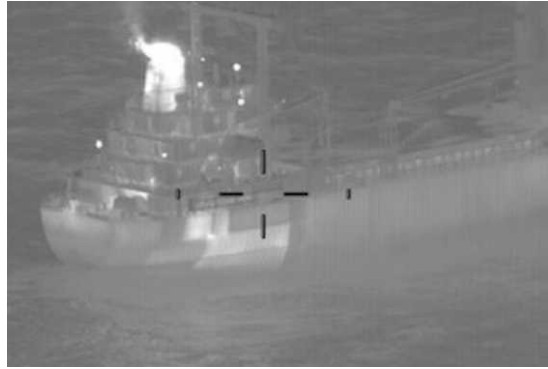
Onward, together.

## Role in Managing the Genius Star XI Fire



Using our capabilities **we're able to take the "search" out of "search and rescue,"** identify vessel whereabouts while displaying important information like vessel name, type, destination, position, and track lines. Here we helped set up a **dynamic "geofence" around the Genius Star XI** and broadcasted messages to mariners to stay away using our **Very High Frequency Radio (VHF-FM)** as the response effort was underway.

In the early hours of December 26th, 2023, a concerning incident unfolded off the coast of Alaska. The cargo vessel, **Genius Star XI** was carrying nearly 2,000 tons of lithium-ion batteries when two fires erupted in its cargo holds. The situation was dire, given the highly flammable nature of lithium-ion batteries, and the potential for catastrophe was real.



MXAK's primary mission is to safeguard Alaska's extensive coastline and maritime communities. This mission extends beyond just monitoring vessels; it includes proactive involvement in emergency response efforts, like the *Genius Star XI* incident.

In collaboration with the U.S. Coast Guard, MXAK contributed to the response by:

- **Broadcasting and Receiving AtoN Transmissions.**MXAK leveraged its extensive capabilities to broadcast and receive Aid to Navigation (AtoN) transmissions, enhancing communication and situational awareness.
- **Acting as a Liaison Between Unified Command.**MXAK served as a bridge between the Unified Command and industry stakeholders, ensuring vital information flowed seamlessly, contributing to a well-coordinated response.
- **Reporting the Second Fire.**In a critical moment, MXAK reported the emergence of a second fire, allowing response teams to adapt their strategy promptly.
- **Setting Up a Geofence Around the Vessel.**To mitigate potential risks, MXAK established a geofence around the *Genius Star XI* helping to divert maritime traffic away from the incident zone.

While the heroic efforts of the U.S. Coast Guard, industry partners, and responders deserve commendation, MXAK's essential role in ensuring the incident's safe management is worth highlighting. The ability to collaborate and provide critical support during emergencies is a testament to MXAK's commitment to protecting the maritime environment.

As this incident demonstrated, MXAK's capabilities extend beyond monitoring vessels' movements; they encompass actively contributing to the safety and well-being of our coastal communities. We are proud to serve Alaska and its maritime interests, working tirelessly to maintain the integrity of our oceans and waters.

MXAK remains steadfast in its mission to safeguard Alaska's coasts, and incidents like the *Genius Star XI* fire remind us of the critical importance of our work. We salute the exemplary efforts of the Unified Command, the U.S. Coast Guard, and all involved parties in managing this incident and safeguarding our marine environment.

## Bearing the Elements: Field Ops in Winter

As winter blankets Alaska in its icy embrace, MXAK's **Field Operations** team embark on journeys that showcase the true essence of dedication and collaboration. In the face of unpredictable weather and unforgiving conditions, MXAK works to ensure reliability of

our Maritime Safety Sites across the state.



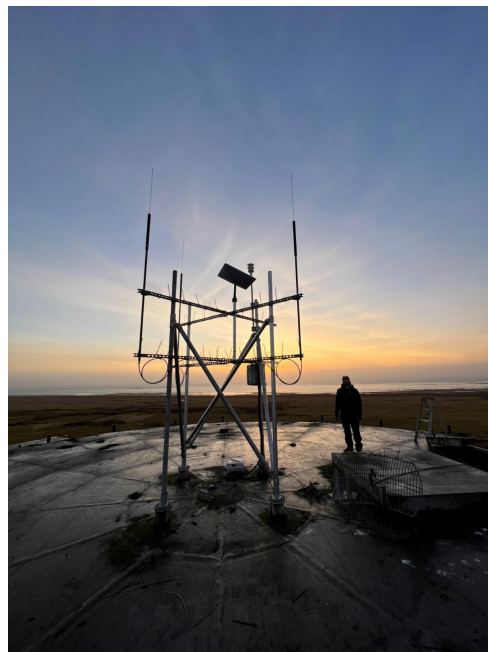
One recent expedition took Field Operations to the vast expanse of **Prince William Sound**. It began with optimism and a promising weather forecast, but Alaska's fickle nature had other plans. Mid-flight, our anticipation turned to apprehension as the cloud ceiling descended, and we found ourselves navigating through a tumultuous **Gulf of Alaska**. A skillful pilot safely landed us on **Middleton Island**, where repairs were urgently needed.

With unwavering determination, our team swiftly restored the **AIS**, **DSC**, and **voice VHF capabilities** of our site.

As we prepared to depart for the **Armin F. Koernig (AFK) fish hatchery in Chenega Bay**, mother nature intervened once again. The worsening weather forced us to alter our course, and we returned to Anchorage, braving severe icing conditions along the way.

Our resilience persisted, and we rescheduled our journey to Chenega Bay via a scheduled flight. But Alaska had more surprises in store. A winter storm advisory swept through the region, postponing our plans. Yet, after a brief delay, we were back on track, reaching Chenega Bay.

Collaboration is at the heart of our mission, and in Chenega Bay, we witnessed it firsthand. The employees of the AFK hatchery assisted us in crossing the bay, setting the tone for our successful mission. Late into the night, we restored connectivity to our **AIS and DSC receivers** and installed a new weather and sea state camera funded by the **Alaska Ocean Observation System (AOOS)**.



Our next destination was **Point Pigot**, nestled at the eastern end of Passage Canal. Braving fierce winter storms, we ventured to repair our weather station. The challenges persisted, with small craft advisory winds and freezing spray. However, the weather eventually relented, and we brought our site back online.

Throughout this journey, we connected with mariners, AFK hatchery employees, and residents of Chenega Bay and Whittier. Their appreciation for the resources provided by the Marine Exchange of Alaska fueled our determination.

Despite the complexity of Alaskan winter weather, our Field Operations team triumphed. We met our goals, restored essential equipment, and even managed to catch our originally booked flight home.

In the face of adversity, collaboration, dedication, and a shared commitment to maritime safety prevailed. As we navigate the winter's chill, we are reminded of the importance of our mission and the profound impact it has on our maritime community.

- Ed Shanley  
Field Technician



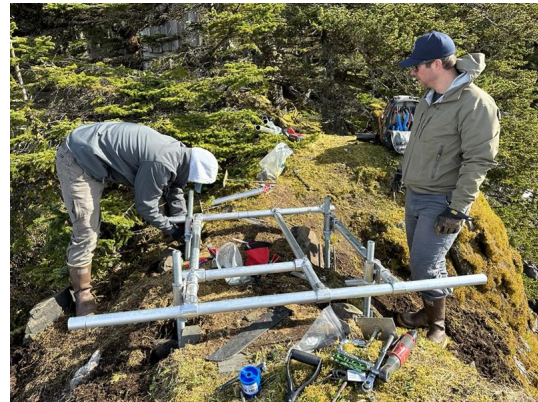
Top photo: Navigating the vast Alaskan coastline with skill and determination - meet some of our adventurous Field Ops crew, **Ed and Kole**.

Bottom photo: **Collin**, one of our skilled Field Techs, hard at work upgrading a Marine Safety Site. Safety, our top priority!



Top photo: Braving icing conditions flying over Alaska's rugged terrain in variable weather.

Bottom photo: Ed and Kole, scaling cliffsides to install vital equipment for our Marine Safety Sites.



## READY TO TAKE YOUR BOATING SAFETY TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

Become a MXAK Member and gain access to the most comprehensive terrestrial and satellite vessel tracking system in Alaska.

Visit <https://www.mxak.org/enrollment/> to join today.







## Tips to Enhance Your Cybersecurity

**Strong Passwords:** Your first line of defense is a robust password. Use a combination of upper and lower-case letters, numbers, and symbols. Avoid using easily guessable information like birthdays or names.

**Two-Factor Authentication (2FA):** Enable 2FA whenever possible. It adds an extra layer of security by requiring you to enter a code sent to your phone or email.

**Phishing Awareness:** Be cautious of unsolicited emails or messages, especially those asking for personal information or urging immediate action. Verify the sender's identity and never click on suspicious links.

**Data Backups** Regularly back up your data to an external drive or cloud storage. In the event of a cyberattack, you won't lose valuable information.

**Employee Training:** Educate your team about cybersecurity best practices, from recognizing phishing attempts to creating secure passwords.

**Regular Audits:** Periodically assess your digital systems and networks for vulnerabilities. Consider hiring professionals for comprehensive security audits.

**MXAK's Commitment to Cybersecurity:** Our IT Department works tirelessly to ensure our systems and data remain secure. By staying vigilant and following best practices, we can all contribute to a safer maritime industry.

Remember, cybersecurity is not a one-time effort; it's an ongoing commitment. By implementing these tips and remaining vigilant, we can collectively navigate the digital waters securely. Stay safe out there!

## Navigating the Digital Waters: Your Guide to Cybersecurity

In today's interconnected world, cybersecurity is more vital than ever before. Whether you're a maritime industry professional, a tech enthusiast, or simply someone who uses the internet, safeguarding your digital presence is crucial. At MXAK, we take cybersecurity seriously, and we want to share some insights and tips to help you stay secure while navigating the digital seas.

### **The Importance of Cybersecurity**

In the maritime industry, just as in any other sector, cybersecurity is essential. As our reliance on technology grows, so does the risk of cyber threats. From ship management systems to communication networks, many aspects of modern maritime operations are now digital. Protecting sensitive data, ensuring safe communications, and preventing cyberattacks are paramount.

## **Rick's PacTracs Tip**

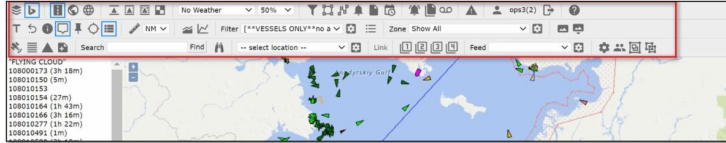


**Rick is MXAK's Senior  
Maritime Information**

### **"Where's my boat?"**

**Question:** I have too many icons on my toolbar in PACTRACS. Can I have some removed, I just want to see where my boat is and/or others?

Specialist and PacTracs expert. If you have any PacTracs questions, please don't hesitate to give him a call at 907-463-2607 or e-mail him at [rickspeck@mxak.org](mailto:rickspeck@mxak.org)



**Answer:** Yes, we can remove some or most of the icons on the toolbar on your login. Just send us an email with your name, login and icons you want removed and we can accommodate (like screenshot below).



As always, if you have any questions with PACTRACS don't hesitate to give us a call!

## USCG Public Comment



The U.S. Coast Guard is seeking input from the public to establish planning criteria for vessel response plans distinct to the Western Alaska and Prince William Sound Captain of the Port Zones.

In the Federal Register of December 4, 2023, under Docket No. USCG-2023-0824, the Coast Guard issued request for information (RFI) to collect opinions, ideas, recommendation, and concerns related to the mandate by Congress in the Don Young Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2022 to create vessel response planning criteria suited for the Western Alaska and Prince William Sound COTP zones.

The notice in the Federal Register for the RFI can be found [HERE](#). Public comments are due by March 4, 2024. Comments may be entered directly through the Federal Decision-Making Portal at <https://www.regulations.gov>.

[WWW.MXAK.ORG](http://WWW.MXAK.ORG)

Follow us on social media:



Marine Exchange of Alaska | 1050 Harbor Way, Juneau, AK 99801

[Unsubscribe mxakmedia@gmail.com](#)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by [edriccarrillo@mxak.org](mailto:edriccarrillo@mxak.org) powered by



Try email marketing for free today!