

Arctic & Western Alaska Area Committee's
Geographic Response Strategy Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Info

Meeting Date & Time

February 26, 2026, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Agenda

Time	Topic
1000	Opening Comments & Introductions from Chair/Co-Chair
1010	Site Evaluation Form
1020	Technical Submission Process
1030	*NEW* USCG Email for Submissions
1040	Distribution List
1045	Project Management of GRSs
1100	CIRCAC/Nuka Introduction
1105	Nuka Presentation (GRS Updates)
1130	Open Discussion
1155	Closing Remarks/Adjourn

Attendance

In person (JBER):

LCDR Amanda Faulkner (USCG)

LT Alison Dew (USCG)

CWO Ann Marie Borkowski (USCG)

Vinnie Catalano (CIRCAC)

Sierra Fletcher (Nuka Research)

Andrew Hartsig (Ocean Conservancy)

Ytamar Rodriguez (DEC)

Todd Paxson (CISPRI)

Josh Ingram (DEC)

Virtual:

Mike Donnellan (DEC)

Kimberley Maher (DEC)

Anna Carey (DEC)

Bernie Nowicki (DEC)

Byron Hayes (Marine Exchange)

Derek Samora (Chadux)

John Pulis (ACS)

Haley Griffin (Nuka)

Scott Joyce (EPA)

Olivia Norton (Nuka Research)

Jeremy Robida (PWSRCAC)

Key Points

1. Shift Toward Discussion-Based Meetings

- U.S. Coast Guard and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation leadership emphasized making meetings more interactive rather than updates/presentation-focused.
- Goal: Strengthen two-way communication with field practitioners and solicit expert input.
- Explicit invitation for operational feedback to improve process efficiency.

2. Site Evaluation Form – Clarification Needed

- Two versions of the GRS site evaluation form currently exist:

- Version on the DEC website
- A legacy/alternate version developed under prior leadership
- Confusion exists regarding:
 - Which version should be used
 - Whether both are required
 - How the form relates to the GIS/Field Maps submission workflow

DEC Clarification

- The **site evaluation form** is intended to *complement* (not duplicate) GIS submissions.
- Field Maps app captures site-specific GRS updates.
- The evaluation form documents contextual deployment information:
 - Personnel present
 - Sea state and tide
 - Duration
 - Tier 2 survey vs. Tier 3 deployment
 - Operational conditions not captured in GIS edits

3. Need for Process Clarity

Stakeholders (e.g., response organizations) indicated:

- They are flexible about process structure.
- Their primary need is clear, unambiguous direction.

Key theme: **Lack of procedural clarity creates confusion and inefficiency.**

4. Technical Submission Process

- A new Coast Guard email/distribution list has been created to resolve issues with a prior non-functional submission email.
- A stable distribution list is intended to mitigate turnover impacts within USCG staffing cycles.

5. Project Management & RCAC Engagement

- Planned discussion with Cook Inlet RCAC and Nuka Research tackling GRS update backlog for Cook Inlet specifically and AWA more generally.
 - Emphasis on ensuring subcommittee alignment and coordination.
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Critiques / Issues Raised

1. Process Ambiguity

- Confusion about:
 - Required forms
 - Sequence of submission
 - Relationship between GIS submissions and evaluation forms
- Previous assumption that GIS updates were sufficient proved incorrect.

Underlying Issue: Lack of documented, single-source-of-truth workflow.

2. Communication Gaps

- Changes to documentation requirements were not clearly or proactively communicated.
- Participants learned of additional requirements after investing effort into GIS submissions.

Risk: Erosion of stakeholder confidence and potential reduction in field validation participation.

3. Redundancy & Administrative Burden

- Potential perception that dual systems (GIS + paper form) are duplicative.
- Need to ensure the evaluation form adds real operational value [to administrative review process] rather than administrative friction.

4. Limited Agency Resource Allocation/Support for Project

- This is a fairly large, complex project and there do not seem to be sufficient resources allocated for completion in an efficient, timely manner.
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Outstanding Questions

1. **Which site evaluation form is authoritative?**
 - Website version?
 - Revised/legacy version?
 - Consolidated new version forthcoming?
 2. **Is the evaluation form mandatory for all Tier 2 and Tier 3 activities?**
 - Or only certain validation activities?
 3. **What is the formal submission workflow?**
 - Step-by-step:
 - Field Maps submission?
 - Evaluation form?
 - Email distribution list?
 - In what order?
 - With what deadlines?
 4. **How are submitted forms archived and tracked?**
 - Is there a centralized tracking mechanism?
 5. **Will written procedural guidance be issued?**
 - Single-page SOP?
 - Updated GRS guidance document?
 6. **How will process updates be communicated moving forward?**
 - Email?
 - Website update?
 - Formal policy memo?
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Parking Lot Issues (issues/ideas raised during the meeting for future consideration/discussion)

- Request GRS-specific permitting information for purposes of conducting GRS validations (may be different than permit requirements included in GRSs, which are response-focused).
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Action Items

For USCG / DEC

1. Clarify and Formalize the Submission Process

- Develop a written workflow describing:
 - Required documents
 - Sequence
 - Submission method
 - Applicability by activity type

2. Designate a Single Authoritative Evaluation Form

- Eliminate legacy ambiguity.
- Archive or remove outdated versions from public access.
- Consider fillable PDF form
- Consider Survey123 version for mobile applications (to complement Field Maps) for all-digital reporting/workflow option
- Consider add-on to Evaluation form (or standalone form) to capture specific proposed updates to GRSs currently relegated to Field Maps entry only (in case field worker voluntarily or involuntarily chooses not to use Field Maps).

3. Distribute Clear Communication

- Email stakeholders outlining:
 - Which form to use
 - When it is required

- Where to submit it
- Contact for questions

4. Validate That the Evaluation Form Adds Value

- Confirm that contextual data collected:
 - Supports after-action learning
 - Supports programmatic improvement
 - Is actually used in decision-making

5. Review, Refine, and Maintain Updated Subcommittee Distribution List

- Ensure continuity despite USCG personnel rotation.
- Moved to centralized distribution list overseen by Area Planners

6. Publish Project Management documentation to GRS SC webpage

7. Distribute meeting minutes within 1 week

For Subcommittee Members / Field Operators

1. Confirm current workflow being used internally.
 2. Identify friction points or redundant documentation burdens.
 3. Provide feedback on:
 - Site Evaluation Form
 1. Missing data fields
 2. Redundant fields
 3. Digital integration potential
 - Meeting materials desired for SC meetings to efficiently adjudicate proposed GRS updates (e.g., like 2021 Kodiak GRS Validation documents?)
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Overarching Themes

- **Governance clarity is more important than process complexity.**
- Field stakeholders are cooperative but require procedural certainty.
- Administrative friction risks undermining otherwise strong collaboration.
- Institutional continuity (especially with USCG turnover) must be structurally built into communication systems.