

MEET MOLLY MCCAMMON

REPRESENTING THE MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Recruited in 2004, Molly McCammon has represented the Municipality of Anchorage on the CIRCAC Board of Directors for 12 years, reporting to every Anchorage Mayor since George Wuerch, and serving as Board President from 2008 to 2009. As a Board Member, Molly has made it a goal to build a greater appreciation for Cook Inlet as a microcosm of all the issues that face Alaska, such as commerce, recreation, fishing, ports and harbors, subsistence, oil and gas development, alternative energy, tourism, and endangered species. Put simply, "You can drive to Homer and talk about every issue that's facing the state," she says.



Currently Executive Director of the Alaska Ocean Observing System, or AOOS, Molly grew up in the Mojave Desert, the daughter of a California Fish and Game warden. Following graduation from the University of California Berkeley with a degree in journalism, Molly moved to Fairbanks in 1973, planning to stay a year. One year later, she was exploring the Brooks Range - spending two months with the first group to float the entire Kongakut River. Migrating caribou, denning wolves, roaming bears and nesting birds were a life altering experience and she stayed.

Molly's first Alaska job was news director for KFAR Radio and TV in Fairbanks where she was hired on the spot at 21 years old with no experience. It helped that the job opened up because the news director left the state in disgust after the Trans-Alaska pipeline was approved. Her first day on the job she was greeted with 200 phone calls for mispronouncing "Tanana." Undeterred, Molly relished a job that allowed her to be nosy and ask questions of then Senators Ted Stevens and Mike Gravel, as well as the gubernatorial candidate Jay Hammond. Such close contact with elected officials would not have happened in California!

One job and experience led to another, and Molly moved on to programming a pilot project for rural satellite TV, ran a guiding business for backpackers and rafters, homesteaded in the Brooks Range (getting title to the land for the bargain price of \$2.50 an acre) and got involved in politics opposing a subsistence initiative on behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives. She followed other opportunities to Juneau as a legislative reporter for the Alaska Public Radio Network, Deputy Press Secretary for Governor Bill Sheffield, legislative lobbyist for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, , and Legislative Aide for the Alaska Legislature. She is proud to say that she staffed Democrat, Republican and Alaska Independence Party legislators, but all pro-rural Alaska.

Throughout her experiences, Molly developed an affinity for working on natural resource policy issues. At the urging of Charlie Cole, the Attorney General who negotiated the state's settlement following the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, Molly moved to Anchorage to serve as deputy of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council, before ultimately becoming its Executive Director for 10 years. Although Molly never thought about managing a major science policy program, she discovered that she really enjoyed

running things and promoting science to inform public policy. That science/policy connection drives Molly's work to this day.

Managing EVOS and high profile issues made Molly an obvious choice to develop the Alaska Ocean Observing System in 2003, where she has served as Executive Director since its inception. At AOOS Molly has promoted expansion of ocean observing infrastructure and information tools to meet the needs of Cook Inlet stakeholders. As a member and chair of CIRCAC's Environmental Monitoring Committee, Molly has initiated many important opportunities for CIRCAC and AOOS to partner on science and data information projects to inform public policy.

"This is one of CIRCAC's many strengths," she says. "The heart of CIRCAC's mission is to work with the oil industry for safe and environmentally sound development and CIRCAC does a good job."



Molly in her element

If she could have one wish, Molly would like to see a unified Cook Inlet monitoring program that knits together all of the individual pieces that are currently done separately. "We would have a much stronger "State of the Inlet" if we collectively keep track of what's happening in Cook Inlet," she says.

Molly has two sons in their 20s, both of whom are committed to Alaska. She always reminds them of the importance of building relationships. In her experience in Alaska, it's the relationships and the people she's gotten to know that have led her to her most fulfilling work.