

Meet Dan Urban, Public Member of Environmental Monitoring Committee



Like many before him, Dan was drawn to the Last Frontier by someone else. His lab partner at the University of Wisconsin had grown up in Alaska and talked about his love for the state. He made it clear to Dan he was going back as soon as he could and basically talked Dan into making it a destination too. After graduating college in 1974, Dan consulted the ride board and found someone going to Alaska in a VW bug, looking to share expenses and driving. With hardly any money but a healthy sense of adventure, Dan signed on. Once in Alaska, he

hitchhiked throughout the state and ultimately found a job on the pipeline as a Bull Cook, cleaning rooms.

And as is often the case, he fell in love with the state. Dan worked on the pipeline for two or three years and traveled, and ultimately went to work for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Dan has worked as a fishery biologist since 1981, having studied wildlife conservation in college. He worked seasonally for Fish and Game and continued feeding his travel habit in the winters. Dan retired from the State and went to work for the National Marine Fisheries Service in Kodiak where he's been working for the past twelve years, traveling throughout Alaska conducting crab and fish surveys.

Dan largely credits Liz Chiton, with whom he worked—and who represented the Kodiak Island Borough on CIRCAC's Board of Directors—with giving him the push to volunteer with CIRCAC. After attending a CIRCAC Board meeting in Kenai, Dan joined the Environmental Monitoring Committee and has served 10 years. "CIRCAC has been a real eye-opener. I've enjoyed learning more about what's going on in Cook Inlet, which seems like the forgotten oil industry in Alaska. But the challenges are so great—ice, traffic, platforms—it makes you realize what a risky venture it is," Dan said.

The EMC has been rewarding, teaching Dan more about the oil industry and what safeguards are in place, as well as giving him the opportunity to learn about the far-reaching success of projects such as Alaska ShoreZone. "That's been a learning experience for me," he said. "And I've gotten to meet fascinating people." Dan cited a 2018 EMC field trip to Kasitsna Bay Laboratory as superb and welcomed more opportunities. "I'm very interested in learning more about the [studies being conducted on marine snow](#) in particular and its potential effect on how oil behaves in Cook Inlet," he said.

Traveling is among Dan's favorite hobbies. He and his wife, Kim, have traveled to 45 different countries, most recently to Egypt (photo). They are keen to visit Madagascar next. He also enjoys music and plays the piano, and has been dabbling with oil paints and printmaking. Both he and his wife are contemplating retirement, which will afford them more time to indulge these interests and make meaningful contributions as volunteers.

Dan's been happy to bring his background as a fisheries biologist to the EMC as a way to keep our responsibilities to the fisheries in mind. Having worked so many years studying crab, he knows the devastating effects that oil settling to the ocean bottom would have on crab and their food supply. That's among the things that draw him to the EMC and why CIRCAC's support of the marine snow research is so important.