

## **Cook Inlet producers power Alaskan business**

By Curtis W. Thayer

Alaska is fortunate to have abundant natural resources that drive our economy in a number of ways. From tourism and recreational hunting and fishing, mining, maritime transportation, to oil and natural gas development, economic prosperity is brought about by the state's resources and the ingenuity of Alaska's business community. Within this broader landscape, in and of itself, and the Alaska Chamber is proud of the work by our members that make this region one of opportunity for all Alaskans.

The recent economic downturn has again highlighted the importance of companies who continue to invest in Alaska. In particular, independent energy companies have taken on a greater role in recent years, as the mix of energy companies in the state has shifted with changes in technology and strategy. The oil and gas industry is not only a significant source of state revenue and jobs for many Alaskan families, but it serves a critical role in producing the energy our communities depend upon throughout the year.

Hilcorp has been operating in Cook Inlet since they entered Alaska in 2011. The company's massive investments in the state have led to a revitalization of existing energy infrastructure throughout the Cook Inlet, averaging over \$150 million a year. These investments have been a critical factor in taking Anchorage, and many other Alaskan communities, from energy scarcity several years ago to one of energy abundance today.

Lately, Hilcorp has been the topic of much discussion, as they've recently had to manage operational challenges related to their Cook Inlet operations. While no one welcomes events like this, I would like to point out that these situations serve as an example of a company's capacity and attitude towards their host communities. In this regard, Hilcorp engaged and coordinated with regulators and the public to rectify the issues at hand as soon as conditions allowed workers to safely do so.

The company's response has been resolute through coordination with local, state and federal partners and regulators. It is indicative of their regard for the community, the environment, and the overall well being of the region, and we here in Alaska expect nothing less. Energy companies must abide by the highest regulatory standards if they want to conduct business in Cook Inlet's waters, and when incidents occur they are responsible for rapid remediation efforts.

Oil and natural gas produced in Cook Inlet goes on to power the marine transportation industry of the region. Local tug and barge companies, along with freight vessels all rely on energy produced in Cook Inlet to power their vessels. These maritime transportation services and their providers are then utilized by Cook Inlet's fishing industry to store and



transport the fish to customers. The cycle of commerce in the region is reliant upon all industries being good stewards and cooperating with one another.

Cook Inlet needs industries of all kinds to continue to do business and collaborate with one another if we are to extend the region's record of economic prosperity. The success of each industry is directly tied to the success of the others in the region. Responsible companies working together to solve challenges and conduct good business practices is key to a bright future for our community. Our members work hard to keep things running smoothly in Cook Inlet, and they learn from their mistakes when incidents occur. The legacy of Cook Inlet is one of economic success and responsible stewardship, and the businesses that operate in the area would like it to stay that way.

*Curtis W. Thayer is lifelong Alaskan and serves as president and CEO of the Alaska Chamber.*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Curtis W. Thayer' with a long horizontal flourish at the end.