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Railbelt Reliability Council Submits Application to the RCA

After years of effort, the Railbelt Reliability Council (RRC), has filed an application with the Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA) to become the Electric Reliability Organization (ERO) for the largest interconnected electric system in the state, serving Alaskans from Homer to Fairbanks.

“I am humbled to file this application on behalf of the diverse and dedicated group of stakeholders who comprise the RRC and the hundreds of thousands of Alaskans we collectively represent,” said Julie Estey, Director of External Affairs and Strategic Affairs with Matanuska Electric Association and Chair of the RRC. “With this submission we commit to continued collaboration, transparency, technical excellence, independence and inclusion as we work to meet the changing needs of the Railbelt electric system and the homes and businesses it serves.”

The Railbelt Reliability Council is a diverse consortium of stakeholders interested in the Railbelt electric system, including electric utilities, independent power producers, state agencies, consumer and environmental advocates and independent members. If certified by the RCA as the ERO, the RRC will establish and enforce clear rules of reliable operation for all entities connected to the electrical network to maintain the current high level of reliability for electric power consumers and protect the system against cyber-attacks, natural disasters and other threats. The RRC will also conduct a public integrated resource planning process for the entire Railbelt. The resulting Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) will ensure the system’s evolving infrastructure needs are contemplated on a regional basis and that the plan is informed by a variety of perspectives.

The RRC Implementation Committee, an informal group of volunteers, initially began work in July 2020 with the goal of forming the RRC as an ERO applicant. Throughout the 20-month process of developing this new organization, the Committee has been rooted in openness, collaboration, and technically strong work products that balance the diverse interests of the membership.

“The RRC Implementation Committee was a collective of almost 30 volunteers that spent thousands of hours drafting the documents that will facilitate regional planning and reliability of the state’s largest electric grid,” said Suzanne Settle, Vice President of Energy, Land and Resources for Cook Inlet Regional Corporation (CIRI) and RRC Vice Chair.

“Collectively, we are striving to generate synergies through regional planning that will ultimately lower the cost of electricity in support of a prosperous economy.”

Concurrent to the RRC effort, the Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA) developed regulations that provide oversight of the ERO. These new regulations primarily address ERO application, governance, and reporting requirements along with provisions to ensure the necessary processes and technical skills. The requirement to form an ERO for the Railbelt was created by the legislature through passage of Senate Bill 123 in 2020.

After more than a year and a half of pre-organizational meetings, the RRC Implementation Committee incorporated the RRC and the new corporation met for the first time on March 14 to install board members, elect officers and adopt corporate documents. On March 23, the RRC voted to approve and submit its ERO application to the RCA. The application can be found on the RCA website following this link: [Regulatory Commission of Alaska - Docket: E-22-001](https://www.rca.alaska.gov/docket/E-22-001).

“The concept of a collaborative structure that brings a variety of diverse perspectives together for the benefit of the entire region has been discussed for decades and we couldn’t be happier to achieve this critical milestone,” said Estey. “The RRC appreciates the RCA’s consideration of our application and, if approved, we stand ready to fulfill the critical mission of the state’s first ERO.”

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More information: <https://alaskapower.org/rrc/>