

Briefing for PWSRCAC Board of Directors – September 2026

ACTION ITEM

Sponsor: John Guthrie and the POVTS committee

Project number and name or topic: 8520 – Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts Phase 3

1. **Description of agenda item:** The Board is being asked to accept the report titled “Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts Phase 3” by Dr. Nicole Ziegler dated August 2026.

It is anticipated that if this report is accepted, Dr. Ziegler will seek professional publication of it. Therefore, she requests the Council not release the paper publicly until it has been peer reviewed, and accepted or rejected for publication.

2. **Why is this item important to PWSRCAC:** Seeking to identify and address various causes of miscommunication, this project will provide a comprehensive perspective by collecting information on the linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic needs and practices of native- and non-native-English speaking mariners in Prince William Sound. Both linguistic and pragmatic failures have frequently led to miscommunication during highly stressful, technical maneuvers, in which there is often very little time or space to correct initial misunderstandings, such as in the Cosco Busan allision with the San Francisco Bay Bridge. In these situations, confusion or misinterpretation of instructions or warnings is likely to intensify problems and difficulties, thus contributing to the occurrence of an accident. In recognition of the need for improved communication, a simplified and highly technical version of English was developed to serve as the “lingua franca” for mariners of varying linguistic backgrounds and proficiencies; however, communication problems persist.

3. **Previous actions taken by the Board on this item:**

Meeting	Date	Action
Board	1/27/22	Approval of project to begin in FY2023.
Board	9/22/22	Authorization of a sole source contract with Dr. Ziegler through Sky Island Language Learning Research in an amount not to exceed \$55,000 for Project 8520 – Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts.
Board	3/27/24	Acceptance of Phase 1 white paper titled “Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts” by Dr. Nicole Ziegler.
XCOM	1/15/25	Acceptance of Phase 2 report and final report covering Phase 1 and 2 by Dr. Nicole Ziegler.
XCOM	1/15/25	Authorization of a sole source contract with Dr. Ziegler through Sky Island Language Learning Research in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 for Project 8520 – Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts.

4. **Summary of policy, issues, support, or opposition:** A better understanding of maritime English between ship crews and native-English speakers is an area of interest to the Council in terms of better addressing the human factors that contribute to accidents.

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5. **Committee Recommendation:** The POVTS Committee reviewed this work and recommended that the report be accepted by the Board at the committee meeting on August 13, 2026.
6. **Relationship to LRP and Budget:** The work associated with Phase 3 of this project was included in the FY2026 budget under contract 8520.26.01 in an amount not to exceed \$50,000. Remaining FY2026 funds were carried over into the FY2027 budget to complete this contract.
7. **Action Requested of the Board of Directors:** Accept the report titled "Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts Phase 3" by Dr. Ziegler as meeting the requirements of contract 8520.26.01, and allow Dr. Ziegler to seek professional publication of the paper.
8. **Alternatives:** None recommended.
9. **Attachments:** Draft report titled "Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts Phase 3" by Dr. Ziegler.