

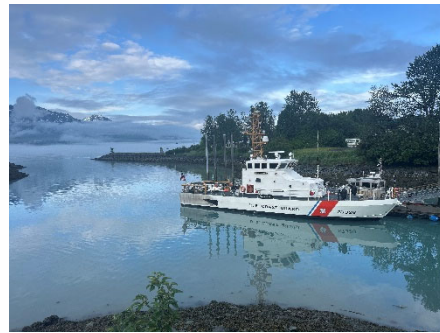


**Valdez Ports and Harbors Staff Report To:** Valdez Ports and Harbors Commission  
**From:** Director of Ports and Harbors  
**Prepared by:** Director Jeremy Talbott and Staff  
**Date:** August 6, 2025  
**Reporting Period:** April - July 2025

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## 1. Director's Overview

The summer season has been very active and productive for the Valdez Ports and Harbors Department. Staff have been managing high visitor volumes, closing and advancing capital projects, and participating in significant regional and national engagements. Cruise ship activity is up, several projects have reached completion, and we are progressing through grant submissions and planning for long-term improvements. Work is also ongoing for the upcoming 2026 department budget and planning in alignment with the Commission, City Administration, and City Council goals.



## 2. Operations Update



- **Operations:** Staff had a busy start to the summer season, with Cruise vessel traffic up and fishing optimism high. We are over halfway through the season and the initial passenger and fish numbers are well above last year. Updated numbers will be shared at the end of the Quarter.
- **“Platinum” Clean Harbor Certification:** The Harbor Team celebrated becoming the first harbor in Alaska to receive Platinum Clean Harbor Certification.
- **Airport:** RAVN Airlines gave notice of operational closure and lease termination. Valdez Adventure Alliance also terminated their lease at the airport. Staff are working to fill these vacant locations.
- **Public Interface:** A few visitor complaints were received regarding restroom cleanliness. Newly promoted Shop Foreman Russell Coxey and his team have been

working diligently with contractors to ensure a first-class experience across waterfront restroom facilities.

- **Cash Handling Policy:** Harbormaster Sarah Von Barga updated the department cash handling policy and ensured all staff were trained and compliant.
- **Community Interaction:** On 5/13, Assistant Harbormaster AJ Keeton assisted NOAA in towing a deceased yearling humpback whale for necropsy, drawing significant community interest.



### 3. Capital Projects & Infrastructure

- **H-K Dock Reconstruction:** Reached substantial completion in June. The State of Alaska Harbor Grant associated with this project has been closed out with a final grant reimbursement total of \$4,996,612.
- **Port Docks:** Port Operations Manager Andrew Doherty executed a repair contract to fix failed “Keeper Eyes”. Director Talbott submitted a temporary land use application with the State of Alaska Department of Transportation for a temporary bollard on the State Ferry Terminal Property to support cruise ship tie-up during planning for long-term dock redesign.

- **Rescue Ladder Damage:** SRVS reported damage to 6 rescue ladders at the VCT. Staff are working to include replacements in the City Capital Projects list.
- **New Equipment:** The Port received a new Volvo Loader on 5/15 and a new Water Wagon trailer for dust control and bird clean-up.



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#### 4. Safety & Compliance

- **Training Compliance:** The department is 100% compliant with all the required annual training three months ahead of the deadline and has 450 plus days' holiday free.
- **Safe Boating Week:** A resolution marking National Safe Boating Week was passed by the Valdez City Council on 5/14.

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#### 5. Customer & Community Engagement

- **Commission Binders:** Sarah Cox completed updates and delivered new Commission Binders.
- **Cruise Season Kickoff:** On April 16, staff met with Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska and Premiere to plan for the 2025 season, including operations for a compromised Kelsey Dock and a 4th of July cruise ship visit.
- **New Cruise Lines:** Following meetings at the SEA Trade Conference in April, four new cruise lines (Azamara, Ritz Carlton, Hurtigruten, and Explora Journeys) will call in Valdez over the next two seasons.



- **Cruise Season Start:** Viking Vessel Venus made its inaugural port call on May 2, opening the 2025 season.
- **Site Visits:** Azamara Cruise Line's Joni Lunsfors visited on May 16 to prepare for the 2026 season. Holland America Line is coordinating a community leaders tour for early September.
- **Decommissioning Event:** Harbor staff supported the USCG decommissioning event for the Cutter Liberty on 2/29.
- **Scholarship:** Director Talbott on behalf of the Alaska Association of Harbormasters awarded a \$2,000 scholarship (plus \$2,000 matched by Moffatt & Nichol) to VHS senior Joshua Duong on 5/5.
- **Community Tours:** General Saxe and National Guard personnel were given a port tour on 5/8, focusing on emergency management.



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## 6. Financial Highlights

- **Cruise Tax Revenue:** Received \$127,600 in shared cruise ship tax from the State on 3/17.
- **Federal Disaster Funding:** Received \$62,223 in Pink Salmon Disaster Funding.

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## 7. Looking Ahead

- **Kelsey Dock Planning:** City Administration and the Port and Harbor Team are actively pursuing a PIDP grant of up to \$4 million for design work at the Kelsey Dock and Sea Otter site. Submission due September 10th.
- **Joint Work Session:** Preparing with the Commission and City Council to align 2026 goals and budget planning.
- **Continuity of Operations Plan:** Kicked off on 5/15. The plan will aid emergency response and federal grant readiness. Draft expected this fall.
- **Coast Guard Cutter Blacktip:** Arrived in Valdez in July. A Home-Porting Ceremony is scheduled for **August 22** at the Coast Guard Dock. Interested Commissioners should contact Director Talbott.

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## 8. Legislative & Intergovernmental Affairs

- **Washington, D.C. Trip:** In early April, Director Talbott attended the 2025 Spring Lobby Efforts in DC:
  - Met with Senators Murkowski and Sullivan and Representative Begich.
  - Two meetings with DOT: discussed Essential Air Service and port infrastructure grant opportunities, including a Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) grant.
  - Emphasized NOAA funding priorities, Seal Rock buoy issues, and Coast Guard home porting.
  - Met with John Rayfield from the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Since that time, an additional \$20 billion in Coast Guard funding has been secured, with potential for assets to be stationed in Valdez.
- **Collaboration with PWS College:** Opened discussion on maritime workforce development.
- **Derelict Vessel Fund:** Unfortunately, the Alaska State Derelict Vessel Fund was defunded for FY2026.
- **Letter of Support:** Director Talbott submitted a support letter for Economic Development's Hometown T-Mobile Grant on 6/13.
- **Army Corps Meeting:** On 6/24, met with representatives to discuss the transport of low-grade decommissioned radioactive waste through Valdez.



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## 9. Other Items

- **City Rebranding:** The rebranding project is complete, and implementation is visible throughout public-facing signage and materials.
- **Trespass Policy:** Drafted on 8/1; currently under internal review.



- **Salmon Industry:** Optimism is high as the season progresses, with better performance compared to 2024. Full report to follow.
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## 10. Commissioner Engagement

- Commissioner Ed Day visited the Port Office on 5/6 to discuss Kelsey Dock operations and the salmon season.
- Commissioners interested in attending upcoming events (such as the Cutter Blacktip Home-Porting Ceremony or Holland America Vessel Tour) should coordinate with Director Talbott or Economic Development Director Martha Barberio.
- Joint Work Session with the Valdez City Council is Scheduled for 5:30pm on Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup>
- Availability for September Ports and Harbors Meeting? The next Regular Meeting will be September 15<sup>th</sup>.