



City of Valdez – Ports & Harbors Department

Operational Improvement Memo Submitted: October 2025

GOAL 5: Focus on Seasonal Operations and Continuous Improvement

Objective:

Use peak summer operational periods to evaluate airport, harbor, and port performance and recommend improvements based on observed challenges and user input.

I. Overview

Each year, during the peak summer operational period (July–September), the Ports & Harbors Department evaluates facility performance across the Port, Small Boat Harbor, Commercial Harbor, and Airport. This review identifies operational challenges, collects user and stakeholder feedback, and develops recommendations to improve efficiency, safety, and customer experience.

This memo represents the annual summary of observations and recommendations for the 2025 operational season and provides guidance for planning and budget development for 2026.

II. Identified Operational Challenges (Q3 Review)

Harbor Operations:

- Seasonal debris accumulation within the Small Boat Harbor continues to pose challenges for navigation and vessel launch haul. Staffing shortages limited debris removal frequency fortunately the debris were not at a record setting level and have experienced a “Normal” level of debris.
- Shortage of available seasonal maintenance employees (6–7 unfilled positions) impacted the ability to perform consistent dock and debris cleanup.
- Portable restroom and restroom security challenges identified at both harbors.
- Increased congestion and limited hours of operation at the Crowley fuel docks during July and August created delays for commercial and recreational vessels.

Port Operations:





- Cruise ship mooring at Kelsey Dock continue to temporarily displace large tenders, increasing congestion within the inner harbor.
- Events and cargo operations performed smoothly, but staff noted port closures during simultaneous activities that included dangerous cargo.

Airport Operations:

- Snow removal and janitorial contracts remain stable; the airline carries are changing out from RAVN to Reeve.

III. User and Stakeholder Feedback (Collected August–October)

- Users consistently praised harbor staff professionalism and responsiveness.
- Multiple users cited the condition of the launch ramps as a major concern; the City continues to lobby the State for replacement funding.
- Feedback identified a need for improved lighting at fish cleaning stations.
- Requests were received for a pressure washer checkout program, card-entry restroom systems, and increased dock cart distribution.
- Commercial operators requested consideration for net cleaning hose access and fueling access improvements.

IV. Recommendations for Next Season (2026)

1. Debris Management:

- Implement a formal debris tracking and removal plan, with scheduled maintenance checks at high-accumulation areas (launch ramp, harbor entrance).
- Prioritize recruitment and cross-training of seasonal staff for debris and dock maintenance.

2. Restroom and Security Improvements:

- Install key card access for Commercial Harbor restrooms, laundry, and equipment use.
- Evaluate cost-benefit of seasonal portable restroom placement.



3. Launch Ramp and Infrastructure:

- Continue to advocate for State funding and initiate work once approved.
- Install no fishing signs on the launch ramps.

4. Fueling and Operational Coordination:

- Encourage Crowley to ensure both fuel docks operate simultaneously during peak months.

5. Airport Operations:

- Improve coordination with Airport Management to update and share seasonal rental car and operational information with the public. We will place links on the City web page for current information. *(We have confirmed that our current rental car operations are open year round and available.)*

V. Conclusion

The 2025 operational season demonstrated resilience and professionalism across all divisions despite staffing shortages and infrastructure limitations. The feedback received underscores strong public confidence in staff performance and highlights key areas for continued investment: infrastructure modernization, safety enhancements, and seasonal staffing stability.

Implementation of the above recommendations will guide planning and funding efforts through 2026 and support the City's goal of providing safe, efficient, and customer-focused Port, Harbor, and Airport operations.

Prepared by:

Jeremy Talbott

Director, Ports & Harbors

City of Valdez