



City of Valdez

212 Chenega Ave.
Valdez, AK 99686

Meeting Agenda Ports and Harbor Commission

Thursday, August 14, 2025

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Special Meeting

REGULAR AGENDA - 6:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND CHAIR PRO TEMPORE

IV. PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. [Review and Formal Recommendation to the Valdez City Council in support of the Resolution to Rename the Valdez Container Terminal to the Ryan J. Sontag Valdez Container Terminal](#)
2. [2025-2026 Ports & Harbors Commission Goals and Meeting Calendar](#)

VI. REPORTS

1. [Valdez Ports and Harbors Staff Report](#)

VII. COMMISSION BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

VIII. ADJOURNMENT



Legislation Text

File #: 25-0347, **Version:** 1

ITEM TITLE:

Review and Formal Recommendation to the Valdez City Council in support of the Resolution to Rename the Valdez Container Terminal to the Ryan J. Sontag Valdez Container Terminal

SUBMITTED BY: Jeremy Talbott, Ports & Harbors Director on behalf of Honorable Bill Walker 11th Governor of Alaska

FISCAL NOTES:

Expenditure Required: N/A

Unencumbered Balance: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

Commission motion to approve the attached resolution recommending that the Valdez City Council formally rename the Valdez Container Terminal to the “Ryan J. Sontag Valdez Container Terminal”, and a recommendation for Valdez City Council adoption.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

The purpose of this agenda item is to present to the Ports and Harbor Commission a draft resolution for review, discussion, and formal recommendation to the Valdez City Council regarding the proposed renaming of the Valdez Container Terminal in honor of the late Ryan J. Sontag.

Following a formal request by former Alaska Governor Bill Walker, family, and strong public support, this resolution recognizes Mr. Sontag’s lifelong contributions to the Port of Valdez, the maritime industry, and the community at large. The resolution proposes that the facility be officially renamed the Ryan J. Sontag Valdez Container Terminal.

Mr. Sontag’s maritime career spanned over 40 years, including critical work in post-earthquake reconstruction, Trans-Alaska Pipeline construction, the Exxon Valdez oil spill response, and three decades of service with North Star Terminal & Stevedore Company at the container terminal itself.

Additionally, Mr. Sontag served on the Valdez Transportation Commission and City Council, exemplifying commitment to both maritime operations and civic leadership.

This item seeks Commission approval of the accompanying resolution, and a formal recommendation to forward the resolution to the Valdez City Council for official adoption.

Bill Walker
2234 Kisse Court
Anchorage, AK 99517
wmw.alaska@gmail.com
(907) 231-7444

August 4, 2025

Honorable Mayor Fleming and City Council Members

I recently had the honor of giving the eulogy for a man who demonstrated time and again his love for Valdez, Ryan J. Sontag. In preparation for delivering Ryan's eulogy, I learned much from the Sontag family about Ryan, even though I first met Ryan in 1961.

Born in Valdez, he had the distinction of living in Dayville, the Old Town and the New Town of Valdez. Having attended school in Dayville and then in Valdez, Ryan spent every year of his adult life in Valdez up until the need for closer proximity to additional medical services, he and his wife Sue moved to Anchorage.

Following Ryan's service to our country in the Navy in Vietnam, Ryan returned home to Valdez and never left.

What is most telling of his commitment to Valdez is that after the devastating 1964 earthquake, while we saw many families leave Valdez never to return, not the Sontags. He lost two uncles on the dock during the quake. Ryan, working alongside his dad Herman Sontag, working with the Army Corps of Engineers, built a desperately needed temporary dock in Old Town post-quake. With our entire waterfront wiped out, that temporary dock was a lifesaver.

During the TAPS construction, Ryan worked long hours on the dock to help unload approximately 500 miles of 48" pipe. He also worked as a tug boat captain for many years.

In 1980, Ryan went to work for North Star Terminal & Stevedore Company, where he remained until his retirement 30 years later.

Ryan's work at the Valdez Container Terminal during the Exxon Valdez oil spill cleanup operations was nothing short of amazing. The pressure put on the Valdez Container Terminal was unprecedented and Ryan handled it masterfully.

Honorable Mayor Fleming and City Council Members

August 4, 2025

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Ryan served his community as a longstanding member of the Transportation Commission and on the City Council.

It is with this backdrop of a great man who devoted his life to serving Valdez and worked in every capacity on the docks in Valdez, that I request that you consider renaming the Valdez Container Terminal the Ryan J. Sontag Dock.

I also wanted to thank each of you for your role in guiding Valdez as elected officials. Valdez is a better community because of your stepping forward to serve this place we all love.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Bill Walker

11th Governor of Alaska

CC: Valdez City Manager Nathan Duval

Valdez City Clerk Sheri Pierce

Port Director Jeremy Talbott

Ports and Harbor Commission

CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA

RESOLUTION # 25-XX

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA, A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA, RENAMING THE VALDEZ CONTAINER TERMINAL TO THE “RYAN J. SONTAG VALDEZ CONTAINER TERMINAL” IN HONOR OF HIS LIFETIME OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY AND THE MARITIME INDUSTRY

WHEREAS, Ryan J. Sontag was born in Valdez and remained a lifelong resident and servant of the community, with deep ties to Dayville, Old Town, and New Town Valdez; and

WHEREAS, following honorable service in the United States Navy during the Vietnam War, Mr. Sontag returned to Valdez and played a vital role in the reconstruction of the City’s port infrastructure after the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake, including working alongside his father, Herman Sontag, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to construct a temporary dock critical to restoring maritime access; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sontag’s worked long hours unloading pipe during the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) construction and his many years as a tugboat captain helped build and sustain the port infrastructure that is vital to Valdez’s economy; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sontag played a critical role in managing operations at the Valdez Container Terminal during the Exxon Valdez oil spill response—one of the most demanding times in Alaska’s maritime history—demonstrating leadership, commitment, and calm under pressure; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sontag worked for more than 30 years at the Valdez Container Terminal for North Star Terminal & Stevedore Company, earning the respect of his peers, the maritime industry, and the broader Valdez community; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his maritime work, Mr. Sontag served the City of Valdez as a member of the Valdez Transportation Commission and the Valdez City Council, further contributing to the city’s civic life and governance; and

WHEREAS, the Valdez Ports and Harbors Commission has passed a resolution recommending the renaming of the Valdez Container Terminal to the “Ryan J. Sontag Valdez Container Terminal” as a meaningful and enduring tribute to his service and legacy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA, that the Valdez Container Terminal shall hereby be officially renamed the "Ryan J. Sontag Valdez Container Terminal", in recognition of Mr. Sontag's lifelong dedication to the City, its port operations, and the maritime industry.

Section 1. The Valdez City Manager is directed to oversee the implementation of appropriate signage, recognition, and public communication regarding this renaming, and to coordinate with the Sontag family for any commemorative events or installations.

PASSED AND APPROVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA, this _____ day of _____, 2025

CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA

Dennis Fleming, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sheri L. Pierce, MMC, City Clerk



Legislation Text

File #: 25-0352, **Version:** 1

ITEM TITLE:

2025-2026 Ports & Harbors Commission Goals and Meeting Calendar

SUBMITTED BY: Jeremy Talbott, Ports & Harbors Director

FISCAL NOTES:

Expenditure Required: N/A

Unencumbered Balance: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

Motion to approve the final draft of the 2025-2026 Ports & Harbors Commission Goals and Goal-Focused Meeting Calendar, and to direct staff to prepare them for presentation to City Council at the August 19, 2025, Joint Work Session.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

Background:

The Ports & Harbors Commission has worked with staff over the past several months to develop a set of six strategic goals for the 2025-2026 planning period. These goals address Commission commitment and meeting consistency, annual revenue review, management of the Waterfront Master Plan, alignment with City strategic and economic plans, seasonal operations and continuous improvement, and safety and congestion reduction at Port and Harbor facilities.

A goal-focused meeting calendar, running from August 2025 through December 2026, has also been prepared to align Commission agenda items with the adopted goals and the

Requested Action:

Approve the final draft of the 2025-2026 Ports & Harbors Commission Goals and the accompanying Goal-Focused Meeting Calendar as presented, and direct staff to prepare and deliver these items in a formal presentation to the Valdez City Council during the Joint Work Session scheduled for August 19, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. City's budget, planning, and operational cycles.



Valdez Ports & Harbors Commission Goals (2025–2026)

Final Draft – For Approval August 14, 2025

GOAL 1: Strengthen Commission Commitment and Meeting Consistency

Objective: Restore meeting regularity, affirm the commitment of each commissioner, and institutionalize a clear timeline for Commission business aligned with the City’s operational and planning calendar.

Work Plan:

- Maintain monthly meetings (target 1st or 3rd Monday, excluding major holidays).
- Establish annual Ports & Harbors Commission work session to set goals, and an annual work session with City Council to review goals.
- Develop annual meeting calendar and agenda themes aligned with City budget, planning, and seasonal operations.

Performance Indicators:

- Minimum of 10 meetings held annually.
- Annual goals adopted by Q3.
- Meeting calendar and agenda timeline approved by Q1.

GOAL 2: Implement an Annual Revenue Review

Objective: Ensure consistent evaluation of Port and Harbor revenue streams, including tariff rates, usage trends, and opportunities for enhanced revenue generation to support long-term infrastructure, strategic goals, and service needs.

Work Plan:

- Phase I: Revenue Analysis (Jan–Mar 2026)
 - January: Staff presents annual revenue breakdown and comparisons.
 - February: Commission reviews tariff, fees, leases, services.
 - March: Identify targets for revenue improvements.
- Phase II: Recommendation & Budget Alignment (Apr–Jun 2026)



- April: Develop revenue recommendations.
- May: Submit recommendations to City Administration.
- June-August: Review responses from Council/Manager.

Performance Indicators:

- Annual revenue report reviewed.
- Recommendations completed by end of Q2.
- Strategic trends and long-term service needs addressed.

GOAL 3: Manage the Waterfront Master Plan by Prioritizing Infrastructure and Projects

Objective: Keep the Waterfront Master Plan actionable by focusing on infrastructure preservation and implementing high-priority projects.

Work Plan:

- Conduct annual review of plan progress (Q4).
- Evaluate staff-generated small works project list before Q3.
- Review City Capital Improvement Project (CIP) list in Q2.
- Recommend infrastructure priorities aligned with the Master Plan and Strategic Plan.

Performance Indicators:

- Waterfront Plan reviewed annually.
- Prioritized project list submitted before CIP deadline.
- Infrastructure gaps and opportunities documented.
- Ensure plan is updated every 5-7 years.

GOAL 4: Align Commission Activities with Strategic and Economic Plans

Objective: Ensure Commission actions align with the Valdez Comprehensive Plan, Economic Development Plan, and Council priorities through active monitoring and timely recommendations.



Work Plan:

- Cross-reference Commission initiatives with City strategic plans during work sessions.
- Invite Planning and Economic Development staff to participate in Q2–Q3 meetings.
- Submit a brief alignment report with Commission goals to City Council by Q3.

Performance Indicators:

- Annual alignment report submitted.
- At least one joint session or update held with Planning/Econ Dev staff.
- At least one new initiative supported by existing plans.

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.

Work Plan:

- Identify Q3 operational challenges (July–September).
- Schedule post-season review in October.
- Recommend improvements for next season during Q4.

Performance Indicators:

- Operational improvement memo submitted by November.
- User/stakeholder feedback documented annually.
- At least two new efficiency or safety recommendations proposed.

GOAL 6: Increase Safety and Decrease Congestion in Port and Harbor Facilities

Objective: Address navigation safety and congestion issues in the Valdez Harbors and Ports – especially during the busy summer fishing and visitor season. Advance infrastructure solutions such as the Sea Otter Dock to ease large vessel presence in the North Harbor Basin and to have alternate locations for cruise dockings. Engage stakeholders to address current large vessel safety challenges and near misses.



Work Plan:

- Phase I: Assessment (Q2 2026)
 - Gather feedback from staff, vessel operators, and Prince William Sound Safety Committee.
 - Identify congestion trends and dock conflicts.
 - Focus on cruise-related displacement of tenders into harbor areas.
- Phase II: Strategic Infrastructure Advocacy (Q3–Q4 2026)
 - Support Sea Otter Dock project development.
 - Recommend vessel traffic flow improvements and signage enhancements.
 - Collaborate with Community Development and Economic Development on design and funding strategies (grants).

Performance Indicators:

- Safety/congestion assessment report completed.
- Two stakeholder engagement sessions held.
- Formal recommendation for Sea Otter Dock project submitted.



Valdez Ports & Harbors Commission Goal-Focused Meeting Calendar (Aug 2025 – Dec 2026)

| Month | Goal-Focused Agenda Topics |
|----------------|--|
| August 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 1: Annual Commission work session to set/confirm goals- GOAL 4: Prepare for joint Council work session |
| September 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 5: Begin post-season planning for operational improvements- GOAL 6: Gather stakeholder feedback on congestion and safety |
| October 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 5: Post-season operational review- GOAL 3: Annual Waterfront Master Plan review- GOAL 6: Finalize safety and congestion assessment report |
| November 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 5: Finalize operational improvement recommendations- GOAL 1: Draft Commission calendar and agenda themes for next year |
| December 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 1: Approve upcoming year's goals and meeting schedule- No regular meeting unless needed |
| January 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 2: Staff presents annual revenue breakdown & rate comparison study- GOAL 2: Begin Annual Revenue Review – tariff, fees, leases, services |
| February 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 2: Continue Annual Revenue Review |



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|----------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 2: Discuss potential rate adjustments- GOAL 3: Review prior year small works project closeouts |
| March 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 2: Finalize revenue recommendations for Council/City Administration- GOAL 6: Review winter safety and congestion observations |
| April 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 4: Align Commission activities with Strategic & Economic Plans – initial review- GOAL 3: Begin Waterfront Master Plan annual review preparation |
| May 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 4: Continue alignment review with Strategic & Economic Plans- GOAL 3: Review preliminary CIP project list for waterfront priorities |
| June 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 3: Finalize prioritized CIP recommendations- GOAL 4: Submit alignment report with Commission goals to City Council- GOAL 4: Joint work session with City Council prior to annual retreat |
| July 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 5: Seasonal operational monitoring – peak period- GOAL 6: Identify congestion and maneuverability issues during fishing & cruise season |
| August 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 1: Annual Commission work session to set/confirm goals- GOAL 6: Mid-season safety and congestion review |
| September 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 5: Begin post-season planning for operational improvements |



| | |
|---------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 6: Gather stakeholder feedback on congestion and safety |
| October 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 5: Post-season operational review- GOAL 3: Annual Waterfront Master Plan review- GOAL 6: Finalize safety and congestion assessment report |
| November 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 5: Finalize operational improvement recommendations- GOAL 1: Draft Commission calendar and agenda themes for next year |
| December 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GOAL 1: Approve upcoming year's goals and meeting schedule |



Legislation Text

File #: 25-0353, **Version:** 1

ITEM TITLE:

Valdez Ports and Harbors Staff Report

SUBMITTED BY: Jeremy Talbott, Ports and Harbors Director

FISCAL NOTES:

Expenditure Required: N/A

Unencumbered Balance: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

Report only, no action required.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

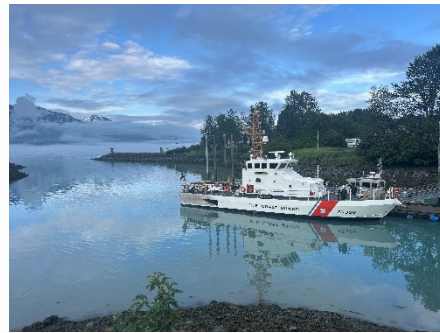
Report Attached



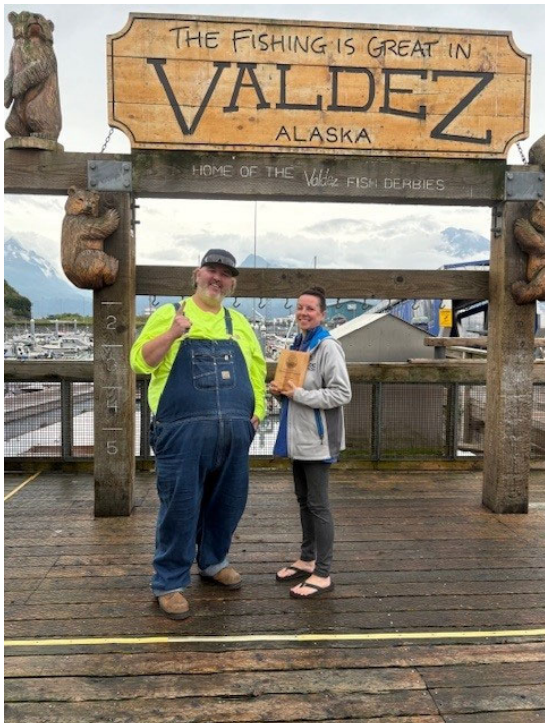
Valdez Ports and Harbors Staff Report To: Valdez Ports and Harbors Commission
From: Director of Ports and Harbors
Prepared by: Director Jeremy Talbott and Staff
Date: August 6, 2025
Reporting Period: April - July 2025

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.



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.

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.



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.

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.

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.



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 19th
- Availability for September Ports and Harbors Meeting? The next Regular Meeting will be September 15th.