

Anchorage port seeks more visibility

By BERT TARRANT, Editor
Journal of Commerce
How about transcendental meditation?

Conscience raising is one of the main things Anchorage Port director Bill McKinney would like to do for consumers, taxpayers and businesses alike in southcentral Alaska.

"We want to make the port known to more people and its impact on them in their daily lives," says McKinney, "from the housewife who take a can of soup off the grocery store shelf on up, everyone is directly impacted by the Port of Anchorage."

"We don't create trade, we only serve it," he added. "The taxpayer and the consumer create the need and the shipping companies seek to meet the demand."

With the dependency of southcentral Alaska (all of the state, for that matter) on goods coming from Outside, the port is the vital link between consumer needs on the one hand and the producers of the goods and carriers on the other.

Fortunately, the Port of Anchorage is meeting that need

quite nicely, thank you.

At least for the time being, that is. "Our single biggest problem is adequate land for staging areas," McKinney says. "Development of Lot 12 as a staging area for Terminal No. 1 should be complete by July 1, adding seven acres. We look to add another seven acres for staging in the transit area and we are negotiating with the military for another 14 acres -- and that's about our limit in this location."

Although the port's master plan projects it will be able to handle the demand through the end of the century (16 years away), McKinney notes the port is already two years ahead of projections in terms of volume.

The port topped 2 million tons in 1983 -- the first time it's done that since trans-Alaska pipeline construction days -- on the way to recording a 13.6 percent increase over 1982's tonnage handle of 1.76 million tons.

"Although the volume of bulk petroleum has been steadily declining since construction of the Nikiski petroleum products pipeline from the Kenai Penin-

sula to Anchorage, we have been more than able to make up the difference in the increases of general cargo volume," he says.

That increase is an increase that is more than just counting tons -- general cargo handling brings in more revenue per ton than bulk petroleum.

Interestingly enough, 1983 marked the first year since 1975 that the bulk petroleum volume recorded an increase over the previous year; 1983's handle of 394,576 tons was some 29.4 percent over 1982's volume.

"Growth-wise, over the past few years, the port has been doing quite well," the port chief says. "Tonages have been growing at 10 percent plus per year and revenues have been up 12-13 percent per year over the past two years."

In addition to burgeoning demand, the Port of Anchorage -- as of late last year -- is playing by a new set of rules.

"Last year we changed from being a branch of general government in the municipality to being a utility," McKinney said, "that means we have to not only live on our revenues

(which we'd been doing all along), but now we also have to be able to put some away for our capital improvements program."

That means the port can no longer act simply as a break-even operation. "Now we have to balance keeping rates as

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Anchorage Daily News

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Surveyors of the sea

Years spent mapping Cook Inlet nearing end

By ANDREW PERALA

Daily News reporter

Rick Hastings has spent the last eight summers working on a job he loves -- mapping the muddy bottom of Cook Inlet.

A short, tanned seaman, Hastings is the senior survey technician on the 231-foot hydrographic survey ship Rainier.

"We've been surveying the bottom of Cook Inlet for the last 14 years," Hastings said. "And we're almost done."

Two years from now, all the information the NOAA crew has collected will be available to the public as nautical maps essential to safe sailing and shipping.

The Rainier, currently docked at the Port of Anchorage, is one of three National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) ships that measure the depths of waters near the U.S. coastline. The vessel played host to nearly 300 local residents Saturday in an open house, which continues today from noon to 4 p.m.

The 65 men and women onboard the Rainier do the basic research for coastal charts -- the roadmaps of the sea that are essential equipment for every sailor.

The charts show the depth of the water in fathoms -- the six-foot units of measure that are to sailors what signposts are to automobile drivers.

"We make the best charts in the world," said Richard Permenter, executive officer of the Rainier. "Our job is to find the depths and the precise location of those depths."

To accomplish that task, the crew of the Rainier uses four 27-foot aluminum boats that cruise in long arcs from the Rainier. The arcs are called sounding lines. State-of-the-art fathometers measure the depth of the water along the sounding lines.

The location of each fathometer reading is then verified with surveying instruments from the shoreline. One surveying instrument, the tellurometer, can measure distances up to 20 miles to within 1/100th of a foot.

"We use standards of tenths of a millimeter of accuracy," said Steve Konrad, who is in charge of the shore surveying parties. The tellurometer is the only instrument onboard that works in feet, he said. The others are calibrated in meters.

Information from the fathometers and surveying instruments are then fed into

Mapping Cook Inlet near end

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most likely to run into trouble." When the Rainier leaves Anchorage on Tuesday, the ship will chart the waters around the Barren Islands, near the tip of the Kenai Peninsula, which have not been re-charted since 1931.

The crew of the Rainier will meticulously follow the coastline into each bay, around each point and over each tidal flat. In about two years, the new charts of Cook Inlet should be complete and available to the public.

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PORT OF ANCHORAGE TONNAGE 1979 - 1983

Commodity	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Freight Nos.	2,324	2,764	6,395	22,128	15,812
Cement - Bulk	21,423	18,836	32,497	63,340	46,378
Coal - Bulk	—	27,754	—	—	—
Insulation	—	1	1	—	—
Iron or Steel	5,752	10,633	25,373	30,292	59,578
Lumber	34	355	2,279	14,316	26,570
Petroleum NOS	1,427	3,021	2,166	3,929	3,831
Tranship. Cargo	—	38,390	27,115	36,855	27,337
Vans, Flats & Containers	934,125	1,043,004	1,154,060	1,253,190	1,390,396
Vehicles	28,626	29,414	39,829	37,626	42,460
Total General	993,711	1,174,172	1,289,715	1,461,676	1,612,362
Cargo					
Petroleum Bulk	678,008	589,580	365,997	304,914	394,576
TOTAL	1,671,719	1,763,752	1,655,712	1,766,590	2,006,938

• Anchorage port seeks growth

low as we can to help keep shipping costs down with the need to adjust rates to be able to have the growth money to keep pace with increased demand for port services."

Short-term actions on the boards or in progress include:

- a good probability of adding another berth capable of handling containers;

- modification of dock and cranes as well as adding a new crane to handle the larger ships one carrier wants to use in its Alaska service;

- electrical and control circuit updating on the gantry cranes;

- changing the rail system to put the line at the base of the hill instead of cutting through the port area, addition additional staging area room; and,

- creating an "inter-modal" yard where cargo can be taken from ships and transferred to railroad flatcars instead of the current system of loading cargo on trucks for the trip over to the railroad yards for transfer to rail.

For all the brouhaha of the efforts of the ports of Valdez and Seward, neither port's actions have yet to impact the Port of Anchorage, although for different reasons.

"We've seen no impact from Valdez' expansion efforts," he

said, "and the same is true for Seward, but because their operation is not yet under way."

Seward recently cut a deal with Seaway Express to handle that carrier's port requirements. "There's no reason to believe Seward shouldn't be a pretty active port," McKinney said, "although Seaway's tariff will tell the tale."

And McKinney isn't all that worried about the incipient competition. "The Port of Anchorage is adjacent to the single largest market in Alaska -- and that's pretty tough to compete against."

Some impact, albeit in the future a bit, is seen from the proposed Knik Arm Crossing. Of two proposed routes, the "downtown" route would be less costly but would impact both the port and the railroad more than the "Elmendorf" routing.

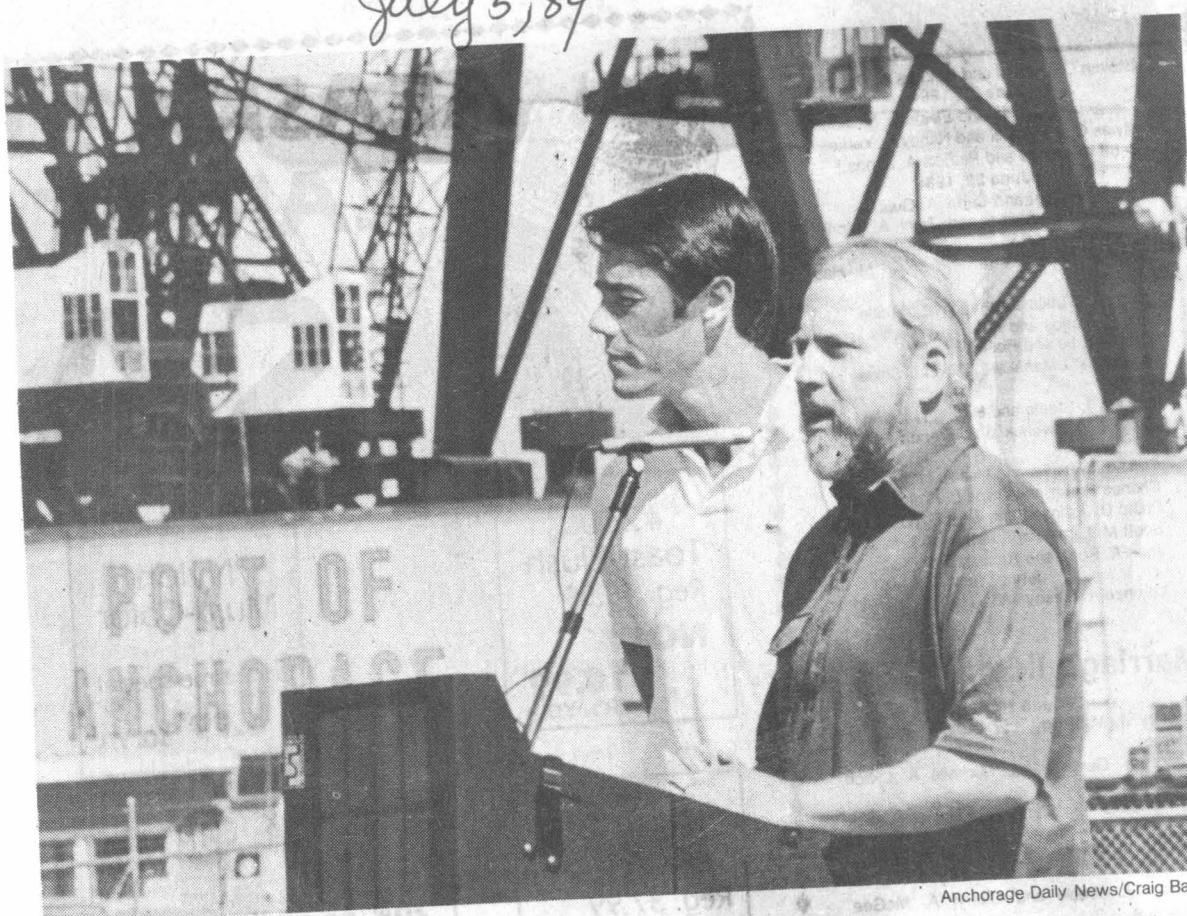
"The downtown routing would have only a 1,000-foot wide shipping lane although it would be high enough for easy ship passage," McKinney said. "Given 5-7 knot, 30-foot tides and ice during the winter, the carriers are concerned with that routing."

"Although I realize it be more costly, I would like to see stronger consideration of adding a rail line to the crossing --

that would certainly speed things up," he added.

Regardless of the routing, McKinney does see some competitive advantage for the Port of Anchorage in that either route -- either because of better road systems or less traffic lights to contend with in getting out of the city -- will enhance the ability to get the freight out of Anchorage faster.

Anchorage Daily News



Anchorage Daily News/Craig Bartlett

Port dedication

Anchorage Assemblyman Gerry O'Connor, right, and Mayor Tony Knowles take part in the dedication of a new 8.9-acre staging area at the port of Anchorage Wednesday. Knowles announced the appointment of Tyler Jones as port director, succeeding William McKinney, who will retire.