

NATION'S MAYORS TOUR, PLAN DURING JUNKET IN ALASKA



Anchorage Daily News/Michael Penn

Anchorage Assemblyman Jerry O'Conner and former Gov. Jay Hammond join visitors from the Lower 48 on a tour of the Port of Anchorage Sunday.



Mud spills from the maw of a giant crane gouging out a 2,900-foot-long, 150-foot-wide trench in the Port of Anchorage

THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 6, 1985

Grabbin' the goop

by Karen Robin
Times Writer

When it's clean-up time at the Port of Anchorage, only barges can handle the job.

In what has become a rite of spring for the port, dredge crews are scooping up tons of mud to gouge a trench 2,900 feet long and 150 feet wide so deep-draft ships don't run aground.

"They're going to keep going until they're satisfied they're 35 to 38 feet deep," said Jack Brown, the port's operations and maintenance superintendent.

The mud, scooped out by a giant crane, is hauled away by the bargeload to be dumped in the channel's deep sections about a thousand yards away. From there a natural washing action dissipates the goo.

Anywhere from 350 to 400 thousand cubic yards of silt from the Matanuska and Susitna glaciers accumulates in the port every year, Brown said. Because of this year's heavy snowfall there will probably be more silt than last year.

Some loaded tanker vessels riding 40 feet deep depend on the dredging and high tides to make it through.

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Port has development plans

By BERT TARRANT

Pursuing an aggressive staging area development program and keeping the rest of the facilities in good order are the marching orders for the Port of Anchorage, says Port Director Tyler Jones.

"For 1985 our major project will be in Transit Area D, where Cowdery & Associates has a \$4 million contract to excavate, backfill and pave about 9 acres of new staging area," Jones said.

Adequate cargo staging area, he added will see the port not only maximize such facilities on the 110 acres the port already has but "we also are engaged in trying to lease more land to the east and north of the port for even more staging area."

In addition to the Transit Area D work, modifications also are slated to begin this year on the Port's Transit Shed, which was first built in 1961 to breakbulk cargo specifications.

Ironically, the year the shed was built was also the year that the maritime industry be-

gan its shift to containerization, Jones observed. "We need a wider apron on the dock to allow us to take containers directly off the ship and place them on rail cars."

That means about one-third of the transit shed will be removed from the west side of the building with a new story for port offices to be added on top.

"We also intend to build a public observation deck on the top of the transit shed," Jones said, "public access to and public knowledge of the importance of the port to Southcentral and Railbelt Alaska is an important consideration for us."

Rounding out the year's activities will be maintenance of existing facilities including repairing the damage done March 17 then a Totem Ocean Trailer Express Ro-Ro vessel rammed the dock.

One of the major longer-range items occupying Jones is the dual-port strategy spelled out in the port's master plan.

"We need to tie our fate to



Tyler Jones

another port, whether it's public or private," he said, referring to the port's land limitations. "We've indicated our desire and three entities, Cook Inlet Regional Corp. (which has Fire Island), Matanuska-Susitna Borough and a private

group have expressed some interest."

With the port's preferential shippers—Sea-Land Service and TOTE—along with the rest of the industry going to more fuel-efficient vessels and focusing on larger containers, the port must position itself for the future.

"Our facility is being designed to deal with our major preferential shippers as well as to make as much multiple use as possible," he added, "for example, we are looking into ways to use the petroleum terminal to handle more than just petroleum."

Increased involvement with the Alaska Railroad is also seen in the near future and Jones says comprehensive waterfront planning is in the works so "we don't duplicate the services already available in railroad-leased areas."

Although the port serves Anchorage where 45 percent of Alaska's population lives and, with the Railbelt, serves the freight needs of over 75 per-

cent of all Alaskans, competition with other ports, notably Seward, Valdez and Whittier, has kept life interesting for the Port of Anchorage.

"We are aggressively seeking the orient steel market, as are Valdez and Seward," he said, "we want to gain back some of the freight work we lost to Valdez."

Not only did the port face competition, but so did its preferential carriers—TOTE and Sea-Land—with the advent of Seaway Express and its service to Seward on the one hand and a move by Crowley Maritime to add a second deck to its barges working the Alaska trade.

"Given both a new carrier and an expanded one, we believe Sea-Land and TOTE have competed very effectively to maintain their market share," Jones said, not only are they holding their own but are regaining some cargo they had lost."