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## Juneau's downtown cruise terminal preparing for bigger boats

By [Jacob Resneck, KTOO](#)

January 26, 2017

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*New cruise ship terminal on January 25, 2017. (Photo by David Purdy/KTOO)*

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A [\\$54 million project to add a pair of floating cruise ship berths to Juneau's downtown waterfront](#) is within months of completion.

The project will expand the port's capacity to accommodate larger vessels. That's because cruise ships in Alaska are [getting bigger](#).

Juneau's Ports and Docks has been working to expand its terminal to keep up with industry requirements.

The city's Deputy Port Engineer Erich Schaal said the downtown Alaska Steamship Dock was limited to tying up ships greater than about 800 feet. And the southern Cruise Terminal or CT dock, was not much longer.

"The original max length that we could receive at our southern CT dock was 960 feet and now we'll be able to receive a 1,000-foot vessel and an 1,100-foot vessel at the same time," he said.

Seattle-based Manson Construction is the lead contractor working to expand the cruise ship berths.

A 25-strong crew from the firm has been working double shifts drilling and driving piles in the daytime and welding in the evenings.

The final work should be wrapped up by May 7, project manager Monica Blanchard said.

Given all the activity on the water there's not a lot of extra space for different ships to get in and out of the harbor.

Schaal said there was a lot of back and forth between different interests in settling on the final design.

Gastineau Channel has a busy summer season mixed with fishing boats, private yachts and cruise ships all competing for dock access in the summer.

“This side of the dock is closer to shore than the south side and that’s because back in the design and we were working with stakeholders, especially the fishing fleet, they needed more access to the Taku Dock,” he said. “The original design was more parallel with the dock and there was going to be a kind of smaller area between the two.”



*Deputy Port Engineer Erich Schaal says the final design attempts to compromise between cruise ships and the commercial fishing fleet. Jan. 25, 2017. (Photo by David Purdy/KTOO)*

The cruise ship industry says the new dock still isn’t as big as it should be.

“We felt that the best design would be a new dock that handled two of the larger class ships,” said John Binkley, president of the Cruise Lines International Association Alaska, which represents companies sailing state waters. “The new class ships will be over 1,000-foot long. And we felt that it was wise to — in terms of an investment of this size — to have a dock that could handle two of those ships and leave the existing dock in place.”

Alaska is projected to receive larger vessels because bigger liners are now able to transit an expanded Panama Canal to arrive from the Caribbean in the summertime, Binkley said, as well as a response to consumer demand.

“They like bigger ships, there’s more amenities, more variety of things to do on the ships and it’s also an economic reason,” he said. “The larger the ship just like with a bus or a car or an airplane, the more passengers you can get on, the better the economics are.”

The final project wasn’t without other local controversies.

For a quarter-decade the [Blessing of the Fleet](#) has been held at a dockside monument maintained by the Alaska Commercial Fishermen’s Memorial. The group challenged the city’s design in court but its legal efforts were [ultimately unsuccessful](#).

Memorial President Carl Brodersen said the court fights are over and now the board is focused on [trying to find it a new home](#).

Until that time, the blessing ceremony is scheduled to go ahead in the midst of the expanded cruise ship terminal.

“It is very hard for the two elements to co-exist and for both to function perfectly for their individual purposes. I mean we essentially do have an enormous wall of cruise ship in front of the memorial right now,” Brodersen said. “But the ceremony is over 25 years old — we can’t just stop doing it.”

Standing next to the new floating berths under construction, Assembly member Jesse Kiehl attended a recent tour to see the progress.

He said the new cruise ship terminal will aid the local economy.

“I really like that we’re replacing this infrastructure for the next 50 years of this piece of Juneau’s economy,” Kiehl said. “Of course, the added benefit is that Juneau sales tax and property taxpayers aren’t footing this bill. This is coming from taxes that the industry and the passengers pay for the services that we provide.”

The first cruise ships are [scheduled](#) to arrive on May 1 in Juneau. They are the Nieuw Amsterdam and the Eurodam, both 935-foot-long, Signature-class vessels operated by Holland America Line.

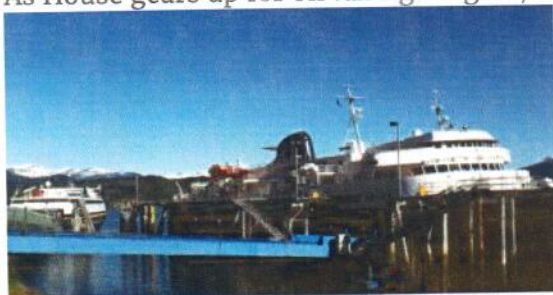
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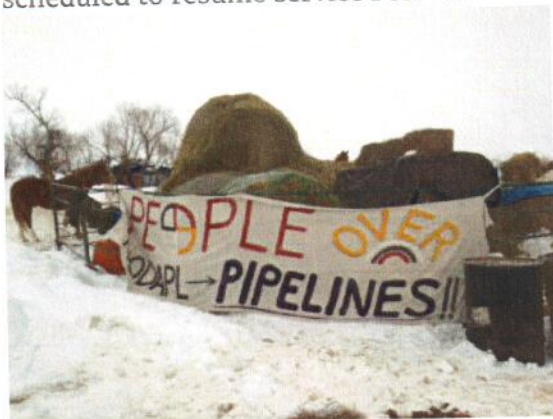
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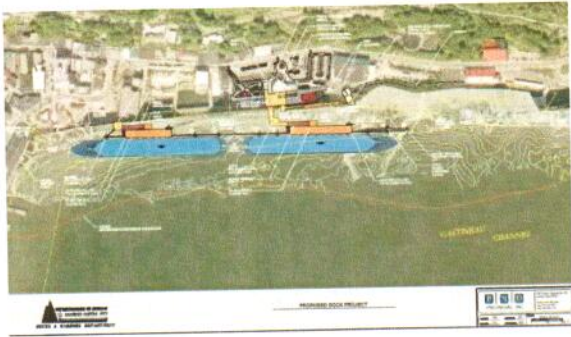
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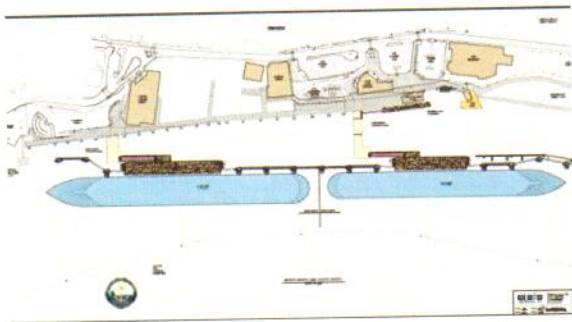


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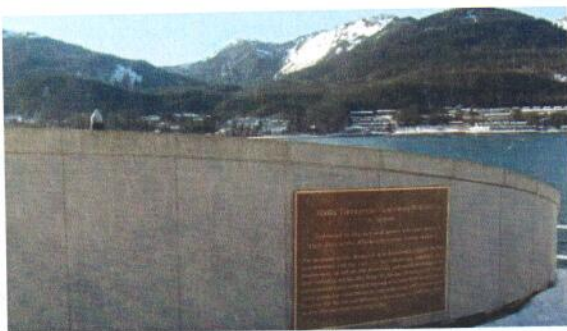


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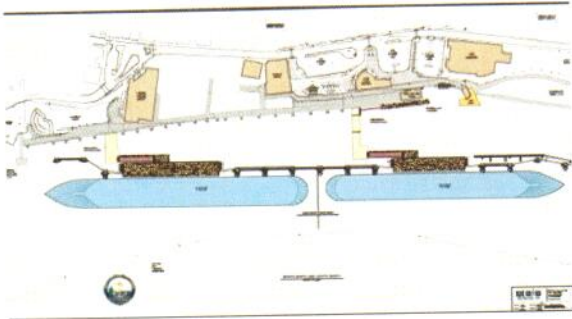
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CBJ199101

Attorneys for the Alaska Commercial Fishermen's Memorial objected to the construction of Juneau's new cruise ship berth because it could disrupt the annual Blessing of the Fleet ceremony.

September 25, 2015

In "Crime & Courts"



### **After delays, Juneau cruise ship berths project can move forward**

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources has issued a final decision transferring nearly 18 acres of submerged tidelands to the city, allowing the \$54 million cruise ship dock project to move forward.

January 7, 2014

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  - [Mudrooms](#) Real people. real stories. Live, on stage. “Mudrooms” is a community-powered monthly event in Juneau, where real people tell real stories, live. Anchorage has “Arctic Entries”. In Juneau, we’re just as sophisticated – just a little muddier. Mudrooms’ creators are Amanda Compton and Alida Bus. Audio production by Marc Wheeler.
  - [Focus On Community](#) “Focus on Community” is an hour long, public affairs program hosted by different volunteer, community members each week. The format ranges from in-studio discussions, to live call-ins. Topics vary from peace initiatives to mental health problems to hotly debated town issues. Any and all community members are invited to present a show idea and work with us to bring it the air.
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