SB92

DERELICT VESSELS

Accountability Across Alaska
a presentation to the Senate
Resources Committee
March 27, 2017
"By 2025, the Alaska fleet will include roughly 3,100 vessels between 28' and 59' that are more than 45 years old...the Alaska fleet also includes 75 passenger vessels, tugs, and barges over 50 years old..."
A GUY WALKS INTO A BAR...

We love our boats, and we depend on our coasts and rivers for transportation, commerce, and quality of life. But there is no denying the immense cost of owning and maintaining a boat. Those costs only increase over time.
A GROWING PROBLEM

ADNR has begun a database, but it is far from complete. There are nearly 200 documented derelicts across Alaska. We know many more exist, and the number will continue to increase.

NOAA database of wrecks & obstructions
THE PUBLIC PAYS THE PRICE

With outdated statutes, our municipalities and state agencies are unable to effectively prevent and manage derelict vessels. Alaskan waters are a default dumping ground.
Over a two-year period, the Derelict Vessel Task Force identified major barriers and solutions to improve derelict vessel prevention and management in Alaska.
TASK FORCE PARTICIPANTS

Please note that while many people sat at the table, nothing within this presentation or testimony is intended to speak on the behalf of any individual agency, municipality, or task force participant.

- ADNR, Mining, Land & Water
- ADEC, Spill Prevention & Response
- ADOT, Ports & Harbors
- ADF&G, Habitat
- USCG, Sectors Anchorage & Juneau/Div. of Waterways Management
- NOAA, Marine Debris Program/Restoration
- EPA, Response Region 10
- AAHPA (Bethel, Homer)
- Orutsaramiut Native Council
- Sen. Lisa Murkowski’s office
- Alaska Marine Response
INCREASE CLARITY

Agencies and municipalities statewide need increased clarity for defining a derelict vessel, vessel ownership, and for the impoundment process including clarified hearing and notice requirements. SB updates Chapter 30.30 to bring clarity and improve utility of the statutes.
Current statutes restrict enforcement of derelict vessel laws. One major way to reduce vessel sinkings and prevent owners from walking away is to provide for enforcement of the chapter to hold owners accountable and prevent derelict vessels from sinking on public waters.
Hearing concerns from agencies and the public, Task Force members acknowledged that it is important to be clear that a vessel owner is liable for all costs associated with the impoundment, storage and removal of a derelict vessel.
Outside states have found significant improvement in derelict vessel prevention and management by streamlining their efforts through a statewide program/point person. Having a point person at ADNR will concentrate work that is currently being done by numerous staff, will reduce overall costs, and increase efficacy of derelict vessel management.
Addressing vessel disposal was outside of the scope of the Task Force, but must be addressed. Through the derelict vessel prevention program, the state will have the opportunity to begin looking at options for vessel disposal, scrap, and salvage solutions that can benefit the private sector and be a reasonable alternative to vessel abandonment.
VESEL INSURANCE

Over 30ft, engaged in commercial activity, and on the water for more than 90 days

Without insurance, when a vessel is abandoned or left to sink on state waters it can be impossible to find a responsible party. If someone is considering a long-term commercial venture on the water, an insurance policy will protect the public in the event the commercial endeavor does not work out as planned.
Agencies and municipalities have found establishing ownership is one of the major hurdles to holding owners responsible for derelict vessels. Requiring all vessels operating in AK to be registered with DMV, and beginning a titling system for vessels similar to that in place for motor vehicles, are commonsense solutions to improve accountability.
The Alaska Department of Natural Resources...lacks even the authority to fine...for littering.

...In places like Bethel, which has a dumping ground called Steamboat Slough, the problem of derelict and abandoned boats long ago broke the surface of public awareness.

...we could instead simply mandate the registration of all boats — commercial and recreational alike — through the DMV. We could also mandate that boats of a certain size, like all cars, carry insurance sufficient to cover their salvage.

At the very least, we could grant the Department of Natural Resources the simple authority to levy fines on those who pollute Alaska’s waters.

Juneau Empire
Editorial
Oct. 15, 2015
"Speaking about the issue in 2013, a state official in Washington said, “We need to find a way to keep these vessels from being abandoned in our waterways, and that means holding owners accountable. Too many people get in over their heads, and their dreams of ship renovation or making money from scrap become a nightmare for the citizens of this state and the marine environment.”

...A hole in the water into which you pour money” is a famous definition of a boat. To the maximum extent possible, we must ensure taxpayers are not the ones doing the pouring."

Chinook Observer, March 22, 2017
HCR 53
1990

WHEREAS the state does not currently have statutory authority to impose liability on the owners of abandoned vessels...
THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK ON SB92

Alaska Association of Harbormasters & Port Administrators

Commonsense solutions for accountability on state waters

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