

Juneau mulls anchoring limits to prevent derelicts

By Jacob Resneck, KTOO February 10, 2018 Community, Juneau, Local Government, Transportation

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The M/V Lumberman is a 107-foot tug that's been converted into a makeshift liveaboard. It's been anchored off Aurora Harbor for years despite city efforts for it to move. (Photo courtesy Dave Borg/Juneau Docks & Harbors)

The Juneau Assembly is reviewing anchoring rules aimed at preventing vessels from becoming derelict in city waters. The initiative is in response to a notorious tug boat that's been anchored near a downtown boat harbor for years.

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Gastineau Channel is a patchwork of jurisdictions that fall under federal, state and local rules. Until now there's no time limit for anchoring in city waters.

Juneau Harbormaster Dave Borg said that's a problem.

"Our docks and harbors were not designed for vessels to just sit in wet storage for, you know, eons," Borg said, "because they cause a lot of problems as far as deteriorating, pollution, they become a nuisance, basically."

The Docks and Harbors board recently sent the Assembly draft regulations to address the issue. They require permits for boats anchored more than 24 hours in city-owned or managed waters and tidelands.

The initiative is in response to the [M/V Lumberman](#), a 1940s-era tug that's anchored at the entrance of Aurora Harbor. It's an unpermitted liveaboard paying no mooring fees.

Tragedy struck in December when [a skiff carrying five people heading out to the tug capsized](#). Three people made it safely to shore but two Juneau men, James Cole and Sheridan "Scott" Stringer, were never found.

The incident was three months to the day after Juneau's port director told the vessel's owner to move the tug away from Aurora Harbor.

"We've issued that vessel [a notice to move](#) prior to this regulation even being put in place, and obviously the boat's still there," Borg said.

Borg said the Lumberman's owner Brenden Mattson has kept a low profile and hasn't been seen in weeks. The tug's engine and bronze propeller were removed long ago.

"We'll be monitoring the situation and coming up with a plan next. I really don't want the boat, I would rather that someone would up and leave the area but I don't think that's going to be an option," Borg said. "We're going to have to handle it somehow or another."

The M/V Lumberman and the various vessels attached were served with a Sept. 6, 2017, notice to move by Juneau's port director. But harbor officials say the owner has shown no indication it's going anywhere soon. (Photo courtesy Dave Borg/Juneau Docks & Harbors)

The Coast Guard recently boarded the vessel and found oily waste, aerosols, batteries and other hazardous waste.

An Anchorage-based contract crew was paid about \$62,000 from the federal [Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund](#) to remove nearly 5 tons of waste in mid-January.

"They removed 830 gallons of miscellaneous oils and chemicals, just under 2,000 pounds of hazardous batteries," said Sector Juneau spokesman Lt. Nicholas Capuzzi. "Over 500 pounds of miscellaneous hazardous material like aerosols, paints, cleaners and that kind of thing, 300 pounds of oily waste and 200 pounds of other oily debris."

The Coast Guard spokesman said the proposed anchoring limits could help the local harbormaster keep these kinds of problem vessels from laying anchor and becoming a long-term problem.

"I think the idea is to hopefully prevent this scenario from happening again where a vessel is anchored and becomes essentially a floating storage shed for these hazardous materials," Capuzzi said. "There's either a pollution event or, in this case, you had to spend a lot of money to go out there and remove it."

Mariners seeking to drop anchor for longer than 24 hours would still have federally managed navigable waters as an option. That's provided they don't block shipping.

The anchoring regulations will be [reviewed by the Juneau Assembly at its Feb. 12 meeting](#).