

RE. HB386

My name is Bryan Hawkins and I am the Port Director and Harbormaster for the City of Homer Alaska. I have been in management of the City's port and harbor for the past 14 years and prior to that I worked as a commercial Fisherman and Captain for hire in Alaska for 22 years. I am Vice President for the Alaska Association of Harbormasters and Port Administrators and I'm writing in support of HB386 on behalf of the City of Homer's Port and Harbor and for AAHPA. I remember Homer Harbor just a few years ago when we had 16 large (80' up to 167') derelict vessels in our harbor and a 450' by 50' derelict barge dumped on our beach. Many of our customers complained because they had to work around and over these vessels that never moved, which further increased our congestion issues causing our customers risk and inconvenience. Derelict vessels are a burden wherever they end up, but in a busy harbor the truth is they cause viable operations to seek moorings elsewhere.

I remind folks all the time that harbors are for working vessels, that's how and why we justified the expense of building them in the first place. Every active vessel contributes to the economy no matter what their occupation, the key word being active. In my opinion harbors are not museums or warehouses for "get to it someday" projects. Harbors are for working vessels that are actively engaged in their occupations whether that be a commercial vessel creating commerce up and down the coast, or as a recreational boats giving residents and visitors access to our amazing waterways.

Boats can last for generations if they're maintained but the truth is that most aren't and so they don't. The question then, is what do we do when we have a vessel that no longer has any commercial value left in it? I can tell you that currently in Homer the plan is don't get stuck with it. I call that the hot potato management plan for derelict vessels and that is one of the main issues. These vessels get pushed around from facility to facility, State to State, and more and more end up dumped on public lands causing a huge civic burden. We are vulnerable; we have seen repeatedly with current State Law, the burden for disposal and cleanup of a derelict vessel fall on the public.

Does HB386 solve all these issues?

No, but HB386 does set us on a good course by:

- Comprehensively addressing the statewide and increasing problem of derelict and abandoned boats along our coast and rivers.
- Uses common sense and protects our state waters, our harbors, and responsible boat owners, and holds people accountable who try to walk away from old, risky boats.
- Streamlines derelict vessel response and prevention, increasing efficiency and improving communication between local, state and federal partners.
- Sets the stage for pro-active work to encourage hauling, scrap and salvage opportunities to address the real need to dispose of old boats when they are no longer economical to operate and before they are abandoned or sunk.

- Protects Alaska. It provides greater security to boat owners, protects local communities and the state, and holds those who abandon their boats accountable.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about the issues surrounding the derelict vessel problem in Alaska. Status quo management will no longer work; I am convinced that change to our laws must happen. The responsibility of ownership of any vessel should always fall to the owner not the public, and that in my opinion is the main goal of this legislation.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call on me.

Thank you for your service to our great state,

Bryan Hawkins  
Port Director/Harbormaster



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