Safe, Secure, Efficient and Environmentally Responsible Maritime Operations

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April 6, 2015
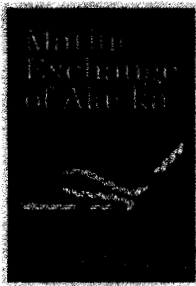
State of Alaska
Senate Finance Committee

The non-profit Marine Exchange of Alaska is a non-profit maritime organization located in Juneau established to provide information, communications and services to aid safe, secure, efficient and environmentally sound maritime operations in Alaska. Over the past 14 years, with funds provided by the State, Coast Guard and maritime industry, the Marine Exchange has established a maritime safety net that has been instrumental in the saving Alaska mariners' lives and ensuring environmentally sound maritime operations.

State funding has been instrumental in the built and operation of the largest Vessel Compliance Monitoring and Response System in the world with over 120 AIS (Automatic Identification System) receiving sites in Alaska, more than Norway and Iceland combined. The vessel tracking information is depended on by State agencies, the Coast Guard, maritime operators and coastal communities from Kaktovik, west to Adak and south to Ketchikan to aid safe, efficient and environmentally sound maritime operations. Continued State funding is instrumental for maintaining and expanding the vessel tracking network and to provide more comprehensive coverage in the Arctic and other remote areas of Alaska where there are presently gaps in coverage.

The development of resources in Alaska is dependent on the ability to ensure the maritime operation supporting the development and shipping of the resources to market are safe and environmentally responsible. The Alaska vessel tracking network cannot operate if it is not maintained. Historically, State capital funding has used to help support and expand the system that is used by State agencies (DOT, Commerce, Fish and Game, Public Safety and Environmental Conservation), the Coast Guard, coastal communities and mariners.

With the Marine Exchange's annual capital and operating costs approaching $3.5M, a State $600K capital fund grant ensures the expansion of the system with operating costs funded by the Coast Guard and marine industry making this a successful government/maritime industry partnership.

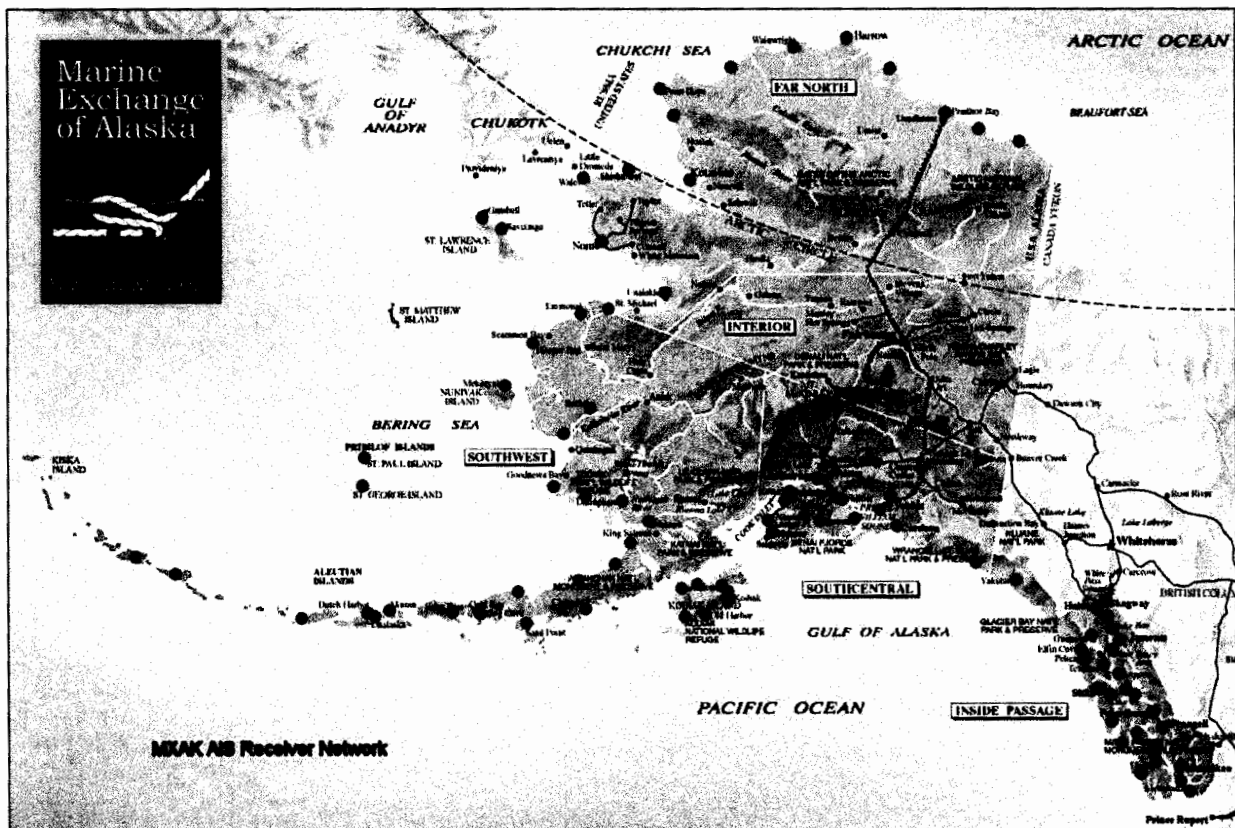Captain Ed Page, USCG (Ret)
Executive Director

March 2, 2015

Subject: Utilization of the Marine Exchange of Alaska Vessel Tracking System by the State of Alaska

The non-profit Marine Exchange of Alaska with funding provided by the State of Alaska, the U.S. Coast Guard and the maritime industry has built and operates one of the largest vessel tracking systems in the world that aids safe, secure, efficient and environmentally sound maritime operations in Alaska.   The Marine Exchanges AIS (Automatic Identification System) vessel tracking network is comprised of over 120 Marine Safety Sites that track vessels and communicate safety information that extend from Ketchikan, to Adak and North to Barrow.

Over the last few years State Capital Grant funding from cruise ship head tax funds has annually been provided to the Marine Exchange to expand technologies that aid maritime safety and environmental protection in Alaska. As maritime shipping in the Arctic increases, the Marine Exchange has applied State funds to develop an Arctic Next Generation Navigational Information System with the Coast Guard to enhance maritime safety. The information provided by the vessel tracking system has played a pivotal role in the Coast Guard's response to a number of search and rescue cases as well as provides the following services to the following State agencies;

- Department of Transportation: DOT uses the system to provide real time tracking of AMHS ferries and the Coast Guard required 7x24 Ship Security Alert System. The historical and analytical information provided by the vessel tracking system is also used for port development planning in the Arctic and other regions of Alaska where maritime activity is increasing.

- Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA): The system is used to aid emergency preparedness and response to tsunamis and storms that impact the Alaska maritime community.

- Department of Fish and Game: The agency uses the system to track the agency's survey and enforcement vessels as well as to monitor the locations of fishing fleets and the operation of other vessels operating in environmentally sensitive areas.

- Department of Commerce: Commerce uses the system to monitor the implementation of State vessel pilotage regulations.

- Department of Natural Resources: The system aids the department's assessment of maritime activities conducted in support of resource development and the vessel shipment of State natural resources.

- Department of Environmental Conservation: The agency uses the system to monitor the locations of cruise ships for environmental monitoring, enforcement of State oil spill preparedness regulations for vessels operating in Alaska waters and oil spill response and investigation. The system is also used to monitor the shellfish industry to ensure harvesting is conducted in waters verified to be safe from toxins.
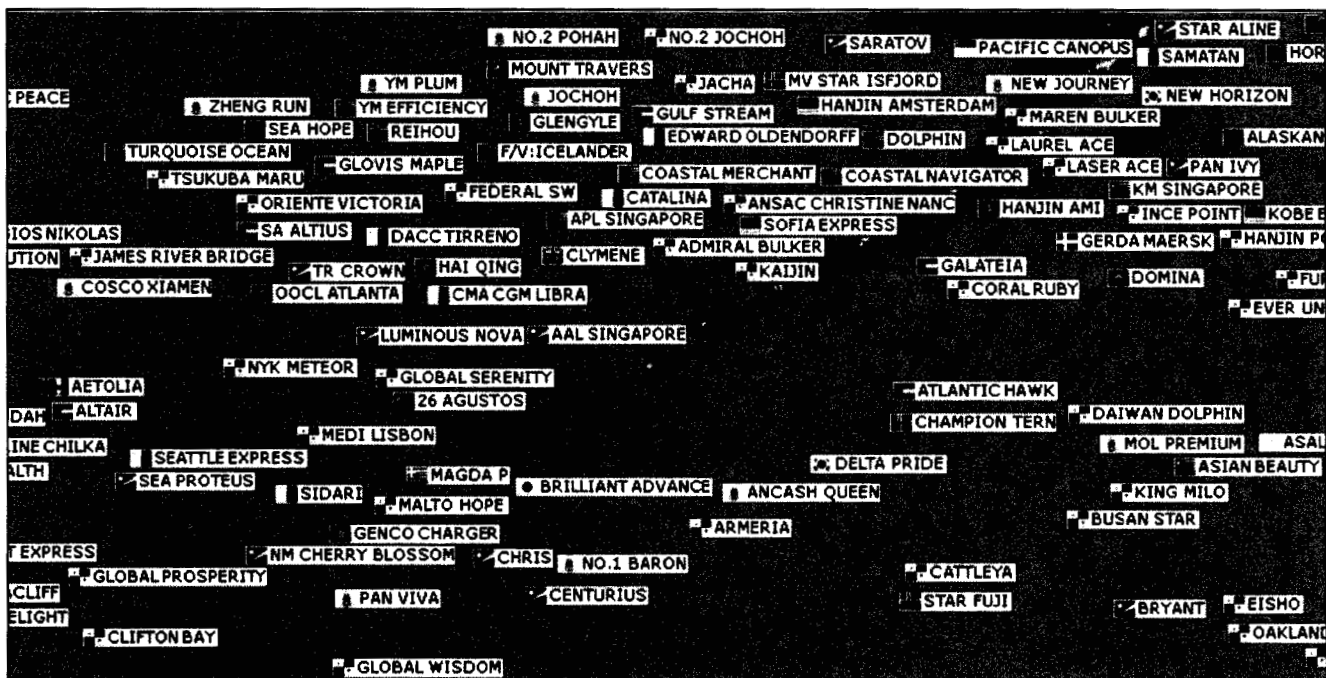
The red dots in the above graphic indicate the locations of the 120 Automatic Identification System (AIS) vessel tracking stations in Alaska built and operated by the Marine Exchange of Alaska to aid safe and environmentally sound maritime operations

The State of Alaska's cruise ship head tax revenues have been the source of funds for this system as authorized by the Harbors Appropriation Act of 1884, as Amended, that reads as follows:

" (2) reasonable fees charged on a fair and equitable basis that–

(A) are used solely to pay the cost of a service to the vessel or water craft;

*(B) **enhance the safety and efficiency of interstate and foreign commerce; and***

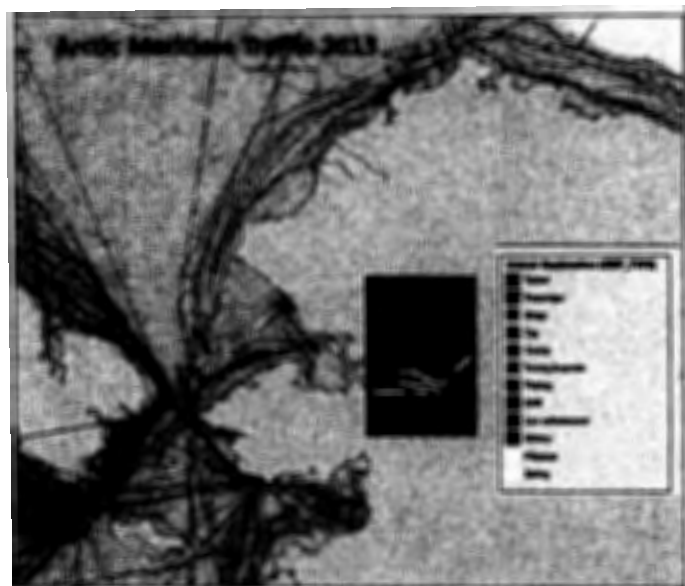*(C) do not impose more than a small burden on interstate or foreign commerce..."*

This vessel tracking system is presently funded by the three primary users and beneficiaries of the system; the U.S. Coast Guard, the State of Alaska and the maritime community. The total annual capital expenditures (building new AIS sites and upgrading existing AIS sites) and operating costs (staffing and operation of 7x24 operations center, communications fees, etc.) for this system are over $3.50 M.

Aleutian Island Maritime Traffic 6 April 2015

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