



Abandoned & Derelict Vessels in Alaska

Cook Inlet Harbor Safety Committee

Soldotna, Alaska

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Objective

Provide high level overview of issues and challenges of abandoned and derelict vessels in Alaska.

Overview

- ✓ Legal framework
- ✓ Important concepts
- ✓ Funding issues
- ✓ Example projects
- ✓ Key take-aways

Abandoned & Derelict Vessels In The News

- **New borough ordinance sets strict standards for inactive boats**
(Wrangell Sentinal, February 18, 2026)
- **Two fishing bills become law without governor's signature**
(KTUU, July 24, 2025)
- **New borough policy in the works for dealing with large derelict vessels**
(Petersburg Pilot, July 4, 2024)
- **Derelicts days done, city to remove ghost fleet**
(Kodiak Daily Mirror, April 2, 2024)
- **Drowning the derelicts: Yesterday's boats are today's problems**
(High Country News, Dec. 16 2020)
- **Abandoned vessels litter Alaska's shorelines while officials work on a fix**
(ADN, Sept. 28, 2016)
- **What can be done about Alaska's derelict vessels?**
(APRN Talk of Alaska, May 13, 2016)
- **My Turn: Responsibility for abandoned and derelict vessels in Alaska**
(Juneau Empire, Opinion, Oct. 8, 2015)



ADVs – A Growing Problem

“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...”

— Trends & Opportunities in the Alaska Maritime Industrial Support Sector, McDowell Group (2014)





Alaska Statutes Title 30, Chapter 30 ~ Abandoned and Derelict Vessels

Article 1 – Abandoned Vessels (AS 30.30.010 – 30.30.075)

Defines “abandoned vessel” and sets out procedures for reporting, removal, and disposal. It addresses liability, environmental protection, and the role of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in overseeing removal.

Article 2 – Derelict Vessels (AS 30.30.090 – 30.30.096)

Covers vessels that are derelict (unseaworthy, uncontrolled, or abandoned at sea). It includes requirements for salvage, removal, and environmental safeguards.

Article 3 – Vessels Abandoned on Business Premises of Persons Engaged in Repair Business (AS 30.30.110 – 30.30.150)

Addresses vessels abandoned on premises of licensed repair businesses, including reporting obligations and removal timelines.

Article 4 – Miscellaneous (AS 30.30.165 – 30.30.180)

Contains provisions on liens, enforcement, and other administrative matters related to abandoned or derelict vessels.

AS 05.25.055

Implementing regulations (11 AAC 200)

Alaska Abandoned & Derelict Vessel Concepts

Key Legal Concepts

- **Abandoned vessel:** A vessel that is no longer under the control of its owner and is not being used for its intended purpose, often due to loss of control or inability to operate.
- **Derelict vessel:** A vessel that is unseaworthy, uncontrolled, or abandoned at sea, posing a hazard to navigation or the environment.
- **Liens:** Certain liens can attach to abandoned vessels to secure claims for removal costs or environmental cleanup.
- **Environmental protection:** The chapter emphasizes preventing pollution and protecting marine resources during removal operations.

Enforcement and Removal

- **Reporting:** Owners or operators must report abandoned or derelict vessels to the DNR within specified timeframes.
- **Removal:** The DNR or authorized parties may remove vessels, with costs recoverable from the owner or responsible party.
- **Liability:** Owners are liable for removal costs, environmental damage, and any other obligations under the chapter.





Federal Authorities

- Appropriation Act of 1899 (RHA)
- Abandoned Barge Act of 1992
- Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act, CWA)
- Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Removal Act of 2024
- Water Resources Development Act (1986) and River & Harbor Act

- ✓ Pollution
- ✓ Obstruction
- ✓ Environmental Threat

Feds sue Juneau's former docks and harbor board chair over \$900K sunken tugboat cleanup

March 4, 2026 by Clarise Larson, KT00

Share: 



Funding

- **State programs**
 - ADNR: Derelict Vessel Prevention Program & Reimbursement
 - No further DNR reimbursements will be provided, as the Derelict Vessel Prevention Program Fund was transferred to the Department of Transportation in the State's Fiscal Year 2026 budget.
 - Additionally, the Alaska Legislature passed a bill in May 2025 that will repeal the fund once the bill becomes effective.
- **Federal programs**
 - OSLTF – threat or actual pollution (oil)
 - COE – block navigable waterway
 - NOAA – marine debris grants
- **Funding challenges**
 - ✓ High expense
 - ✓ Special contracts & competitive grants
 - ✓ Prefer many small projects over few large projects
 - ✓ Contract / Grant program compliance

ADV Removal & Disposal Process

Definition

- ✓ In danger of sinking, or sunk
- ✓ Obstructing waterway
- ✓ Endanger public or environment
- ✓ Left of private, public land with permission

Unlawful

- ✓ Illegal to abandon or store derelict vessels on state waters or property without consent.
- ✓ Illegal to leave vessels on private property without permission

Authority

- ✓ Landowner, S/F agencies, municipalities, and peace officers may secure, tow, remove

Notice

- ✓ Written notice must be posted on vessel.
- ✓ Duplicate mailed to owner.
- ✓ Owner has 20 days to reclaim before disposal

Disposal

- ✓ After 20 days without repossession, authorities may:
 - ✓ Sell via auction or sealed bids.
 - ✓ Donate or destroy vessel if no bids received.





Example Projects

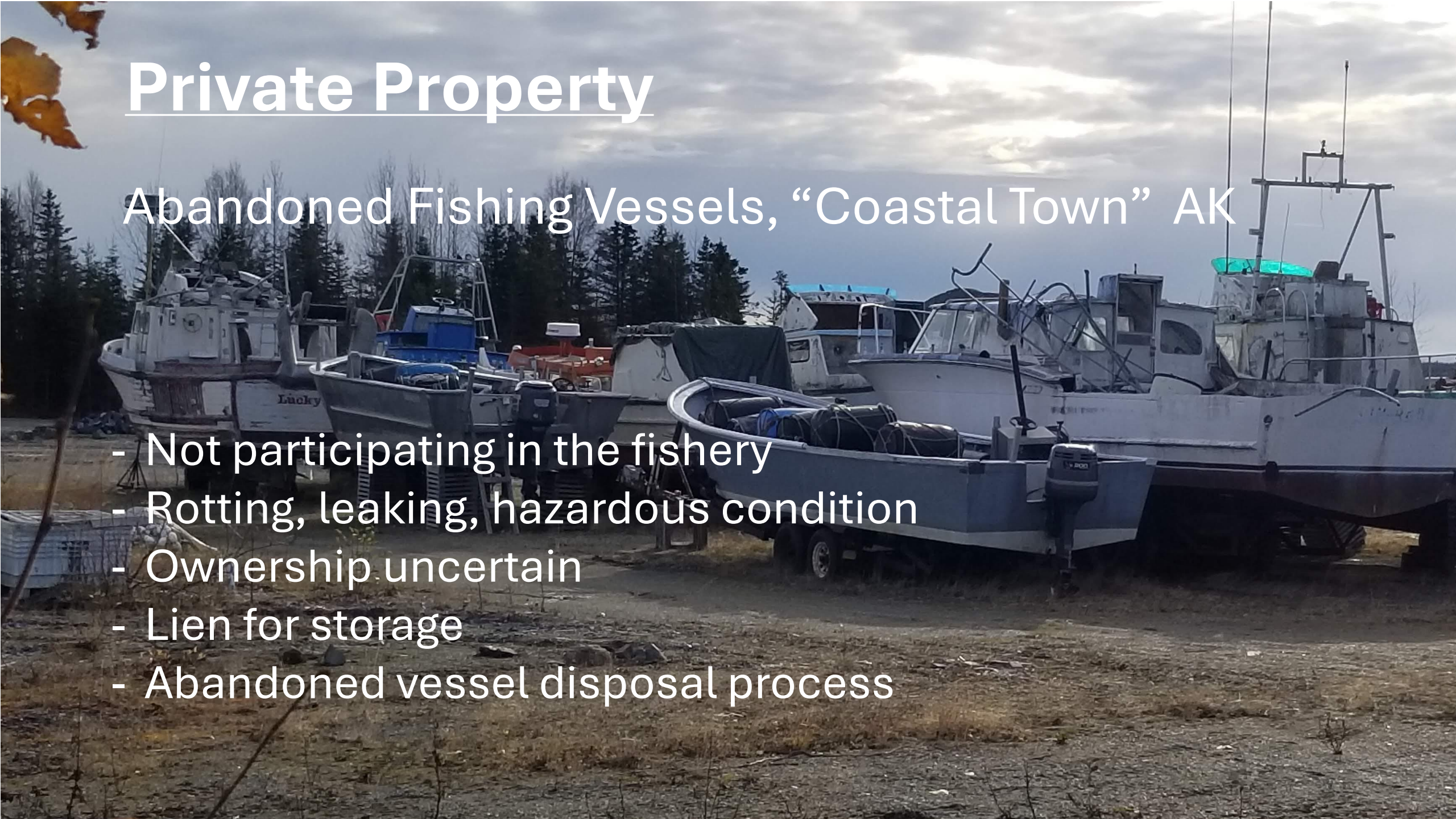
- ✓ **Private Property**
- ✓ **Federal Funded**
- ✓ **Waiting Action**



Private Property

Abandoned Fishing Vessels, “Coastal Town” AK

- Not participating in the fishery
- Rotting, leaking, hazardous condition
- Ownership uncertain
- Lien for storage
- Abandoned vessel disposal process



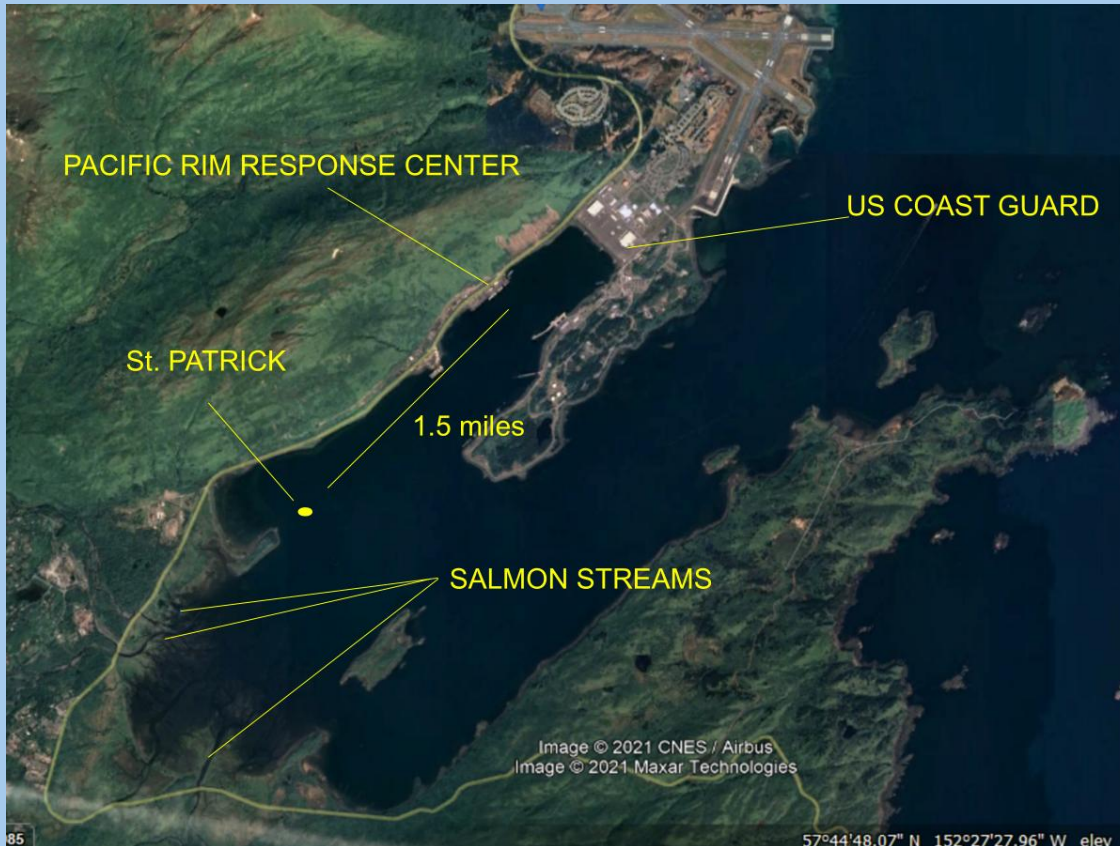
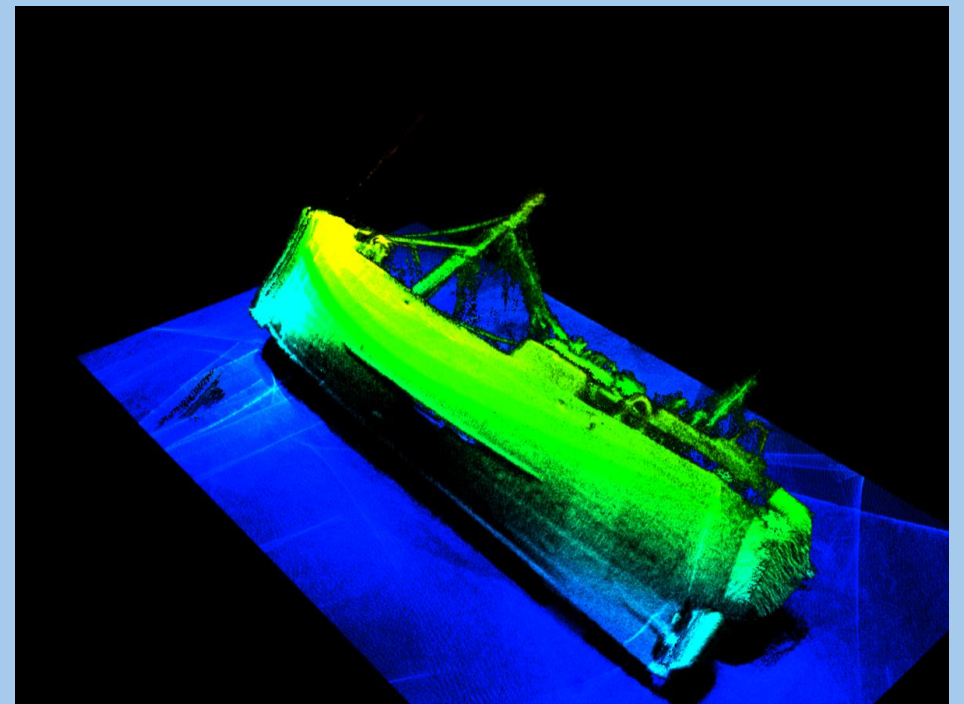
Federal Funded

F/V St. Patrick

Submerged wreck fuel removal

Kodiak, AK

July 28, 2021 - 8.2 magnitude megathrust earthquake



F/V St. Patrick, Kodiak, AK



GD&S surface supply dive ops, depth an issue



Surface oil recovery by OSRO ACN

F/V St. Patrick, Kodiak, AK

Waste Management & Disposal = \$\$



11,176 pounds of soaked sorbents were incinerated at the PRRC



14,857 gallons of hydrocarbons and oily liquids were transported by the OCEAN LIBERTY to Homer, Alaska for disposal




Vessel remains on bottom.

Funding agency determined no hazard to navigation or threat to environment.



Waiting Action

Abandoned Fish Freezer Barge Womens Bay, Kodiak AK

	14 species with NOAA-designated Essential Fish Habitat in Womens Bay and multiple anadromous streams near the BARGE.
	NOAA Trust Resources include Steller sea lions and their designated critical habitat (Western DPS; listed under the Endangered Species Act and protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act [MMPA]) and harbor seals (MMPA-protected).
	Area is part of the USFWS Trust Resources, including sea otters designated critical habitat, and eagle and seabird concentrations.

Abandoned Fish Freezer Barge
Womens Bay, Kodiak AK

Tim Response Center
Primary Staging

USCG
Air Station

Womens Bay

Freezer
Barge
Deconstruct
Debris Sort



Derelict Vessels in Alaska

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Key Takeaways



- ✓ Number of ADVs increasing
- ✓ Agency action is limited
- ✓ Each vessel triggers different legal status
- ✓ Funding options limited
- ✓ Removal and disposal is expensive

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Soldotna, Alaska | April 23, 2026

CG2005
56°36.7001' N 169°38.6535' W
SPD 172 KTS HDG 284 °T
ALT 1406 FT

56°36.3687' N 169°40.5373' W
SPD 5 KTS HDG --- °T
ELV 0 FT SLT 1.1 NM


03/25/26
19:13:40 Z

Questions?

HDEO
DDE
FOG MAN
EXP AUT

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W  N 15 FT



GEOPOINT
INS NAV 0.04°

TRK SW COR

SLAVE ACTIVE





JIM BUTLER

Attorney ~ Consultant
Kenai, AK

Jim Butler is an attorney and Of Counsel with Holmes Weddle & Barcott, where he practices in the firm's business and maritime law groups. He is also the Principal of Incident Response Group, LLC, a small consultancy specializing in response plan compliance, response organization strategic planning, and incident management support. His career in marine casualty response began with the *T/V Glacier Bay* oil spill in Cook Inlet in July 1987.

Over the course of his career, Jim has represented both for-profit and nonprofit organizations providing incident response services to vessel and facility operators throughout Alaska and the U.S. West Coast, as well as public emergency management agencies. In addition to his legal practice, Jim regularly provides consulting services to responsible parties and to pollution response and salvage contractors responding to marine casualties. He remains active on several public- and private-sector incident management teams, serving in various Command and General Staff roles on marine casualty and all-hazard incidents throughout Alaska and nationwide. Most recently, from December 2023 through February 2024, Jim served as Liaison Officer supporting the Unified Command during the *M/V Genius Star XI* lithium-ion cargo fire incident in the Aleutian Islands.

Jim's specialized training includes Lloyd's Maritime Academy (Certificate in Marine Salvage Law); U.S. Coast Guard (On-Scene Coordinator Crisis Management); NIIMS (Public Information Officer and Liaison Officer Type 1); U.S. National Fire Academy (All-Hazard Incident Management Team); and the National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (Advanced Incident Management Team). A commercial salmon fisherman in Alaska for more than 35 years, Jim was recognized by United Fishermen of Alaska as the *2013 UFA Fisherman of the Year*.

Jim earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Business Economics and Public Policy from the George Washington University School of Government and Business in Washington, D.C., and a Juris Doctor from Seattle University School of Law.