

# Valdez Waterfront Development Master Plan

Planning Areas A through H – Shoup Bay to Entrance Point



Prepared for the Valdez Ports and Harbor Commission

by

Alan Sorum CMM – Port Director

Diane Kinney – Port Operations Supervisor

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## **VALDEZ WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN**

### **PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The purpose of this Plan is to work with the Valdez City Council and the Valdez Planning & Zoning Commission to create a better long-term vision for the community's waterfront that will manage and focus its development to:

- Adequately position Valdez to support continued industrial and commercial growth.
- Maintain Valdez's position as a premiere Alaska deep water port.
- Strengthen tourism infrastructure.
- Enhance community quality of life and recreational opportunities.

The Plan will make recommendations to the City Council and the Planning & Zoning Commission regarding:

- Land acquisition/disposal necessary for short and long term growth.
- Waterfront land use and zoning regulations.
- Identification of capital infrastructure investment and maintenance needs.
- Guiding principles for tideland leases.

The Plan will incorporate existing plans and documents pertaining to the waterfront in Valdez. Documents are listed in Appendix A – Works Cited. These include, but are not limited to:

- Small Boat Harbor Master Plan
- Old City Dock Master Plan
- Valdez City Comprehensive Plan
- Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Valdez Coastal Zone Management Plan
- Old Town Hazards Assessment

## Chronology of Meetings for Public Input

- September 21, 2004 – Ports & Harbor Commission agenda item on Valdez Container Terminal expansion prompted discussion of developing a master plan for the Valdez waterfront
- November 16, 2004 – First appearance of waterfront plan as a regular Ports & Harbor Commission agenda item
- January 25, 2005 – Ports & Harbor Commission work session on waterfront master plan
- February 15, 2005 – Ports & Harbor Commission work session on waterfront master plan
- March 15, 2005 – Ports & Harbor Commission work session on waterfront master plan
- March 23, 2005 – Ports & Harbor Commission work session with Planning & Zoning Commission on waterfront master plan
- April 5, 2005 – Ports & Harbor Commission work session on waterfront master plan
- May 3, 2005 – Ports & Harbor Commission work session on waterfront master plan
- August 16, 2005 – Ports & Harbor Commission regular meeting discussion item on waterfront master plan
- September 20, 2005 – Ports & Harbor Commission work session on waterfront master plan
- November 22, 2005 – Ports & Harbor Commission work session on waterfront master plan
- December 6, 2005 – Ports & Harbor Commission work session on waterfront master plan
- March 21, 2006 – Ports & Harbor Commission work session on waterfront master plan

- April 4, 2006 – Ports & Harbor Commission regular meeting discussion item on waterfront master plan
- April 12, 2006 – Planning & Zoning Commission regular meeting discussion item on waterfront master plan
- April 26, 2006 – Planning & Zoning Commission work session on waterfront master plan
- May 2, 2006 – Ports & Harbor Commission regular meeting discussion item on waterfront master plan
- June 13, 2006 – Parks & Recreation Commission regular meeting discussion item on waterfront master plan
- November 7, 2006 – Ports & Harbor Commission regular meeting discussion item on waterfront master plan
- February 6, 2007 – Ports & Harbor Commission regular meeting discussion item on waterfront master plan
- May 8, 2007 – Parks & Recreation Commission regular meeting – waterfront master plan approval
- May 9, 2007 – Planning & Zoning Commission regular meeting – waterfront master plan approval
- May 15, 2007 – Ports & Harbor Commission regular meeting discussion item on waterfront master plan
- June 19, 2007 – Ports & Harbor Commission regular meeting discussion item on waterfront master plan
- September 25, 2007 – Ports & Harbor Commission regular meeting – waterfront master plan approval and referral to City Council

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Comprehensive and proactive waterfront development within the City of Valdez will be a key factor in the successful economic growth of the community in the future. Valdez is a coastal community with strong ties to the marine environment for recreation and transportation. A successful master plan for the Valdez waterfront will be aware of the multiple uses and demands for access to Port Valdez.

There are three primary waterfront uses that should be considered in future planning. They include natural waterfront, the public waterfront, and the working waterfront. The Valdez Ports and Harbor Commission has recognized the unique nature and importance of the community's waterfront and the importance of using long-term strategies to guide land use. There is a finite amount of upland available for use in Port Valdez and this scarcity should color any conversation concerning waterfront development in Valdez.

### **1.1 Natural Waterfront**

The natural waterfront supports our tourist industry, commercial fishing industry, and is a major contributor to the quality of life here. Port Valdez represents the closest access to the marine environment for residents of interior Alaska. Some users come here for hunting, subsistence, and recreational fishing opportunities. Others use the Port for a wide variety of recreational uses, including transportation access to the rest of Prince William Sound. Any project or development needs to work in concert with community goals outlined in the Coastal Management Plan. One other planning consideration for Prince William Sound is its pristine condition. Most major construction projects conducted by the City will require environmental mitigation to preserve fish and wildlife habitat to secure appropriate permits. In the wake of the *Exxon Valdez* spill, millions have been spent in the Sound and there are limited opportunities for mitigation projects.

## **1.2 Public Waterfront**

The public waterfront relates to how our residents and visitors interact and access Port Valdez and Prince William Sound. Waterfront access is important to community recreational needs, transportation requirements, subsistence access, and facilitation of commercial enterprises. The waterfront is a natural draw for recreational opportunities for people to visit the beach, walk along the harbor, kayak, participate in motorized and non-motorized water vehicle sports, view marine life, or watch a ship land.

## **1.3 Working Waterfront**

The working waterfront describes our port, harbor, and industrial facilities that are dependent on access to Port Valdez for their continued success. Shore side development has to consider the needs and demands of current and future commercial operations. An example would be residential development within the safety zone of the Valdez Container Terminal which would limit use of the port for military cargo transfers. Any of the proposed natural gas pipeline projects would impact use of the port and its facilities. Development of the working waterfront should identify opportunities for infrastructure improvements that promote better intermodal connections of people and cargo to water, highway, and airport transportation links. (See Appendix B for list of City of Valdez Waterfront Intermodal Facilities.)

## **1.4 Strategy**

The shoreline and associated uplands of Port Valdez were broken into functional zones containing similar uses. Current zoning, land uses, and planning priorities were identified for each area. Future development within Port Valdez needs to consider these factors to insure future planning adequately meets community interests and goals. The Valdez Ports and Harbor Commission intends to work



closely with the Valdez Planning and Zoning Commission to help tailor zoning regulations that support this waterfront planning project.

### **1.5 Coastal Zone Management Enforceable Policies**

The Valdez Coastal Zone District is located within the corporate boundaries of the City of Valdez. During early 2006, the City of Valdez approved its final draft of the *Valdez Coastal Management Plan*. As part of the plan, a number of land use policies were identified as being especially important to the City and warranting special consideration under the plan as policies enforceable at the local level above and beyond Federal or State requirements. The issues identified are at the core of the waterfront master planning effort and need to be noted as overall goals for waterfront land use in the City of Valdez.

Five enforceable policies were identified in the 2006 amendment to the *Valdez Coastal Management Plan*. A summary of the priorities is shown below:

1. Prioritization of waterfront land use – Waterfront property will be developed in the following order of prioritization.
  - a. Water dependent uses and activities. Uses that are economically or physically dependent on a coastal location. Examples could include fish hatcheries, fish processing, boat harbors, and marine ways.
  - b. Water related uses. Uses that desire a marine view and access to the waterfront. Examples could include hotels and restaurants.
  - c. Nondependent uses. Uses and activities which are neither water dependent nor water related, but there are no practicable inland alternatives that meet public needs.
2. Fill below mean high water – Piling supported or floating structures shall be used for construction below mean high water unless clear and convincing evidence shows a compelling need for the project.

3. Preservation of navigational access below mean high water – A person may not obstruct or interfere with the free passage or use by a person of any navigable water except under specific circumstances.
4. Tidelands viewsheds – Placement of structures or dredged or fill material in tidelands below mean high water shall minimize, to the maximum extent practicable, obstruction of the water views as currently enjoyed.
5. Floating facilities – Floating facilities in coastal waters within the Valdez Coastal District shall be sited and operated to utilize anchoring methods that securely anchor the facility during high winds and extreme tides prevalent in the area.

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## 2.0 PLANNING ZONES

### 2.1 Area A – Shoup Bay to Mineral Creek



Current zoning districts in Area A are commercial residential and unclassified. Current uses and areas of interest in Area A are residential housing, hiking trails, Mineral Creek State Park, Shoup Bay State Park and cabins, sport and commercial fishing, fish and wildlife habitat, and the Cliff Mine.

#### **2.1.1 Area A Planning Priorities:**

- Preserve fish habitat including spawning sites and fishing areas.
- Encourage recreation related development and opportunities.
- Consider improved access for the public to recreational sites from the Valdez road system.
- A review of potential land sales on the waterfront should be completed to see if land is needed for Harbor or Port growth, industrial or commercial growth, or expanded waterfront facilities to enhance the community's quality of life and recreational opportunities.

## 2.2 Area B – Mineral Creek to the Entrance of the Small Boat Harbor



Current zoning districts in Area B are single family residential, rural residential and light industrial. Current uses and areas of interest in Area B are residential housing, University of Alaska lands – Perkins Cabin, Alaska Marine Highway Ferry Terminal, John Thomas Kelsey Municipal Dock (Valdez City Dock) with recreational fishing from the dock, small cruise ship and fishing boat landings, and plans for renovation for large cruise ships, City Warehouse 1, Laydown Yard to support the municipal dock, Ruth Pond, bulk fuel transfer dock, oil industry offices and warehouses, and a recreational vehicle park.

### 2.2.1 Area B Planning Priorities:

- Development of area around the Kelsey Municipal Dock should adhere to the master plan developed for it.
- Preserve uplands associated with the Kelsey Dock Laydown Yard to support Dock usage, cruise ship related staging, and for potential overflow from the Valdez Container Terminal.

- A review of potential land sales on the waterfront should be completed to see if land is needed for Harbor or Port growth, industrial or commercial growth, or expanded waterfront facilities to enhance the community's quality of life and recreational opportunities.

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## 2.3 Area C – Entrance of Small Boat Harbor to Dock Point



Current zoning districts in Area C are general commercial, light industrial, and waterfront commercial. Current uses and areas of interest in Area C are U.S. Coast Guard vessel moorage, Valdez Small Boat Harbor, SERVS and its related dock, Hotel Hill, Harbor Cove beach and recreational area, hiking trails, and a recreational cabin. Areas in Harbor Cove and on both the east and west sides of the SERVS Dock have been identified as potential sites for harbor expansion.

### 2.3.1 Area C Planning Priorities:

- Development of Small Boat Harbor area should adhere to the master plan developed for it.
- Develop and construct a new small boat harbor.
- Develop funding options and a plan to support deferred maintenance and replacement of Small Boat Harbor facilities.
- Continue projects that will benefit the commercial fishing industry:
  - Heavy-duty sheet pile bulkhead dock in the new harbor to support cargo and fuel movement.

- Public viewing area overlooking commercial fishing operations to allow interpretation and public education about the industry.
- Large Marine Travelift and Lift Dock to accommodate vessels up to 150 tons.
- Develop a master plan for a marine business park at the harbor spit to promote the goals of the Valdez Marine Center Concept.
- Consider making any new launch ramp capable of handling large landing craft.
- Develop new Coast Guard Boat Station and seek the return to the City of the current Coast Guard Dock for potential use as a launch ramp facility.
- Level Hotel Hill and develop harbor related uplands. Parking continues to be the most deficient aspect of the harbor's operation.
- Deepen entrance in existing Small Boat Harbor to better accommodate fishing tenders and other larger vessels.
- Consider potential new vessel launch ramp facility as part of any harbor expansion construction project.
- Consider potential sites for seaplane moorage and operations.
- Review potential land sales on the spit and on the waterfront to see if land is needed for harbor use.
- Create additional uplands on the spit.



## 2.4 Area D – Dock Point to West Loop Road to the Richardson Highway



Current zoning districts in Area D are general commercial, commercial residential, public, and conservation. Current use of Area D is the Duck Flats. (Map of area is in Appendix C.)

### 2.4.1 Area D Planning Priorities:

- Define the boundaries and approve a management plan for the Duck Flats Area Meriting Special Attention (AMSA). This effort will be needed for any future development of the Small Boat Harbor or Container Terminal that approaches the Duck Flats. A management plan was developed in 1992, but was never approved by the City or any of the various natural resource regulatory agencies. The proposed plan defined boundaries and appropriate land uses within the AMSA area. Lacking clear boundaries inhibits any potential future development because the evaluation criterion becomes a matter of how close the project comes to any part of the entire Duck Flats area. A management plan based on the 1992 study needs to be developed and made part of the Valdez Coastal Management Plan. This should be a



high priority given the time that will be needed to work through various agencies.

- A review of potential land sales on the waterfront should be completed to see if land is needed for Harbor or Port growth, industrial or commercial growth, or expanded waterfront facilities to enhance the community's quality of life and recreational opportunities.

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## 2.5 Area E – West Loop Road to East Loop Road adjacent to the Richardson Highway



Current zoning districts in Area E are multi-family residential, light industrial, general commercial, and the Valdez Container Terminal (VCT). Current uses and areas of interest in Area E are the Valdez Container Terminal, residential housing, city land leases, tideland leases, Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ), commercial business outlets, warehouses, boat storage facilities, and apartments. (Map of area is in Appendix C.)

### 2.5.1 Area E Planning Priorities:

- Define and clear City owned lands across Loop Road from the VCT. Funding is required to survey the property, determine how much useable space there is after accounting for wildlife setbacks, and permitting. There is an active eagle nest and fish stream boundaries that need to be identified. This area is the best alternative for storage until the VCT yard can be expanded and the only land remaining adjacent to the VCT available for future Port development. This land needs to be preserved for this purpose. Further

- action concerning this area is dependent on funding of the required survey work and land use planning.
- Once land use planning is complete for the land located across from the VCT, consider construction of platted road from VCT access road to the Richardson Highway. The goal is to improve access to the terminal and soften the tight turns required of trucks accessing the terminal.
  - Develop a Marketing Plan for the Port of Valdez and specifically the VCT.
    - Port MacKenzie continues to vie and compete for Valdez bound freight.
    - Market the VCT and its capabilities with the Gas Pipeline Port Authority.
  - Improve access to the Richardson Highway. Both intersections of Loop Road and the Richardson Highway have been identified as in need of improvement. Tractor-trailer trucks have a difficult time safely turning on or off the highway. The City of Valdez has asked that these improvements be included in the Alaska Statewide Transportation Improvements Program (STIP) list for construction funding. Priority should continue to be given in support of this effort.
    - A safe and clear route to the Richardson Highway is an important priority for the success of the VCT facility.
    - Power line heights need to be evaluated and adjusted to allow clear passage of trucks to the highway.
    - A truck staging area needs to be identified and/or developed to facilitate smooth access to the dock face. The area near the new security gate may be suitable for this purpose.
  - Wildlife habitat may impact usability of City owned property in the area of the VCT. This includes the presence of eagles' nests and anadromous fish streams.
  - A review of potential land sales on the waterfront should be completed to see if land is needed for Port, industrial, or commercial growth.

## 2.5.2 VCT Planning Considerations



The VCT is “middle aged” and is in need of major maintenance and improvement to meet the community's intermodal transportation needs for the future. (See Appendix D for representative photos.)

- Fund major maintenance and maintenance planning for infrastructure at the facility. Maintenance or repair projects include:
  - Upgrade and replace silo transformer. The transformer is extremely over sized and expensive to keep powered up.
  - Upgrade generator and switch gear. This may be the subject of a grant application aimed at protecting our communications infrastructure from interruption during a power outage.
  - Repair electrical pedestals for refrigerator vans. Consider relocation of some pedestals to better and more protected locations.
  - Replace existing dock winches (capstans). Evaluate total number needed and locations for capstans.
  - Repair fendering on the face of the floating dock.

- Consider forward funding of the floating dock inspections that are required every five years. The Port has depended on ever more limited City CIP funding for this work that may be more difficult to obtain in the future.
- Seek funding for an initial planning and engineering study for expansion of VCT facilities. This is will eventually require an Environmental Impact Study for Army Corps of Engineers permitting. Projects falling within the scope of this effort include:
  - Expand the yard to improve marshalling storage capabilities.
  - Expand the length of the floating dock.
  - Add additional dolphins to dock.
  - Develop a new landing craft dock within the expanded yard.
  - Add a new sheet pile dock to the facility.
- Widen and strengthen transfer ramps to floating dock in preparation for heavy lifts.
- Find an asphalt paving design that can withstand heavy imposed loads of lift trucks.
- Move scale house to a more advantageous position further into the yard or consider widening the road around this area to make it easier for trucks accessing the facility.
- Move warehouse building and other structures to the back of the yard to improve utilization of available space.
- Continue to maintain relationship with stevedore operator to ensure the equipment and expertise is in place to keep the Port competitive with other Alaskan ports.
- Place additional fill at entrance of the causeway to provide room for truck staging. Coordinate permitting with effort to remove a portion of Hotel Hill.

### **2.5.3 Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ) Planning Considerations**

The Valdez City Council, Ports and Harbor Commission, and Planning and Zoning Commission met in a special work session to discuss the importance of the FTZ. The FTZ concept was supported by these groups. Recommendations for the FTZ include:

- Update the Operating Manual for the Foreign-Trade Zone.
- Specify target acreage for the FTZ and be sure to replace lands that are lost through sales or leases by the City.
- Study available City owned land and identify property that would be suitable for use in the FTZ.
- File paperwork required to update the status of the FTZ boundaries.
- Conduct a marketing survey to identify potential customers for the FTZ.



## 2.6 Area F – East Loop Road to Glacier Stream adjacent to Richardson Highway



Current zoning district in Area F is light industrial. Current uses and areas of interest in Area F are the Old Town site, tideland leases, warehousing, Pipe Yard, Alaska Railroad land, Valdez Sewer Treatment Plant/Baler Facility, King Salmon Pond, summer and winter recreation, birding, and commercial business sites. (Map of area is in Appendix C.)

Careful review of any proposed waterfront land use must be given in the old Valdez town site and the R-22 zoning area. This is especially true of hazard "Zone A" identified in the 1983 Dowl *Old Town Hazards Assessment* that recommends all existing facilities be removed and land be reserved for use as a green belt only. Zone A is an area very highly susceptible to seismically induced ground failure, such as submarine landslides, ground cracking and stretching, subsidence, liquefaction, and wave run up. Waterfront structures in this zone could give way to unstable ground **without** seismic inducement. Plate 1 of the *Old Town Hazards Assessment* prepared by Dowl Engineers clearly shows this

area which is centered on the Old Town Dock and runs from the VCT to Glacier Stream.

### **2.6.1 Area F Planning Priorities:**

- Pipe Yard (Foreign-Trade Zone) Priorities
  - Ensure that no City owned land within the Foreign-Trade Zone is sold.
  - Identify usable land in the Foreign-Trade Zone and determine how many acres have been sold. Identify other land available to make up lost acreage. File Zone Modification Request with Foreign-Trade Zone Board.
  - Investigate permitting required to remove alder brush.
  - Remove debris, brush, junk, and scrap metal to make upland storage visible and available for potential use.
  - Establish a regular maintenance schedule for brush control.
  - Perform condition survey of perimeter fencing and explore funding opportunities to repair it.
  - Preserve Old Town site as an interpretation and public education area. Develop as recreational site for summer and winter activities including the King Salmon Pond, birding, and trails.
- Improve road access from the VCT to the Pipe Yard to facilitate movement of trucks that avoids conflicts with traffic on the Richardson Highway.
- Restrict further residential development on Loop Road between VCT and Pipe Yard to preserve the explosive safety zone and areas available for waterfront related commercial development.
- The Old Town area has been considered a possible location for boat maintenance and repairs that could accommodate larger boats. This might include a dry dock or marine railway and related upland development for support industries. Only temporary marine loading facilities and storage areas are recommended in hazard "Zone A" identified in the Dowl *Old Town*



*Hazards Assessment* study. A more permanent facility would require further study.

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## 2.7 Area G – Glacier Stream to Allison Creek



Current zoning districts in Area G are light industrial, heavy industrial, and public. Current uses and areas of interest in Area G are a Lowe River wetlands, Robe Lake wetlands, waterfowl hunting, cemetery, historic cemetery, gravel extraction, fuel refinery, fish hatchery, hydroelectric plant, hiking trails, sport and commercial fishing, fish and wildlife habitat, and Allison Point campground.

### 2.7.1 Area G Planning Priorities:

- Preserve fish habitat including spawning sites and fishing areas.
- Encourage recreation related development and opportunities.
- Future development of Petro Star Refinery fuel loading dock.

## 2.8 Area H – Allison Creek to Entrance Point



Current zoning districts in Area H are heavy industrial and unclassified. Current uses and areas of interest in Area H are recreation in Anderson Bay, sport and commercial fishing, historic sites identified for preservation, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Terminal, and unclassified lands to the west of the terminal identified as a potential site of a gas liquidification plant and LNG terminal.

### **2.8.1 Area H Planning Priorities:**

- Preserve fish habitat including spawning sites and fishing areas.
- LNG terminal site.

## Appendix A - Works Cited

- Bechtol Planning and Development Valdez Coastal Management Plan – 2006 Plan Amendment. Valdez Coastal District, City of Valdez, January 2006.
- Bermello, Ajamil & Partners, Inc. Long Range Waterfront Plan for the City and Borough of Juneau. City and Borough of Juneau, January 2004.
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- Winchester, James. Comparative Analysis Valdez Boat Harbor. City of Valdez, February 1996.

## **Appendix B - City of Valdez Waterfront Intermodal Facilities**

**John Thomas Kelsey Municipal Dock (Valdez City Dock)** – The City owns and operates the 600 foot long and 60 foot wide wooden wharf that was constructed in 1965. The deck height is 16 feet and water depth at the face of the dock is –35 feet at mean lower low water. Services available include water and garbage collection. Telephone service can be provided by the local utility company and wastewater disposal and fuel delivery are provided by private contractor.

**Valdez Container Terminal (VCT)** – The City owns and operates the terminal which is located on Ammunition Island. Construction on the facility was completed in 1982. It has a 700 foot long and 100 foot wide concrete floating dock. Two mooring dolphins extend the usable length of the dock to 1,200 feet. The deck height is 15 feet and water depth at the face of the dock is -50 feet at mean lower low water. The dock is connected to a 21 acre marshalling yard by two 200 foot ramps. The yard currently supports container, refrigerator van, and wood chip storage. Services available at the VCT include a Foreign-Trade Zone, longshoring/stevedoring services, water, and garbage collection. A scale house utilizing a 60 ton certified scale is located at the entrance to the facility.

**Valdez Grain Terminal** – Also located on Ammunition Island with construction completed in 1982, is the Valdez Grain Terminal. The terminal has 9 silos that are 112 feet tall and 33 feet wide and includes 4 shipping bins with a facility capacity of 522,000 bushels. A control/office building is included with the facility.

**Valdez Small Boat Harbor** – The City owns and operates a small boat harbor with 500 slips and room for about 200 additional transient vessels. Services available at the harbor include moorage, ice, fish pump, wireless internet access, sewage pumpout, power, garbage collection, tidal grid, used oil collection, 60 ton boat lift, upland vessel

storage, vessel maintenance yard, hoists, fish cleaning station, small cruise ship mooring and a boat launch ramp.

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Appendix C – Map of Planning Areas D through F





## Appendix D – VCT Images



**Damaged Railing at East Approach Ramp**



**Scale House**



**Damaged Power Pedestal**



**Power Capstan**



**Junk in the Storage Yard**



**Bent Fendering**