

# A road means better ex-vessel prices for commercial fishermen

The Homer Port and Harbor accommodates everything from tankers to water taxis, but "commercial fishing is still king here," said Harbormaster Bryan Hawkins.

He emphasized open access to the fish dock, which offers a fisherman-friendly market environment. "No one entity has control here — multiple fish buyers operate in Homer, and that creates a competitive marketplace," he said. "As a result, fishermen are able to negotiate better prices here in Homer."

Sited on Kachemak Bay near the Cook Inlet's mouth, the port is also the hub of Homer's marine trade economy. Fishermen who moor there are able to access a wide range of commercial services, including boat building and repair, engine service, electronics, hydraulics, and metalwork and welding.

**Trade association:** Awareness of the marine-related economy is promoted by the non-profit Homer Marine Trades Association group, which collaborates with the port on marketing. The association has 66 mostly small-scale member businesses, but some have more than a dozen employees, said Hawkins.

The support of the association and its business mix distinguish the port. "I worked out at sea for 22 years, and the ability to come to town, figure out what's available, make contacts, and access the amount of equipment on the shelf is remarkable," said Hawkins.

The fish dock features eight cranes and an ice plant. Steel and wood grids are also available, and a harbor officer is on duty 24/7.

Another "key component" of the port's serviceability is that



Homer's port on Kachemak Bay.

it's connected to roads, Hawkins said, with halibut and black cod trucked out to fresh markets outside of Alaska. It's a market that's gotten stronger with the emergence of the individual quota system.

"I think that helped create more opportunity because it's made

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Homer Port and Harbor staff.

the season longer and buyers are able to market to the fresh market throughout the season," Hawkins said.

Fleet consolidation has resulted in a greater focus on negotiating with buyers for a "quality product," he continued, but it hasn't reduced activity at the harbor.

Permanent mooring spots are full, and the transient fleet is "quite large," Hawkins said.

Though the port is one of the state's commercial fishing hubs, it also includes two deep-water piers. Commercial freight, towing, and tour vessels moor in Homer, which Hawkins said has "emerged as a port of call" in Southcentral Alaska.

**Expansion:** That's why expansion plans are afoot. "We've got growing pains," said Hawkins, and the goal is to create a new deep-water harbor basin of at least 20 acres for the large-vessel fleet. The current basin is 50 acres, and space there will be opened up for mid-size and smaller vessels when the new one's built.

It's a challenging plan. The project cost is estimated at between \$80 million to \$130 million, and federal funding will be necessary.

The Army Corps of Engineers did an economic study and deemed the project not feasible at this time, but Hawkins said the port is "still working on finding solutions to the cost of construction."

Also in the works is the expansion of one of the deep-water docks, which is slated to be significantly widened and strengthened. Hawkins expects that work on state Department of Transportation-funded economic feasibility and environmental studies will begin this winter.

Use trends are favoring the port's expansion goals. Kachemak Bay features a relatively mild, subarctic climate, and Hawkins said it's a "point of refuge" for larger vessels seeking shelter from bad weather. Vessel landings and business activity at the piers are increasing year to year, he continued, making the pier expansion a market-driven project.

"We see that trend continuing on into the future, and that will help justify expanding that facility," said Hawkins.

Homer's economy is diverse but, as with many coastal communities, its epicenter is its port. "One way or another, everyone's tied to the water and the harbor," Hawkins said.

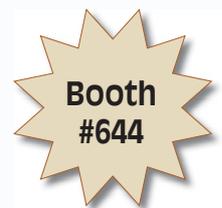
• **Moorage**

Homer Small Boat Harbor provides 18-, 20-, 24-, 32-, 40-, 50-, and 75-foot stall sizes, totaling 883 reserved stalls. There is more than 7,000 linear feet of transient moorage.

*continued on page 22*

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# PORT OF THE MONTH *Homer continued from page 21*

**• Potable water**

Available year-round at the Harbor Office, Fish Dock, Deep-Water Dock, and Pioneer Dock. Also available during May 1 to Oct. 1 along A-N Float, at the end of EE and FF Float, one side of EE Float, and System 5. Upcoming construction projects for 2014 will be extending/improving water lines to several more of the float systems.

**• Power**

110v, 208v single phase, and 208v three phase. Power is available for transient vessels at a daily/monthly flat rate, to reserved stall lessees for a monthly availability fee, plus kilowatts used, and at a special rate during the winter under the Winter Metered Power Program.

**• Bilge and oil**

Recycling satellites for used oil, filters, oily rags, antifreeze, zincs, and used batteries are located at the top of Ramps 2 and 8. A seasonal sewage pump-out station is located at the end of EE Float. No bilge pump-out stations are available.

**• Fuel**

Petro Marine Fuel Float has two stations, one open year-round and the other during the summer season. Call (907) 235-8548.

**• Grids**

Two tidal grids are located inside the harbor basin. The wood grid is 122 feet by 22 feet and allows vessels up to 59 feet in length. There's a maximum of 50 tons. The steel grid is 100 feet by 22 feet and allows vessels 60 feet to 120 feet, with a maximum of 200 tons.

**• Technicians**

The Port of Homer is partnered with Homer Marine Trades Association, a local organization with more than 100 marine trades and service providers as members. Visit their website at

[www.homermarinetrades.com](http://www.homermarinetrades.com) for more information and a directory of services provided.

**• Transportation**

Homer is accessible by road (Sterling Highway), by air (Homer Airport/Era Aviation), and by sea (boats, water taxis, state ferry).

**• Showers**

During the summer, Sportsman Supply and Homer Spit Campground near the harbor have shower facilities. The rest of the year, shower facilities are available just off the spit at The Washboard and farther in town at Homer Cleaning Center.

**• Grocery and big-box retailer**

Primary grocery stores include Safeway, Save U More, and Kachemak Wholesale.

**• Wi-Fi**

Internet is available in the harbor as well as at multiple locations in town.

**• Laundry**

During the summer, Sportsman Supply by the harbor provides laundry facilities. The rest of the year, laundry facilities are available just off the spit at The Washboard and farther in town at Homer Cleaning Center.

**• Contact**

**City of Homer Port and Harbor**

4350 Homer Spit Road

Homer, AK 99603

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Fax: (907) 235-3152

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