

## **Take-home messages from interviews with Alaska stakeholders during the development of the Alaska Clean Harbors program (2009-2010)**

***The regulatory landscape in Alaska can be difficult to navigate and there are serious concerns about potential future regulations.*** Federal and state regulations are not always clearly defined or understood by those trying to uphold them. A Clean Harbors program should be able to assist harbors in navigating environmental laws and regulations, and the committee that oversees the program should have members from the regulatory community who can offer advice on relevant topics. A Clean Harbors program may also be able to provide assistance with developing SWPPS, SPCCs, and other permit requirements that some harbors have.

***Harbor users should be a primary focus for pollution-prevention efforts, and success may not be guaranteed. Changing behaviors is generally easier said than done.*** Many Alaskans, and boaters from the Lower 48 who may fish or visit Alaska with their vessels, are generally used to freedoms in their activities not afforded to vessel owners in the Lower 48. This includes not only things like sandblasting paint over open water, but also not picking up pet waste on floats and harbor uplands. Behaviors don't change overnight, but there are trends beginning in Alaska that will over time influence upcoming generations of harbor users to be increasingly responsible in their marine and upland environments. A Clean Harbors program should work earnestly with harbor users to encourage behavioral changes where there are opportunities to improve stewardship of the marine environment.

***Harbor users need to be directly involved in a Clean Harbors program if it is going to be a success.*** Getting harbor users on board is going to be a primary challenge of a Clean Harbors program. This should not come to a surprise to harbor operators, as working to communicate effectively with harbor users is a major component of running a harbor facility. A Clean Harbors program in Alaska should have representatives from the boating community (including from fishery associations) involved in running the program with seats on the oversight committee for the program.

***Harbormasters and other staff are typically stretched to the limit on time and budgets. A Clean Harbors program can't significantly add to their workload if it's going to be successful.*** Pollution prevention is one of many issues that face a harbormaster or port director when running a harbor facility. A Clean Harbor program must be efficient in order to be effective in Alaska. The BMP Checklist should be as straightforward and self-explanatory as possible. Having a statewide coordinator for ACH would provide direct assistance to harbor staff. The benefits of participating in a Clean Harbors program, and the time and cost requirements, need to be well defined at the beginning and updated as needed as a harbor goes through the certification process.

***BMPs need to be economically feasible in order to be implemented.*** Best Management Practices are, by definition, economically feasible measures that will reduce pollution. In most cases, the BMPs within the Clean Harbors program emphasize communication between harbor staff and users. Capital projects may be necessary to implement some BMPs, however, and through this process we have learned that funding is a sensitive subject statewide. It is important that the Alaska Clean Harbors program can provide some tangible assistance (i.e. free signage) as well as assistance to harbor staff in obtaining grants from other programs for capital improvements.

***While facilities share common needs (i.e. used oil disposal), there are unique issues facing most***

***harbors. It is necessary for a Clean Harbors program to understand and work with the unique fleets, regions, and other pollution-prevention programs already in place around the state.***

Crabbers, long liners, gill net fleets, seiners, sailors, sports fishermen, and weekend warriors – Alaska's harbors have a diverse array of users. Some harbors see all of these fleets come through, others may only have one or two primary user groups. Different users and different regions may face unique environmental issues in addition to the common needs of all harbor facilities (i.e. used oil collection). The coordinator of a Clean Harbors program should spend the time to become familiar with each participating harbor and their unique set of harbor users. Additionally, there are many community organizations and other programs in place around the state that may already have pollution prevention programs that include work with the harbors. A statewide Clean Harbors program should have open communication with these groups and work to avoid duplicating efforts, but instead fill in as needed to complete Clean Harbor certification through whatever means are most efficient.

***While many BMPs may already be in place, it is often difficult to ensure the outreach to users and enforcement that make them effective.*** Implementing a BMP on paper is easier than enforcing it on the job. BMP implementation must be done with a good faith effort and be understood by all harbor staff that are involved on a daily basis with harbor operations. Harbor users also must be made aware if there are any changes that may affect the way they work in and around the harbor. Everyone is aware that, like changing behaviors, making sure BMPs are followed is generally easier said than done. However, we believe that this does not eliminate the need to begin implementation and working towards effective changes, where necessary, to protect the marine environment and our quality of life in coastal communities.

***Harbormasters like hats.*** The Advisory Committee provided great feedback during the development of a logo for Alaska Clean Harbors. We did not anticipate this task taking the amount of time that it did, but the result was a great product that can be displayed proudly by harbormasters around the state. Making sure that the logo could be embroidered on a hat, or made into a pin, as well as put onto a flag was emphasized during the process.

***There is general interest and support for a Clean Harbors program in Alaska.*** During the 2009 AAHPA meeting the Board of Directors passed a resolution supporting the development of a Clean Harbors program in Alaska. Nearly all of the harbor staff we talked with were enthusiastic (albeit cautiously) about the potential of a Clean Harbors program. The AAHPA travels annually to the Seattle Boat Show to market Alaska's harbors, and harbormasters are keenly aware of the need to have high occupancy rates in their slips. We are all aware that Alaska's waters are marketed as "pristine" – we need to collectively work to make sure we can say that with a straight face as we stand on the floats in our harbors around the state.