

HISTORY ON THE CHANNEL YOUR MONTHLY NEWS FLASH

F O J D C M

FRIENDS OF THE JUNEAU DOUGLAS CITY MUSEUM

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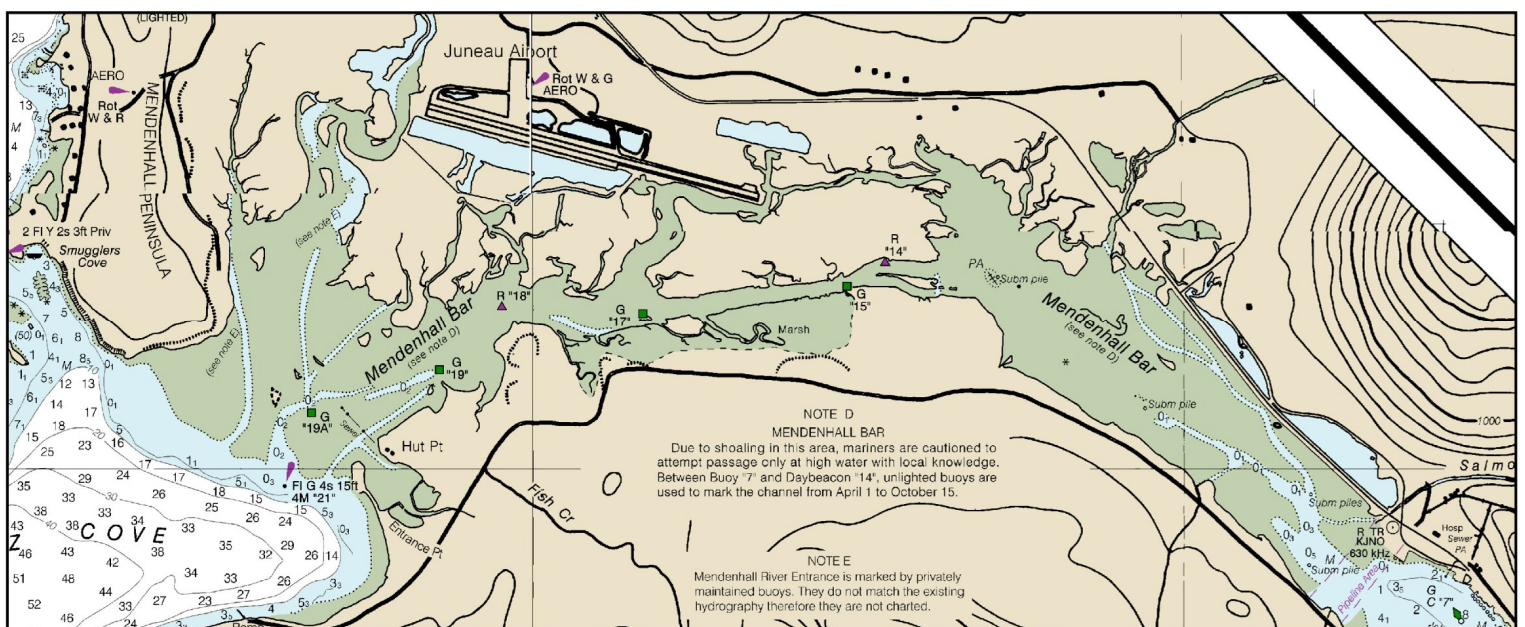
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TO DREDGE BAR AN IMPORTANT JUNEAU NEED

December 1, 1916--Matters affecting Juneau's future prosperity are being seriously discussed by the merchants and other interested citizens. The consensus is that one of the most important questions the city must solve is adequate facilities for the fishing fleet.

This naturally brings up the proposition of dredging the Mendenhall Bar, making navigable that stretch of water beyond Norway Point, sufficient to accommodate the large fishing fleet that will travel this course, if such an improvement is made.



NOAA Chart 17315

These boats now go to Petersburg and Ketchikan, the commercial life of which towns is practically kept alive by the fishing industry. [Moreover] many of the boats operating to the westward where the best fishing banks are located go direct to Seattle with their catches.

Many of the city's old timers tell of the prosperous condition of Juneau, when in earlier days the mines were not a source of any great amount of business; of the revenue from the fishing fleet; and that the money spent by those employed in fishing and the business created by the handling of fish at Juneau was practically all the city had to sustain itself. Hence this great industry deserves and should have the greatest and most serious consideration at this time.

Many have said that benefits of dredging of the Bar would redound more to the city's prosperity than would the proposed Channel bridge, to be constructed at a cost of approximately half a million dollars.

No one attempts to say that the bridge would not be a valuable adjunct; all concede that it would be an excellent thing for the community.

The waters of Alaska are teeming with fish--halibut, cod and other species. Fishermen often throw back into the water cod and other fish when trolling for salmon.



Supper on the Bar, about 1935--

Sydney Laurence painted this pleasant scene, near the future east end of our airport runway.

A great demand especially in the East exists for cheap fish. If it is possible for the boats to make this port without extra expense, all such fish will pass through the city for shipments—Juneau will be a clearing house, with the resultant impetus to business. Then too, the common mud shark, plentiful in the waters of Southeastern Alaska, would be caught and shipped. It has been demonstrated by governmental investigations that this little-thought-of fish has a food value.

Councilman Claude Ericson, yesterday stated that he fully realized the importance of this matter to Juneau and other Channel towns, that he was heartily in favor of the Bar being dredged, and would at Friday's council meeting bring up the matter. Ericson favored a plan of requesting the Governor and the Mayor to make a trip to Washington to take the matter up with government officials, that he felt ways and means could be provided for such a procedure.

This question of dredging the Bar is an important one. It should receive the most profound consideration of all the citizens. From present conditions, nothing is of more vital concern to the city's welfare. (Daily Alaska Dispatch, abridged)

November, 1977-- "...it is concluded that development for deep draft vessels is not at all practical. The high cost of maintenance and the project cost exclusive of environmental issues would exceed the benefits over the entire range of depths required to accommodate anticipated traffic." *Alaska District, Corps of Engineers, Feasibility Report*

January 31, 1994--"Not all of our harbor and navigation projects have enjoyed complete success. At Gastineau Channel, for instance, excessive shoaling continues to frustrate us. Sometimes nature gets to you. Gastineau Channel represents God's way of saying "This is the way it's going to be." *Wendell Moore, quoted in "Engineering in the Far North.*

February 13, 2006--Governor Murkowski, to the surprise of some residents, and to an extent, his own regional transportation officials, has asked the Legislature to approve spending \$7 million to dredge out navigable channels in upper Gastineau Channel.

This wouldn't be the first dredging project in Gastineau Channel...the shallow areas of Gastineau Channel were dredged in 1959 and 1960 as part of a multiyear federal project. The channel was dredged again to build Juneau's main thoroughfare, Egan Drive. (*Juneau Empire, extract*)