Former Kodiak Harbor Employee Heads Up Juneau Harbors

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Ed Schoenfeld/Coast Alaska

Juneau has a new harbormaster. Phil Benner of Haines topped a field of 20 candidates for the position. He's spent the past two years overseeing harbors in Haines. Before that, the Navy veteran spent three years as a harbor patrol officer here in Kodiak.

Kodiak Harbormaster Marty Owen said Benner did a great job for the city of Kodiak, and he recommended him highly when Haines, and then Juneau, city officials called for references. Owen said Benner got his basic harbor training here in Kodiak, and says he's really proud of his advancement.

(KMXT's Jay Barrett contributed to this report.)

-- Harbor1 16 seconds: The water's always ... part of my life. It's in my blood.

He says the job was a rare opportunity to move up while remaining in the business. Haines has just two harbor staffers, while Juneau has 15 to 30, depending on the time of the year.

The capital city has five small boat harbors holding as many as 1,700 vessels. The harbormaster is also responsible for the city's cruise-ship docks.

Benner says he'll look for savings in the entire operation.

-- Harbor2 15 seconds: We're going to take a look ... all the way up through personnel.

Benner starts work in early March. Juneau's previous harbormaster was Lou McCall, who retired in October and died of cancer the following month.

Juneau Port Director John Stone says Benner is well qualified for the position.

-- Harbor3 12 seconds: We've heard ... leadership qualities and would do well with our staff.

Juneau is in the process of upgrading its aging waterfront infrastructure. Stone says the new harbormaster will oversee that work.

-- Harbor4 11 seconds: We're going to be rebuilding ... so that will be a challenge.