



SITKA SEAPLANE BASE SITING ANALYSIS UPDATE Public Meeting Notes Wednesday, February 17, 2016

CBS Staff – Dan Tadic, Stan Eliason
DOWL Team – Tom Middendorf, Mark Morris

Presentation: Dan and Tom recapped the results of the 2002 and 2012 studies and Dan explained that DOWL was hired to address recent FAA questions about demand. Dan explained that the City has also hired PND to evaluate the problems with the current seaplane base and determine the improvements and costs to make it serviceable until a new seaplane base can be built. Tom presented a recap of the results of the survey of demand and amenities for the new seaplane base and handed out the survey results.

Discussion/Comments:

- DOWL asked whether the survey results are overstating demand. Several commercial and non-commercial pilots responded that the numbers appear to understate the demand.
- Roughly 50 airplanes flying between Seattle and Anchorage use the private seaplane base every summer. This facility formerly had 7 employees during peak years of the 1970's and 80's. The age and condition of the current facility has caused many to avoid Sitka, switch to amphibians or wheels, or base aircraft in other locations.
- The seaplane base needs to service both commercial and non-commercial users, based and transient.
- To make commercial operations viable, the facility needs to provide an aircraft haul-out ramp and space for aircraft maintenance. The current practice of using the minimal DOT&PF ramp on the other side of the Sitka Airport requires careful timing with tides, is not useable in strong wind conditions, and requires airport staff to be available to escort trailered aircraft across the runway. None of this is reliable enough for regular maintenance needs of commercial users. DOWL should ask the airport whether they would support increased escorts if more users needed it.
- The demand numbers appear to be understated. There are various levels and types of potential commercial use of the seaplane base. Guaranteed aircraft parking spots, an aircraft maintenance area and on-site fuel would be critical for commercial use. Many of the users would be seasonal, such as herring spotters. Transient users have avoided the existing facility due to its condition.
- The Department of Education should be encouraged to support an aviation school that would take advantage of the region's use of floatplanes.
- The existing and new seaplane base are critical for outlying communities that are dependent on seaplanes for access. There is a need for space for transient floatplane parking this

summer and until a new facility is built. Consider an expansion to the current Work Float on an interim basis.

- There is private land available next to the current seaplane base that could be sold to Sitka for parking and other uplands uses. Dan Tadic noted that the current site has many other issues besides parking, such as conflicts with boats and birds from the adjacent seafood processor, not enough space to expand the seaplane base, and shallow water.
- Petersburg has a drive down ramp so fuel trucks can deliver fuel plus they have private floating hangars.
- Would city insurance pay for any damage from wind?
- The City could be the fuel provider.
- Ketchikan has a great video showing the economic importance of seaplanes in Ketchikan. We need to do an economic impact study showing what seaplanes can do for Sitka – tourism, taxes, fuel sales, etc.