We appreciate this opportunity to update the Assembly on the Douglas Harbor replacement project. I plan to answer the following questions at the July 20 COW meeting:

1. Why are we replacing the harbor?
2. Why are we dredging the harbor?
3. Are the dredge spoils harmful?

The Board recently asked the Army Corps for authorization to dredge the seafloor of the original harbor basin and to put the dredge spoils in the middle of Gastineau Channel, directly outside of the harbor in about 110’ of water. Regulatory approval to deposit harbor dredge spoils in this location was granted by the Army Corps on two previous occasions, once in 1999 and again in 2002. This area is also in the primary vessel travel lane and in the vicinity of the outfall from the Juneau Sewage Treatment Plant, factors discouraging subsistence fishing.

Sediments in the Douglas Harbor area contain trace amounts of mercury. Sediments from the previous dredge operations contain mercury at levels slightly below the screening levels being used by regulatory agencies on the U.S. West Coast. Sediments in the old harbor area contain mercury at levels above screening levels, triggering requirements for comprehensive testing to determine the toxicity of the spoils and an analysis of disposal alternatives.

During its analysis, the Board considered twelve disposal alternatives. Several alternatives would provide less exposure of the spoils to the environment than the
Channel disposal. However, this comes at additional expense. The Board chose the Gastineau Channel alternative because it complied with all applicable requirements of the Clean Water Act, our consultant believes that no harm will result from the disposal, and the cost is within the project budget. The Board also noted that there is no evidence of human health or environmental issues associated with previous dredge operations or the existing old harbor area. The alternatives providing less exposure of the spoils to the environment are more expensive and would require additional project funding. At this time, funding would need to come from user fee increases. The Board concluded that harbor users would not support a fee increase for this purpose at this time.

I am attaching PowerPoint slides I will present at the meeting, a memo from Dr. Jack Word, our environmental consultant, about health and environmental effects of the dredge spoils, and a copy of our disposal alternative analysis.

The Board would like to obtain concurrence from the Assembly on its request to dispose of the dredge sediments in Gastineau Channel.

Call me at 586-0294 if you have questions.

Attachments