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## **Barge Line Service to Alaska**

By Bruce Johnson

Common carrier barge service from Puget Sound to Alaska is continuing in abundance this year, despite a drastic downturn in the state's oil-based economy and the effect that decline is having on cargo movements from the "Lower 48". As of this writing, 10 barge lines are offering service to Alaska on a year-round basis and/or seasonal basis.

Times are tough, though for the Alaska transportation industry in general, and barge operators are being hit the hardest by the impact of soft oil prices on Alaska's economy and the buying of goods to be shipped north. Because of curtailments in state government spending and a slowdown in business and individual spending in Alaska, the shipping of building materials -- a mainstay of the barge business -- has fallen steeply during the past year. And the outlook is for more decrease in freight volumes in consumer goods as well as cargo related to construction.

At the same time, a sizable increase in waterborne transportation capacity is scheduled to take place soon in the Alaska trade. Sea-Land Service intends to introduce three new containerships on its run to Anchorage. This will give Sea-Land alone a 50 percent increase in weekly sailing capacity -- resulting in more competitive pressures for barge carriers into Alaska's "Rail Belt" market as well as for trailership operator TOTE, also serving that region.

Already there has been a major casualty in the "Rail Belt" portion of the Alaska trade. Last September, triple-deck trailerbarge operator Sea Way Express, in operation for only 2 1/2 years, shut down its service between Seattle and Seward. Another industry shakeout or more could occur before 1987 is concluded, depending on how much cargo volumes and freight rates deteriorate and to what extent carriers are able to control their operating costs.

Meanwhile, shippers of goods to Alaska have a fine array of barge companies at their service on a common carrier basis. As of this writing, these are the services available and how they can be contacted:

**Alaska Barge Lines.** A Totem Ocean Trailer Express (TOTE) company, Alaska Barge Lines offers monthly containerized, break-bulk and equipment service on a seasonal basis between Tacoma and Anchorage. This year, sailings are planned from early April until September or October. Alaska Barge Lines sails from TOTE's terminal at the Port of Tacoma, 1-800-325-2752 from out of state.

**Alaska Cargo Transport.** With Jore Corp, as agent, Alaska Cargo Transport provides service via Samson Tug & Barge every 10 days on a year-round basis from Seattle to Seward for distribution of containerized, break-bulk and equipment freight to Anchorage, Fairbanks and the

Kenai Peninsula, and to other Samson destinations. In addition, Alaska Cargo Transport is planning five seasonal sailings this year direct to Anchorage. The barge service is offered from the Port of Seattle's Terminal 115 on the Duwamish Waterway. (206) 762-3035 or 1-800-327-7739.

Alaska Hydro Train. A Crowley Maritime company, Alaska Hydro Train has weekly, year-round rail car and highway trailer sailings from Seattle to Shittier, where the Alaska Railroad provides service to Anchorage and Fairbanks. Tandem sailings of one combination rail/trailer barge and one rail car barge occur every Friday from Crowley-occupied Pier 17 at the Port of Seattle. Each combination barge has a capacity for 50 rail cars on the main deck and 105 trailers on the upper deck. Every rail car barge also carries 50 rail cars. (206) 443-8100 or 1-800-248-8632.

Alaska Marine Lines. A Lynden Inc. company, Alaska Marine Lines provides weekly, year-round containerized, break-bulk and equipment service between Seattle and Southeast Alaska and on a bi-weekly basis to Yakutat on the south central Alaska coast. Southeast Alaska ports of call are Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Juneau, Haines, Skagway and Sitka. Alaska Marine Lines sails every Thursday from the Duwamish Waterway. (206) 763-4244 or 1-800-443-4343.

Alaska Outport Transportation Association. This non-profit association of Alaska shippers furnishes break-bulk and equipment service from Seattle to Southeast Alaska outports every three weeks from April to November and monthly from November through March. Regular calls are made at Hydaburg, Craig, Klawock, Kake, Angoon, Tenakee Springs, Hoonah, Excursion Inlet, Gustavus and Pelican and, on inducement, stops are made at various other sites. D & V Boat Co. provides towing and the service departs from the north end of Lake Union, (206) 632-7744 or 1-800-682-2682.

Boyer Alaska Barge Lines. Containerized, break-bulk and equipment service is provided on a weekly year-round basis from Seattle to the Southeast Alaska cities of Ketchikan, Wrangell, and Petersburg and on a biweekly basis to Metlakatla. Through Ketchikan, Boyer Alaska also services Prince of Wales Island outports. Sailings occur every Thursday from the Duwamish. (206) 763-8575.

Northland Services Inc. On a year-round, weekly basis, Northland offers containerized, break-bulk and equipment sailings from Seattle to the Southeast Alaska cities of Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Juneau and Sitka and, on a monthly basis, to Yakutat on the south central coast. On a seasonal basis starting in April, Northland provides the same type of service from Seattle to Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula and on to more than 40 communities in western and northern Alaska, including Naknek, Dillingham, Bethel, Nome and Kotzebue. This year, five such sailings are scheduled. Doing Northland's towing are Dunlap Towing of La Conner and Campbell Towing of Wrangell. Southeast Alaska sailings are every Thursday from Manson's terminal on the Duwamish; previously, Northland sailed from Kenmore ton north Lake Washington. (206) 485-9502 or 1-800-426-3113.

Pacific Alaska Line - West. A Crowley Maritime company, PAL provides a seasonal containerized, break-bulk and equipment service, from April to early October, between Seattle and nearly 90 communities in western and northern Alaska on a direct-call basis and through lighterage services involving Crowley. Ports of call include Naknek, Dillingham, Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue and Barrow. This year, seven sailings are scheduled. PAL sails from Crowley-operated

Pier 17 at the Port of Seattle. (206) 443-8100 or 1-800-248-8632.

Sanson Tug & Barge. Containerized, break-bulk and equipment service is offered every 10 days on a year-round basis from Seattle to Sitka, Seward and Kodiak and every three weeks to Adak in the Aleutians, and Cordova and Valdez in south central Alaska. One sailing is to Adak, with service available on an inducement basis at Dutch Harbor and other Aleutian points, and the alternate service includes Cordova and Valdez. Foss Maritime provides towing for Samson's longer ocean voyages. Samson sailings depart from the Port of Seattle's Terminal 115 on the Duwamish. (206) 767-7820 or 1-800-331-3522.

The Barge Lines. Weekly, year-round service for containerized, break-bulk and equipment cargo is provided from Seattle to Juneau. The Barge Lines charters space on barges belonging to Northland Services. (206) 281-0950 or (907) 586-6886 in Juneau.

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