

MUST READ **ALASKA**

Nome, Army Corps of Engineers, sign agreement to construct expansion of Nome Harbor

By **Suzanne Downing** - January 28, 2024



Col. Jeff Palazzini, district commander of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Nome Mayor John Handeland

In a major step for the future of the Arctic region's transportation infrastructure, representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Alaska District and the City of Nome gathered in Nome for a signing ceremony on Thursday.

The event marked the official agreement between the two stakeholders to advance the construction of the Port of Nome Modification Project. The "project partnership agreement," signed by Col. Jeffrey Palazzini, district commander, and John Handeland, mayor of Nome, outlines the responsibilities and cost-sharing arrangements between the federal government and the City of Nome for the expansion of Nome Harbor.

The Port of Nome Modification Project's goal address limitations at the port and allow larger vessels to access the harbor. Currently, the outer basin's depth restricts ships with drafts greater than 18 feet, making it difficult for them to navigate the waters. The project involves enlarging the outer basin and creating a new deep-water basin at a depth of minus 40 feet. The expansion will require dredging to deepen and maintain both basins and their navigation channels.

The project will extend the west causeway by some 3,400 feet and build a new east causeway aligned with F Street. The expansion will result in approximately 2,000 feet of usable dock moorage area and a series of 400-foot docks attached to the causeways.



The economic implications of this project are huge for Nome. As sea ice recedes and shipping traffic increases in the Arctic, Nome is positioned to become a major port of call, which could lead to a more efficient transportation hub that can reinforce the region’s supply chain, improving housing, food security, and infrastructure, ultimately bringing down prices for consumers across western Alaska.

The cost of the preconstruction, engineering, design, and initial construction phase, is estimated at \$250 million. The total project cost is anticipated to be \$548 million, with the federal government contributing 90 percent of the funding and the City of Nome responsible for the remaining 10 percent.

Col. Jeffrey Palazzini said the project has national security and economic stability implications.

“I believe that today we are not only celebrating the start of a port modification, but also recognizing a regional and national milestone,” Palazzini said. “As the need for economic stability and national security in the Arctic grows ever more important, USACE stands with Alaskan communities and the broader American nation as we engineer solutions to our Nation’s toughest challenges in the far north.”

“Together, we continue to build upon the legacy of the Port of Nome and the broader community,” Palazzini said, while in Nome. “As sea ice recedes and shipping traffic increases in the Arctic, Nome finds itself at the center of an evolving world. A more efficient transportation hub in the form of this port expansion will create opportunities to improve housing, food security and infrastructure by reinforcing the region’s supply chain, which will then enable an influx of important goods and lower prices for consumers across western Alaska’s communities.”

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Alaska District plans to award a construction contract for the Port of Nome Modification Project in 2024.

Suzanne Downing

✕