

## Ketchikan shipyard employment, business volume increases under new leadership

Posted by Hunter Morrison | Feb 6, 2026



Ketchikan shipyard manager Bergan Wieler overlooks a drydock bay. JAG Marine Group took charge of the facility last fall. (Hunter Morrison/KRBD)

On a recent, sunny afternoon, Ketchikan shipyard general manager Bergan Wieler walked alongside the hull of the large NOAA Okeanos Explorer. The vessel just completed a series of expeditions in the South Pacific, and shipyard workers were busy fixing it up.

Since JAG Marine Group took over the facility in September, Weiler said the company has rehired nearly 70% of employees who worked under the

shipyard's previous operator, Vigor. That's in addition to seeking out a diversified client base.

"So all of those opportunities are our growth, and I've seen that change since we've gone into this new operator," Wieler said.

Alaska's state development agency, AIDEA, [ended a two-decade partnership with Vigor last year](#), citing poor performance to QUOTE "fully utilize all of the shipyard's economic capabilities." Vigor could not immediately be reached for comment. But according to AIDEA's website, Vigor employed about 100 people before 2025, during its final operating period. The shipyard employee count dwindled to less than 20 when the company demobilized last year.

Weiler said under JAG's leadership, the shipyard employs about 175 people. And he said the facility will bring in more employees this fall for work on another NOAA vessel.

"It's a lot of economic driving assets that will be brought here to Ketchikan with that increase of jobs," Weiler said. "And that will be on top of all of our current and typical jobs that we go after and pursue."

According to [AIDEA's website](#), business volume under the new company is expected to "increase exponentially." At a Ketchikan City Council meeting in January, Weiler said their projected business is nearly three times what it was in the last five years. He also said that JAG "aggressively targets a much broader spectrum" of clients.



JAG Ketchikan employees work on the NOAA Rainier. Weiler says the vessel was the first NOAA boat to drydock at the shipyard's smaller drydock facility. (Hunter Morrison/KRBD)

Joseph Fields has worked under both companies at the shipyard. Before JAG took over, he recalled working almost exclusively on Alaska Marine Highway vessels.

"It's a nice change," Fields said. "I mean, you get tired of working on the blue canoes."

And it's not just vessel maintenance the shipyard is working on. Weiler said JAG has led repairs around the shipyard itself, including updates on a transfer slab that boats travel over. He said the company is also looking into job shadowing and mentorship opportunities for people entering the job market.

According to Weiler, more than half of JAG Ketchikan's employees are Alaskan, including him. He said the shipyard's growth will not only bring new workers to Ketchikan, but will keep local workers in Ketchikan.

"We really look forward to just this continued success here at the Ketchikan shipyard, and seeing where we can go and how we can grow from there," Weiler said.

JAG also bought the former Trident bunkhouse in Ketchikan to provide short-term housing for shipyard employees. And while he said there will be a future need for additional housing, Ketchikan City Mayor Bob Sivertsen said in an email that growth at the shipyard will lead to increases in shopping and services

that bring “revenue and stability to our community.” Vice Mayor Judy Zenge also said via email that the recent takeover of the shipyard “will be great for our community as well as the economy in Southeast Alaska.”

*Hunter Morrison is a Report for America corps member for KRBD. Your donation to match our RFA grant helps keep him writing stories like this one. Please consider [making a tax-deductible contribution](#).*

*Did you appreciate this report? Consider [supporting us](#) to keep local journalism going strong. News tips and feedback can be sent to [news@krbd.org](mailto:news@krbd.org).*