

A/B Dock design informed by citizens advisory committee

Expanded article from page 1 of the Summer 2008
Port of Port Townsend newsletter, *The Conversation*



An overview of A/B Dock



Degrading styrofoam flotation

Rotten piles, sagging flotation, crumbling bull rails. Look closely and the deficiencies of the 40-plus-year-old A/B Dock at the Port of Port Townsend Boat Haven become clear.

Having outlasted its useful life, the dock system with its 175 slips is beyond repair, and replacing it is a top priority for 2010-11.

“There are a lot of marinas around that look worse,” says Tike Hillman, a member of the citizens advisory committee that will be making its design recommendations to the Port Commission in August. “But looks can be deceiving.”

Since the committee was formed in late 2007, “most of the people who were skeptical are now convinced that it [the dock] is not repairable, and that was the first hurdle,” he says.

Hillman is retired from marine construction management and was the project manager when the 15,000-s.f. dock system was constructed in 1965-66. His own boat is moored on A/B Dock, and what most concerns him is upper pile failure caused by wind loading at a high tide.



Rotten pilings grow vegetation

Moorage tenant Stephen Lewis has already experienced a dock failure at his A/B Dock slip. In May of 2007 he was backing his 39-foot trawler on a spring line tied to the bull rail when—crack! “I found myself tied to a piece of driftwood in the middle of the water,” Lewis recounts. The port responded quickly to replace the rotting section of bull rail within a day, he says, but more than a year later Lewis is still in the habit of securing a few extra dock lines—just in case.



Moorage tenant Stephen Lewis shows the section of bull rail that failed (and was replaced) at his A/B Dock slip

The Port is working with engineers from PND on the specifics of the A/B Dock redesign. For ease in permitting, the total float coverage will remain the same, at about 15,000 s.f. Likely changes include:

- Replacing degrading styrofoam flotation with solid concrete or foam-filled plastic floats.
- Replacing the creosote-treated wood piles with steel piles.
- Using modular instead of ribbon dock assembly, so the pieces can be taken apart and re-used.
- Widening the main walkways and laterals.
- Steps to ease congestion at the fuel dock.
- Consolidating some small slips, which are not all full, into bigger slips that are more in demand.

“In a little harbor, there’s not room for everyone to have everything they want, so we’ll have a compromise and that will indicate we [the committee] are doing a good job,” Hillman says.

Committee members are Mark Jochems and Leif Erickson (marine trades reps), Susan Moffat (live-aboard rep), Barbara Nightingale (environmental rep), Steve Tucker (trailerable boat owner), Chelcie Liu (small boat owner), Bob Steele (Moorage Tenants Union rep), Sandy Oen (taxpayer at large), Hillman (citizen at large) and Keith Marzan (alternate).

Story and photos by The Conversation Editor Shelly Randall