

Central Okanagan Major Lakes Recreational Marine Facilities Study

Executive Summary

The Regional District of Central Okanagan recognized the need to plan for the ever increasing demand for access to marine recreational facilities. The continued popularity of water based activities and in particular those related to the various types of boating has put tremendous pressure on the existing facilities. The development boom and the influx of thousands of new residents every year adds to the demand. Many residents moving to the Okanagan come for the lifestyle, which for many of them includes boating. Likewise, the large numbers of tourists who flock to the region in the summer months enjoy the amenities of the lakes.

In response to these demands the RDCO initiated this study in order to: obtain a comprehensive inventory of current and future projected demands for marine recreational facilities on the lakes; have in place a comprehensive twenty year plan and implementation strategy for marine recreational facilities; and to explore different structures and types of organizations for future marine recreational facilities service delivery within the Regional District.

The study was governed by the following Guiding Principles:

- Protect and expand water based and marine recreation opportunities
- Increase water based recreational lake and marine accessibility in the Central Okanagan
- Maintain opportunities for economic development
- Consider service delivery options and legislative impacts
- Ensure any options identified to increase water based marine recreational opportunities respect current local government legislation
- Protect fish and other environmentally sensitive habitats and achieve no net loss to the environment

This Executive Summary provides an overview of the progress to date.

Inventory

Site visits were conducted during May, June and July, by road and by water on the three major lakes. Marine facilities on the lakes were inventories including: boat launches and associated parking, moorage slips, docks, boating clubs, public washrooms, gas pumps, grey water pump outs, mooring buoys, beaches and waterfront parks. A total of seventy-seven (77) sites were designated as points of interest and were documented and photographed. Of those sites forty-seven (47) were identified of interest for potential future upgrades or changes in use.

The points of interest were mapped according to municipal boundaries. Each of the 47 points were rated and evaluated by Summit Environmental and are colour coded on maps according to their sensitivity rating.

Boating Activity

Boating Activity was measured in May, June and July, with a focus on the holiday long week-ends, and on week-ends in particular.

In order to determine the number and type of boats using the lakes, several methods of data collection were used. Boat and trailer counts were taken at 27 boat launch sites, and size and type of boat was also recorded, in accordance with the data required for the Economic Impact Model. Boat counts on the lakes were taken at different locations on the lakes, on a number of days, in June and July. Marinas and Yacht clubs assisted the process by providing numbers. It was determined from trailer licence plates at the boat launches that 72% are from within the

region, 15% are from other parts of BC, 11% from Alberta and 2% from the rest of Canada or the USA.

The data collection indicated that the total number of boats launched in the Regional District on 43 days between the holiday weekend in May and the 20th of July is about 16,000 on Lake Okanagan. The number for Wood Lake and the south end of Kalamalka Lake is about 1,600. Using information from the Ipsos Reid Survey, it has been determined that an additional 700 boats come out of private slips on the lakes. The number of boats counted on a peak day was 1429 for Okanagan Lake and 149 for Wood/Kalamalka (south end).

An additional source of information is the number of boat registrations and pleasure craft licenses. Transport Canada has indicated that there are 69,400 boats registered in the Central Okanagan.

Development Activity

Development activity was examined in order to get a feel for the current applications for residential and resort development that were planning waterfront amenities. Not all of the developments listed have made formal applications to ILAM for approvals, but all are in some stage of the application process with the municipalities.

Approximately 1800 new boat slips will be added over the next one to five years, with 1400 of those for private use. In addition there are plans for dry dock storage for 315 boats with the potential for more. The 1800 slips will be dispersed in the following manner: Peachland 8, Westside 100, Westbank First Nations 750, Kelowna 350, Lake Country 170, and RDCO 400.

Consultation

Meetings were held with Planning and Parks and Recreation staff in the local municipalities, the Regional District, and Westbank First Nations.

Two formal stakeholder consultations have been held, one with the boating community, and one with government and agency stakeholders. The trends identified by the groups included: shrinking numbers of boat sales, but increase in sales of higher priced boats; reduction in public slips and an increase in commercial and private sector moorage; shorter periods of power boat use; increasing boat sizes.

Recommendations included: develop a comprehensive private-public initiative for dry-storage with easy water access, (not on foreshore) for residents and seasonal-regular visitors; developer approvals for foreshore development be conditional on a portion of the amenities include public access, to slips, launches, parking and moorage; upgrade all designated boat launches and reconstruct to include accessible parking, and conduct an existing marina/slip review for a consistency usage upgrade; develop a strong boating friendly awareness campaign to both local and tourist markets which includes highly visible directional signage, tourist moorage/storage sites and on lake travel routes with designated mooring buoys; a major public-boater awareness campaign be positioned for short term impact with enforcement for respectful recreational use of the lakes; implement a co-ordinating body or an alliance of lake authorities.

Input from the general public is being sought and received on a website set up for this study: www.boatingintheokanagan.com. The site is being promoted in a weekly article "Ripple Effects" in the Saturday Okanagan newspaper.

Three public meetings are scheduled; August 13th at the Jammery in Kelowna, August 19th at Bliss Bakery in Peachland; and September 10th TBA.

Demographics

The analysis of the demographic profile and population forecasts for the Regional District of the Central Okanagan suggest that the following implications should be considered in the recommendations arising from this study.

- RDCO's total population will climb by almost 40% over the next 20 years and 50% by 2031. This growth will add 85,000 more residents to the region than live in Central Okanagan today.
- While the region's total population will grow, the distribution of residents between the five electoral areas will remain similar to the current situation.
- In-migration will produce almost all of the region's future population growth. People new to the RDCO will arrive with preconceived notions of acceptable levels of infrastructure and services based upon experiences in their previous home jurisdictions.
- The region's population will age over time. While there will be modest increases in the younger age cohorts, there will be a dramatic upswing in the number of individuals over the age of 45 years with the most significant growth in the over 65 age group. This trend will significantly influence the preferences of the region's consumer base to the extent that they will expect the provision of "age sensitive" infrastructure and the delivery of services in a manner consistent with individual needs, including adjustments to facilities and service approaches available at marinas and boat launches.
- Neither household income or a lack of financial resources are likely to impede a significant proportion of the region's population from participating in their recreation pursuits of choice including water based activities.

Governing Authorities Review

The consulting team undertook a review of existing governing authorities and service delivery approaches for marine recreation facilities in the region and in other jurisdictions across the country. The work program also called for consultation with key stakeholders and those with vested interests in the future provision of marine recreation facilities on the three lakes within the subject area. Accordingly, telephone interviews were conducted with owners/managers of private marina facilities in the RDCO and representatives of area yacht clubs. These interviews are ongoing. A summary of consultation findings will be presented in the next phase of the study.

The purpose of the review and stakeholder consultation was to identify the implications of alternative management models and partnership options available to the Regional District. Recommendations for potential future directions that the RDCO might pursue for the oversight of marine recreation facilities and/or the delivery of new marinas services will be presented during latter phases of this study.

Several alternative models have thus far emerged from the research: *Public Sector Self Management Mode*; *Public Sector Contract-Out Mode*; *Joint Venture Model*; *Private Sector Model*; and the *Not-For-Profit Organization Model*.

Ipsos Reid Survey

Ipsos Reid conducted 1,000 telephone interviews with a randomly selected representative sample of adult (18 years or older) Regional District of Central Okanagan residents on boating on the major lakes. The following is a brief overview of some of the findings:

- Perceptions of the opportunities for boating in the Central Okanagan are overwhelmingly Positive (by both boat owners and non owners)
- Four-in-ten households own a boat. One-in-ten will likely purchase a boat in the next five years.
- Just over one-quarter of current boat owners have a valid Service Canada Pleasure Craft License.
- The majority of motor boats and sail boats are over 15 feet.
- Motor boats are usually transported to and from the water using a trailer, while sail boats are usually moored at a marina or dock.
- There is a demand for more marine recreation facilities, with six-in-ten respondents saying there are "not enough" of these facilities currently available
- The majority of those who have participated in boating activities over the past twelve months expressing dissatisfaction with parking facilities and the availability of public mooring facilities. Relatively high levels of dissatisfaction are also seen for washroom facilities, public boat launches, and fuelling facilities.
- Eight-in-ten agree the Central Okanagan's current facilities are insufficient to meet the demands of the region's growing population and tourists.
- More than three-quarters agree local governments should invest more in these facilities.
- Two-thirds agree it is important to build new or upgrade existing facilities because the current facilities are in poor shape.
- Residents' top two priorities for marine recreation facilities over the next five years are expanding parking facilities at boat launches and offering additional boat launch facilities.
- Second-tier priorities include increasing the number of public boat slips as well as the number of marinas.
- When it comes to managing marine recreation facilities, a slight majority of respondents would prefer to see individual local governments continue managing the facilities in their own community rather than create a single coordinated regional entity for this responsibility.
- Nearly nine-in-ten respondents think local governments in the Central Okanagan should play a role in providing marine recreation facilities.
- More than eight-in-ten would support local governments working in partnership with private operators to provide marine recreation facilities.
- A similar proportion would support local governments using public funds to develop new marinas in partnership with the private sector.
- Overall, these findings suggest that residents want to see local governments involved in the provision and management of marine recreation facilities.

Regulatory Overview

The following are the main federal regulations that will directly apply to any proposed marine facilities: Fisheries Act, Navigable Waters Protection Act; Species at Risk Act, and the Migratory Bird Convention Act.

The provincial regulations are: Drinking Water protection Act, Water, Riparian Areas Regulation, Municipal Sewerage Regulation and Sewerage System Regulation.

Local Government: The City of Peachland is currently the only municipality that has jurisdiction over the foreshore water rights. RDCO has adopted the RAR(Riparian Areas Regulation) for development within 30m of Okanagan Lake. Kelowna has provisions within their OCP for Riparian Management Area setbacks, and Lake Country is revising their OCP to adopt the RAR.

Environmental Rating System

To compare the potential effects that existing and future marine facilities have on the environment, a hazard system was developed. Potential marine facility sites were assessed for the following criteria:

- Proximity to water intake(s)
- Proximity to shore spawning habitat
- Existing level of shoreline disturbance
- Noise hazard - proximity to residences
- Proximity to fish bearing stream(s)
- Ecological communities
- Wildlife habitat
- Riparian area values

Each "point of interest" was assigned a high, medium or low hazard rating based on the proximity to the above criteria.

Environmental issues and Potential Impacts

The potential impacts of new or upgraded facilities have been summarized in table format in the report by Summit Environmental Consultants for each of the 47 points of interest. Generally, the order of potential impacts (highest to lowest) is:

1. Large marinas including boat slips, gas pumps, and grey water pump outs
2. Boat launch, docks and on shore parking areas
3. Docks
4. Mooring Buoys, and
5. Dry dock boat storage on land.

Maps have been prepared which indicate each of the points of interest as high, medium, or low sensitivity rating. The maps also outline areas of Kokanee habitat.

The recommendations for proposed marine facilities are, in general:

- Areas with high sensitivity have important features that should be preserved and such areas shall not be considered for upgrades or new facilities. These areas likely have important shore spawning habitat, domestic water intake locations, sensitive wildlife habitat and/or close proximity to fish bearing creeks. Mooring buoys outside of the shore spawning habitat range are suitable in these areas.
- Areas with moderate sensitivity should be considered for small or seasonal boat launches and docks and associated parking areas unless the area is located within red or yellow zone spawning habitat. A site-specific environmental impact assessment should be completed along the foreshore and upland areas.
- Areas with low sensitivity are recommended for existing and future facilities. The rating system screened these areas and determined these areas have a low probability of having important environmental features and therefore they will experience lower potential impacts.

Major facilities, boat launches and docks should be avoided in areas with red or yellow zone spawning habitat unless a qualified professional completes an EIA that determines that proposed upgrades will not cause a harmful alteration, disruption, or destruction (HADD) of fish habitat.

Early Findings

There are a number of early findings which will be further analysed in the next phase of the study. The findings, in no order of priority, are:

- High interest in this study by boating stakeholders
- High usage of marine facilities during peak periods
- Boat launches need more parking and most need to be upgraded
- Inadequate fuelling facilities, washrooms, pump outs
- Lack of adequate directional and educational signage
- Lack of mooring buoys for day and night use in appropriate locations; little knowledge of mooring buoy regulations; little or no maintenance of buoys
- Private sector interested in building facilities to serve the public, but have trouble with approvals
- Enforcement issues are frequently raised regarding noise and unsafe boating
- Public access to lakes and moorage is highly desired
- Protection of the lake environment is strongly supported
- Public awareness of appropriate lake practices is inconsistent
- Tourism is negatively impacted by lack of moorage/storage for out-of town boats (daily/weekly/monthly); and lack of "places to go" on the lake
- Concept of user pay for launching was positively received in consultations
- Boating community generally favourable towards the establishment of a Major Lakes Coordinating Task Force or Alliance
- Consensus for short and long term commitment to plan and develop marine facilities and continue public engagement

The next steps in the study are the "analysis" phase, which is well underway; and then the development of the recommendations and conclusions. Throughout these phases there will be ongoing public consultations, and key stakeholder interviews.

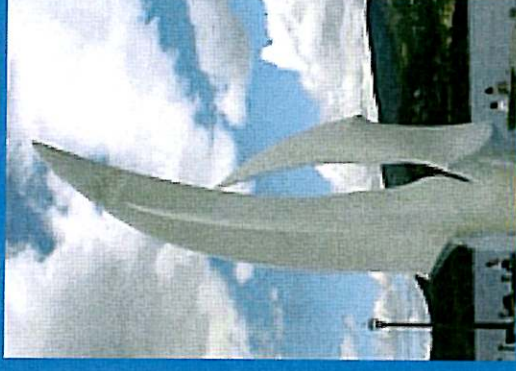


MAJOR LAKES RECREATIONAL MARINE FACILITIES STUDY



Objectives of the Study

- Complete comprehensive inventory of current and future demands for marine recreational facilities on the lakes
- Create a comprehensive 20 Year Plan and Implementation Strategy
- Identify and evaluate organizational structures for future marine recreational facilities service delivery



Inventory

- Marine facilities on the three lakes were inventoried including: boat launches and associated parking, moorage slips, docks, boating clubs, public washrooms, gas pumps, grey water pump outs, mooring buoys, beaches and waterfront parks
- 77 Points of Interest were photographed and mapped
- 47 were analyzed by Summit Environmental
- Boat launch counts were taken at 27 sites during May, June & July
- Origins of boaters: 72% within Region, 15% BC, 11% Alberta
- Busiest locations are Peachland, Westbank, Cook St, Water St, Sutherland Bay, Okanagan Centre, Coral Beach, Oyama, Turtle Bay
- On lake boat counts were also done; peak day count 1500
- 69,400 registered boats (Transport Canada)

Development Activity

- Research on pending developments (residential and commercial) with waterfront amenities
- Most significant waterfront development is slated for Kelowna (350), Lake Country, and WFN
- Approximately 1800 new slips to be added in next five years; 1400 of those will be private



Consultation

- Stakeholder consultations with boating community, marine industry, government, agency and private sector representatives
- Meetings with municipal staff and Westbank First Nations
- Ongoing informal discussions with wide variety of stakeholders
- Public meetings: August 13, 19 and September 10
- **“Ripple Effect”** Column in Saturday Okanagan
- www.boatingintheokanagan.com

Governing Authorities Review

- Potential Governance Models have been reviewed and key stakeholders interviewed
- Alternative models include:
 1. Public Sector Self Management
 2. Public Sector Contract-Out
 3. Joint Venture
 4. Private Sector
 5. Not-for-Profit Organization Model – such as a “Lake Authority”

Ipsos Reid Survey Results

- Four-in-ten households own a boat
- Boaters are dissatisfied with trailer parking, public mooring, boat launches, washrooms and fuelling facilities
- Eight-in-ten felt current facilities are insufficient for future needs
- 75% agree local government should invest: top priorities are parking at boat launches and more launch sites
- Second priority is public boat slips and marinas
- Slight preference of local government managing facilities versus a single regional entity
- Eight-in-ten support public-private partnerships; including using government dollars for new marina partnerships

Environmental Issues/Impacts

ENVIRONMENTAL RANKING CRITERIA

1. Proximity to water intake(s)
2. Proximity to shore spawning habitat
3. Wildlife habitat
4. Proximity to fish bearing stream(s)
5. Riparian area values
6. Ecological communities
7. Existing level of shoreline disturbance
8. Noise hazard - proximity to residences

Early Findings

- Boat launches need more parking and upgrading
- Inadequate fuelling facilities, washrooms, pump outs
- Lack of adequate directional and educational signage
- Lack of mooring buoys for day and night use in appropriate locations
- Private sector interested in building facilities to serve the public, but have trouble with approvals
- Public access to lakes and moorage is highly desired
- Protection of the lake environment is strongly supported



Early Findings

- Tourism is negatively impacted by lack of moorage/storage for out-of town boats (daily/weekly/monthly); and lack of “places to go” on the lake
- Concept of user pay for marine recreational facilities was positively received in consultations
- Loss of Eldorado dry boat storage is a concern
- Boating community generally favourable towards the establishment of a Major Lakes Coordinating Task Force or Alliance
- Consensus for short and long term commitment to plan and develop marine facilities and continue public engagement

