



MAJOR LAKES RECREATIONAL MARINE FACILITIES STUDY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In response to rapid population growth and increasing recreation and tourism demands, the Regional District of Central Okanagan identified the need for a comprehensive plan for the development of future of recreational marine facilities on the major lakes. A Study was initiated to meet the following three objectives:

1. Complete an inventory of current and future demands for marine recreational facilities on the major lakes;
2. Create a twenty (20) year plan and implementation strategy;
3. Identify and evaluate organizational structures for future marine recreational facilities service delivery

The study has resulted in a “Blueprint for the Future” with recommendations for governance, service delivery, economic impact and sustainable facility development.

The Blueprint was developed through the completion of extensive consultation and public participation, research, on site inventory and data collection, and analysis phases; the results of which are well documented in four separate reports:

- Inventory (Part A) Understanding the Area and Issues
- Analysis and Synthesis (Part B)
- Environmental Issues/Impacts (Part C)
- Recommendations and Conclusions (Part D)

Extensive environmental mapping was also undertaken to support the analysis and recommendations.

KEY ISSUES

During the research and consultation for this study, several key issues became evident.

Vision for Boating in the Okanagan. The lack of a common vision for the future of boating in the Okanagan has resulted in an uncoordinated, inefficient, and underfunded system for the provision of recreational marine facilities in the Central Okanagan. The continuing rate of population growth and boating interests in the region combined with the current lack of support for the boating community will result in a “crisis for boating” in the Central Okanagan.

Status of Recreational Marine Facilities. The current number and quality of recreational marine facilities is inadequate to meet the demands of residents and tourists. Local governments have made little investment in facilities. They primarily provide boat launches (all with parking problems) some docks for day use, and lease some lands for yacht clubs. All the marinas are owned and operated by the private sector, with no common “standards”. The greatest need is safe, accessible boat launches with associated parking areas.

Authority and Management. The present method of providing public recreational marine facilities by the five districts and WFN is not meeting the needs of the local residents or tourists. There is no specific funding mechanism or source of revenue for new or improved marine facilities. The region lacks a coordinating body to facilitate the development of a marine recreation facility system.

Private Sector Investment. The private sector has invested in marinas, boat launches, and moorage on the lakes. The private sector has the potential for increasing current service levels of marine recreational facilities provided that local government plays a supporting role in the creation of these services.

Economic Impact. The current and potential economic impact of boating in the central Okanagan has not been considered as an important factor relating to the provision of marine recreational facilities. The current economic impact is approximately \$39 million, which is in jeopardy due to the deteriorating quality of the boating experience.

Environmental Impact. Concern for the environment has been an important component of this study. Comprehensive mapping of sensitive habitats was undertaken on the Central Okanagan lakes to identify potential new or expanded facility areas. Further detailed environmental investigations would be required prior to the acquisition or development of any new or expanded recreational marine facility to ensure that sensitive habitats would not be affected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The major recommendations have been presented below. A complete list of recommendations can be found in Part D of the report.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

1. The RDCO take the lead role in establishing a coordinating body to collaboratively work with all local governments in the delivery of recreational marine facilities on the lakes.
2. The “Blueprint for the Future” be adopted by RDCO and the municipalities of Kelowna, Lake Country, Westside and Peachland as a guide for the development of recreational marine facilities on the major lakes.
3. All proposed marine facilities, be assessed for potential involvement by the private sector through joint ventures, contracting out, or private sector models.
4. Environmental considerations be taken into account for all developments as the environmental review identified that there are many sensitive foreshore areas as well as areas that are more suitable for marine facility development.,
5. The development and improvement of boat launches and marinas with supporting infrastructure, and boat channels be given high priority by local government organizations.
6. The issue of provision and maintenance of mooring buoys be considered on a Region wide basis. A mooring buoy policy for the entire region should be developed, and then enforced in coordination with all local governments, the Regional District, BC Parks and Transport Canada. Long term moorage buoy use also needs to be considered.
7. New developments (residential and commercial) with waterfront access be reviewed for opportunities to provide additional facilities for public use, including transient and seasonal moorage, boat launches, gas pumps, pump-outs, public washrooms, and beach access. Official community plans should include provision of sites for marine recreational facilities.

8. The economic impact of boating be considered when reviewing waterfront plans and developments that include marinas and boat launches as well as those that provide destinations for local boaters and tourists.
9. Revenue generation be explored such as: launch and mooring buoy permits; revenue from other levels of government including marine fuel taxes and boat registration fees; using special area charges for marine facilities; tourism grants; and federal/provincial infrastructure funding programs.

GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY RECOMMENDATIONS

An important aspect of the study was to recommend a governance model. The governance model should respond to the needs that have emerged from the research and consultation phases of the study which include:

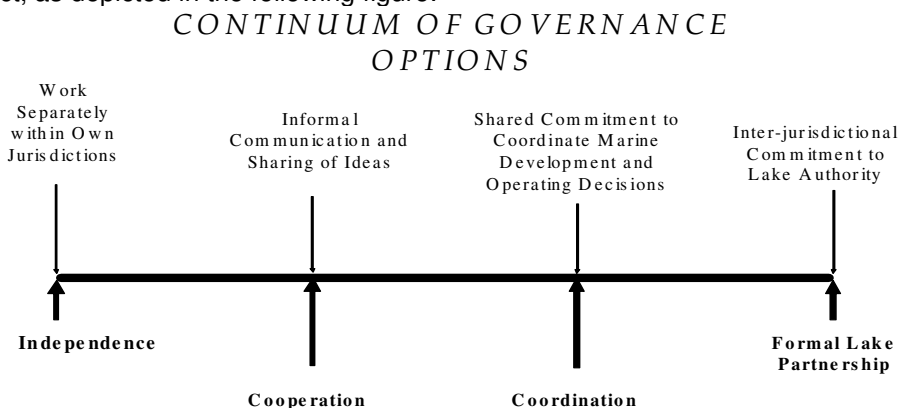
- coordination of marine services;
- a mechanism to maintain an accurate marine facilities inventory;
- standardization of “like” services – e.g. signage at launches;
- systematic approaches to implement additions and/or improvements to infrastructure;
- means to ensure that environmental standards are maintained and improved;
- methods and tools to effectively communicate with users;
- mechanisms to remain current with the needs and desires of boaters;
- opportunities to increase the public’s access to the lake system;
- approaches to optimize the use of public sector resources; and opportunities to gain greater access to new sources of capital.

Governance Approach

The consultants met with the Committee to discuss governance options that would respond to the needs of the RDCO Lake system while remaining sensitive to the nuances of the current situation. Various governance alternatives employed in other jurisdictions were examined for their applicability to the local circumstance.

One of the organizations which were reviewed was the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB). The OBWB has been empowered to act as a coordinating body for basin-wide water resource management on behalf of the three Regional Districts. For many years the OBWB has been directing its efforts toward the most urgent recommendations of the 1974 *Okanagan Basin Study* – reducing phosphorus and nitrogen inputs to the lakes and controlling the Eurasian milfoil. Although the Study, known as the “Comprehensive Framework Plan” also considered water based recreation, including boating, provided some recommendations for shoreline recreational facilities up to the year 2020, the OBWB does not appear to have embraced marine recreation as part of their mandate.

The consultants developed a continuum of options that could be considered by the Regional District, as depicted in the following figure:



The consultants suggested - and the Study's Steering Committee agreed – that the circumstances of the RDCO Lake system call for a coordination model. It was also agreed that a coordinating body would require resources, including a contract staff person, in order to be effective. It is therefore recommended that:

- ▶ The Regional District of Central Okanagan take the lead role in establishing a *coordinating body* to collaboratively work with all local governments in the delivery of recreational marine facilities on the lakes.
- ▶ The Regional District of Central Okanagan provide dedicated resources to support the coordinating committee
- ▶ RDCO initiate discussions with the OBWB to determine opportunities to work collaboratively on the implementation of recreational marine facilities.

The recommended body would not have legislative or authoritative powers but would represent the interests of all individuals and organizations involved in the provision, management and operation of marine facilities and infrastructure. However, the coordinating body would be responsible for leadership, coordination and direction for the provision, management and operations of marine facilities and infrastructure on the major lakes in the regional district.

Service Delivery

It is recommended that:

- ▶ Municipal governments would take advantage of the resources provided by the *coordinating body* to create joint venture agreements with private sector or not-for-profit partners for development and/or expansion of recreational marine facilities
- ▶ Municipal governments remain primarily responsible for the development and maintenance of boat launches within their jurisdictions, but that all options be considered within the context of a coordinated plan

ECONOMIC IMPACT RECOMMENDATIONS

The annual economic impact of boating has the potential of growing from the current level of \$39.2M to a forecasted \$68.7 by implementing the Blueprint and adapting a business plan for marine facilities. It is therefore recommended that a Recreational Marine Facilities Economic Impact Business Plan be developed.

It is further recommended that a '*boater friendly*' Marketing Plan be developed, which includes an extended boater 'shoulder' season with an economic impact of \$11M.

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations were developed for each type of recreational marine facility and are outlined in the report Part D. Although this is a twenty (20) year plan, the majority of the facilities are urgently required and should be provided within the next five years, with the remainder within (10) years. Due to the constantly changing environment, including the economy, and the pace of implementation, the facility needs should be reviewed in 2018.

A summary of the recommended recreational marine facilities is:

- ▶ Five(5) new boat launches, plus upgrades to most existing launches
- ▶ Four (4) new marinas
- ▶ Four(4) new grey water pump-outs
- ▶ Six (6) new "destination" docks
- ▶ Fifty (50) new mooring buoys
- ▶ Four (4) dry dock storage locations

- ▶ Small boat storage (various locations)
- ▶ Boat channels for small craft safety

Specific recommendations with respect to potential locations and timing for facilities are included in the Appendices.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Demographics

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. The region's population will age over time, 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.

Ipsos Reid Survey

Ipsos Reid conducted 1,000 telephone interviews which resulted in valuable information. They found that four-in-ten households own a boat and that one-in-ten will likely purchase a boat in the next five years. There was dissatisfaction on the part of the majority of boaters with the marine recreational facilities, and eighty percent agree that there are not enough facilities to meet the future demand. They also found that more than three-quarters agree local governments should invest more in these facilities, and that the priorities are boat launches (with parking), followed by public boat slips and 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. Eighty percent support public private partnerships in the provision of facilities and they support using public funds in these partnerships.

Overall, the Ipsos Reid findings suggest that residents want to see local governments involved in the provision and management of marine recreation facilities.

Inventory

Recreational marine facilities on the major lakes were inventoried including: boat launches and associated parking, moorage slips, docks, boating clubs, public washrooms, gas pumps, grey water pump outs mooring buoys and waterfront parks. Forty-seven (47) points of interest were identified for further study. The complete inventory can be found in the Inventory Report Part A.

Boating Activity

Boat launch counts were taken at 27 sites during May-July with the busiest locations at Peachland, Westbank, Cook Street (Lakeshore), Water St, Sutherland Bay, Okanagan centre, Coral Beach and Oyama. The estimated number of boats launched from mid May to mid September was 53,000. The origins of boaters, based on trailer licence plates are: 72% within the Region, 15% from the rest of BC, 11% from Alberta, 2% elsewhere. According to Transport Canada there are 69,000 registered boats in the region,

Development Activity

Over the next five years approximately 2100 slips will be added by the private sector. Only 400 of those will be available for purchase or lease by the general public.

Public Consultation

Public input has been sought and received in a variety of methods throughout the study. This included three public meetings, two think tanks, numerous interviews and presentations, and feedback received on the website that was set up for this project. By far the majority of participants in the consultations were very supportive of the study and the need for additional facilities immediately. The most frequently expressed concern was the need for moorage slips, boat launches and mooring buoys. Participants in the process represented the boating public, private operators and developers, the marine industry, yacht clubs, the tourism industry, boat owners, municipal, provincial and federal government, environmental agencies and local residents.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES/IMPACTS

The potential environmental issues and impacts associated with current and future marine facilities is addressed in a comprehensive report, complete with mapping, prepared by Summit Environmental as Part C.

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; and riparian area values.

Environmental issues and Potential Impacts

The potential impacts of new or upgraded facilities have been summarized in table format in the report Part C for each of the 47 points of interest. Major facilities, boat launches and docks should be avoided in areas with red or yellow zone (shown on maps) 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.

CONCLUSION

The Study results have shown the tremendous need for the provision of additional marine recreational facilities in the Central Okanagan. The study has provided a "Blueprint for Action" and will help set the direction for the future. The extensive interest and participation in the Study by a large number of stakeholders will provide support for implementation; however it has also created expectations for action to be taken.

There is an opportunity for the RDCO to take a leadership role by creating and supporting a coordinating body to collaboratively work with all local governments and the private sector in the delivery of marine recreational facilities on the lakes.