



MAJOR LAKES RECREATIONAL MARINE FACILITIES STUDY

Recommendations and Conclusions

Part D

A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

Submitted by:

GDH Solutions

In association with
The JF Group and
Summit Environmental Consultants

Recommendations and Conclusions

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Introduction

The Recommendations and Conclusions, Part D, provides the concluding chapter of the Major Recreational Lakes Marine Facilities Study. The supporting background information and analysis was provided in Parts A, B, and C between May and September 2008. Environmental lake and shoreline mapping has been completed at various phases and the final maps relate to the recommended potential improvements.

The Blueprint for the Future is intended to be used as a “stand alone” document to guide recreational marine facility development in the region over the next 20 years. It is the action plan for the implementation of sustainable recreational marine facilities.

There are two major motivators for the implementation of the Blueprint for boating in the Central Okanagan:

1. The high quality of life in the region for current and future residents should include support for boating. Four in ten households own a boat, and seventy-two percent of the boaters live in the Central Region. Many people are drawn to the Okanagan for the boating opportunities; however the marine facilities are in need of upgrade and repair. There is good support for government investment for marine recreational facilities, and two thirds of those surveyed believe that government should invest in marine facilities right now.
2. The economic impact of boating in the Central Okanagan is \$39M and has the potential to grow from \$39.2M to \$68.7M. However, if the issues of access, services, moorage, boat storage and destinations are not addressed by public and private initiatives, the current economic impact level may decline.

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 growth 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. The current demand for slips alone is 33% greater than the supply. 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 and marinas. 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.

Key Recommendations

General Recommendations

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. Further foreshore environmental mapping be undertaken for Wood and Kalamalka Lakes to gain a better understanding of the environmental sensitivity of the foreshore on those lakes.
6. The development and improvement of boat launches and marinas with supporting infrastructure, and boat channels, be given high priority by local government organizations.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. The application and approval process for waterfront facilities to support boating be reviewed in each jurisdiction to ensure applicants have easy access to information concerning all requirements.

10. 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.
11. 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.
12. A signage program be undertaken to clearly mark marine facility locations, regulations and provide educational information.
13. The RDCO initiate discussions with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen and the Regional District of Northern Okanagan regarding opportunities to coordinate the provision of recreational marine facilities on the lakes.
14. RDCO (or the coordinating body) to examine Peachland's crown foreshore head lease agreement to determine viability for similar leases on other foreshore lands.

Governance and Service Delivery Recommendations

The most appropriate governance approach would capitalize on the collective energies and expertise of individuals, groups, organizations, governments and agencies that are capable of contributing to the success of recreational marine facilities on the lakes. The governance model should respond to the needs that have emerged from the research and consultation phases of the study. These needs are:

- 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.

The Current Situation

- Moorage is provided by not-for-profit societies (yacht clubs) and private marinas. In each case, the entity deals with municipal government on matters related to local zoning and bylaws, and the provincial government for water licenses or water leases, the DFO regarding fish, Transport Canada and their departments of Navigable Waters and Office of Boating Safety for signage, buoys, aids to navigation etc.
- Mooring buoys are distributed along the shoreline and in many cases are maintained by the yacht club that is nearest the buoy.
- Boat launches are maintained by the municipality within which they reside.
- There is very little coordination of marine planning, development or operating activities between municipalities.
- Several potential marine development proposals or expansions plans have been presented to municipal and other agency officials. There is a sense by the potential developers that officials are not willing or able to respond to these proposals in a timely fashion.

- While the public would support the investment of public funds in the development of new marine facilities, there seems to be little appetite for more bureaucracy or government involvement in the operations of new marinas.

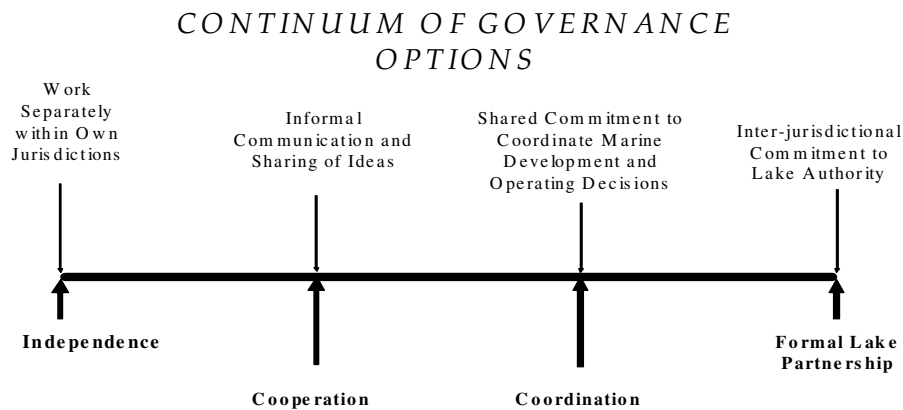
Governance Approach

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, called 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 Committee agreed – that the circumstances of the RDCO Lake system call for a coordination model. The Committee also agreed that a coordinating body would require resources, including a contract staff person, in order to be effective.

THEREFORE, THE CONSULTANTS RECOMMEND 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 the following:

- To provide leadership, coordination and direction for the provision, management and operations of marine facilities and infrastructure on the major lakes in the regional district.
- To explore the potential of incorporating language into current zoning and official community plan documents throughout the region that will assist in expanding current levels of marine facilities within waterfront developments.
- To facilitate and where possible expedite the approval process between senior levels of government and potential marine facility developers.
- To guide common sourcing and procurement procedures for the development of new or expanded marine facilities – i.e. RFP's, search and selection process, etc.
- To act as a common source of information and/or as assistance to developers or others interested in creating or maintaining marine infrastructure.
- To access funding opportunities through various levels of government and by securing funding partners as well as creating revenue opportunities.
- To develop and circulate common standards regarding “like marina facilities and services” provided by others.
- To advocate and represent local marine needs with senior levels of government, agencies and other appropriate organizations.
- To communicate with and between government, non-government, business and the general public regarding matters related to marine infrastructure and operations.

In accordance with these responsibilities, the coordinating body could deal with the following action items that respond to specific local circumstances as well as other recommendations that have arisen throughout this study.

- Continue to cooperate and coordinate with Westbank First Nation regarding the development of recreational marine facilities; and for tourism initiatives, such as “destinations”.
- Establish a “Revenue for Boating” Task Force to identify and take action on potential sources of revenue and grants. This could include negotiating with Transport Canada for boat registration fees, working with UBCM to access gas taxes for marine fuel; and instituting a user pay system for launches and mooring buoys; using Special Area Charges for marine facilities.
- Develop a template for Public/Private Partnerships and Joint Ventures Request for Proposals (RFP), for recreational marine facilities.
- Hold a Marine Industry Symposium for the private sector to discuss their participation in the implementation of the Blueprint.
- Meet with Tourism Kelowna to discuss tourism destination improvements on the lakes; co-develop a Boating Marketing Plan.

- Host a “special destination” conference with the wine industry for boat access plans to extend boating season into Spring and Fall.
- Work with the RDNO and the RDO-S to develop a destination and development business plan.
- Host a series of workshops with lake based recreational activity groups and clubs such as Waterskiing, Sailing, Wakeboarding, Parasailing, and Dragon boating etc. to determine “best practices” for sustainability and effective lake use.

The participants on the coordinating body should include representation from each of the local municipalities and WFN. A technical advisory committee could provide advice to the coordinating committee. This advisory group could include, but not be limited to: representatives from the following disciplines: Tourism, Marine Industry, Environment; Developers; Yacht Clubs; Marina Operators, and Small Boat Clubs.

Service Delivery

The consultants also recommend that the following approach be adopted for the delivery of marine services in the Central Okanagan:

- ▶ 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 Study recommendations and adapting a business plan for marine facilities. It is therefore recommended that a Recreational Marine Facilities Economic Impact Business Plan be developed to include:

- The recovery of latent marina operations and services valued at \$5.5M of economic impact
- The expediting of an additional 300 marina slip with an economic impact of \$6.6M
- The upgrading of current yacht clubs operations for an additional \$6.4M in economic impact
- The constructing of a dedicated full service launch for resident and tourist boaters with a dedicated commercial-concierge Kelowna launch for an economic impact of \$6.4M

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

Facility Recommendations

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. Recommendations are provided by facility type, with details as to location and timing located in the Appendices.

Boat Launches

The analysis indicated that the current number and capacity of boat launches was inadequate for peak summer use. At least five (5) additional launches and significant improvements to the main launch sites are needed within the next 20 years. It is recommended that the RDCO provide one (1) new boat launch, with four bays, within the next three years. Opportunities for seasonal or temporary parking should be explored, such as recreation centres or arenas and industrial lots. Sites that are not within walking distance of the launches could be served by a shuttle bus in peak periods. All new or improved sites should institute a fee to park and/or launch.

Dedicated small craft launch areas with amenities are needed in various locations. Channels for the small craft should be provided at these launch areas. Stronger communication and support with local boat associations should be undertaken.

Marinas

Marinas available to the public in the Regional District are consistently at capacity and cannot accommodate the current demand for boat moorage. These marinas, which include both yacht clubs and privately operated marinas, are the only source of large volume boat moorage spaces available to boat owners who don't have access through a private residential development. There are 500 names on waiting lists (primarily at yacht clubs) which indicates an under supply, today, of about 33 percent, based on the current supply of 1560 public slips.

In addition to the current undersupply, the growing population will increase the need for more moorage slips and marina facilities. This demand would support four (4) more marinas with fuelling facilities, pump outs, with 200-400 slips each.

It is recommended that the RDCO provide one (1) new marina in the short term, using an appropriate partnership model. In addition there is a need for all the municipalities to facilitate the development and approval processes for new and expanded marina facilities. These private sector initiatives will help to meet the demand through both public marinas and private moorage at residential developments.

Grey Water Pump Outs

There is a severe shortage of pump-outs within the Central Okanagan. New regulations require that pump-outs be hooked into the municipal sewage system, which means that some of the current marinas could not add a pump-out station. It is recommended that each jurisdiction investigate the opportunity to provide a pump out on their foreshore, as public feedback has indicated that boats are dumping their grey water directly into the lakes due to the lack of convenient facilities.

Mooring Buoys

Public consultation has indicated that there is considerable unmet demand for mooring buoys for both day and overnight use. Resident and tourists seek locations to tie up their boats and enjoy the lakes, without having to burn fuel driving up and down the lake. Public mooring buoys are currently provided and maintained by the yacht clubs.

Mooring buoys should be provided at a number of locations on all three lakes. Buoys should be placed offshore from public lands, and should not interfere with swimming areas at beaches. An additional fifty (50) buoys on Lake Okanagan should be considered, as well as a number on Wood and Kalamalka. Refer to the general recommendations regarding mooring buoy policies.

Dry Dock Storage

Storage of boats in areas that are readily accessible from the lakes would reduce the need for trailer parking and would result in more "older adult" and tourist friendly boat launching. Municipal lands should be considered for boat storage with concierge service, potentially provided by the private

sector. Boat concierge services reduce the number of boat trailers on the roads, thereby reducing traffic congestion and CO2 emissions. At least three boat storage locations should be considered, plus one to replace the Eldorado Boat Storage.

There is also a need for storage for non-motorized boats, in proximity to the foreshore. They should be located around the lakes, in consultation with the small boat clubs.

Destinations

Public feedback during the study has indicated that there is a demand for places to go on the lakes to eat, use restrooms and enjoy land based recreational and shopping activities. The lack of destinations on the lakes discourages boaters from more frequent outings which negatively impacts tourism and economic benefits. There are a number of locations that could be suitable for installation of visitor docks/piers and new facilities to serve tourist and resident boaters. It is recommended that each jurisdiction review these opportunities with a view to enhancing the boating experience as well as increasing economic impact.

Boating Channels

In order to provide for safe boating on the lakes, it is recommended that designated hand launch areas and boat channels be provided in a number of locations around the lakes. The locations should be determined in consultation with the small boat clubs.

Public Consultation

Public input has been sought and received in a variety of methods throughout the study. Stakeholders and the public provided valuable information to the consulting team throughout the study process. The third and final public meeting was held on September 18th, to present the draft recommendations. There was strong reaction. The participants expressed concern that the recommended numbers of moorage slips, boat launches and mooring buoys was inadequate to meet the current and future demand. Participants in the meeting represented private operators and developers, the marine industry, yacht clubs, the tourism industry, boat owners, municipal government and local residents.

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 help support the implementation of the recommended actions. The consultation process has also created expectations for action to be taken to provide a better boating experience.

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 recreational marine facilities on the lakes.