



APPENDIX
Marina Assessment



January 21, 2016

MEMORANDUM

To: City of Clearwater

From: Michael Herrman

Date: January 26, 2016

Subject: Seminole Boat Launch Overview

M&N Job No.: 9051-00

The Seminole Boat Launch is an important boating facility in Clearwater, providing boating access to hundreds of boaters. This memorandum outlines the analysis of boating operations and activities at the Seminole Boat Launch with consideration of the Clearwater Comprehensive Boating Plan and the stated goal of making Clearwater a preeminent boating destination on the west coast of Florida.

Existing Operations

The Seminole Boat Launch is a self-service boat ramp facility serving 100 to 150 boats (City Marina Manager estimate) daily during peak periods. The launch ramp has eight lanes with relatively short, 30-35 ft long, staging docks between every two ramps. Boats remain at the staging docks while trailers are parked and boats are loaded, delaying use of the ramp by the next patron.

Trailers entering the ramp area to launch or retrieve boats queue along the approach driveway along the Seminole Street alignment. Trailer queues occasionally extend onto the public streets during peak demand periods. Boat trailers are parked in the adjoining, city-owned, pay parking lot. There is limited overflow parking available in the unpaved City parcel at the southwest corner of Seminole St. and N. Osceola Ave. Trailers have also reportedly parked on neighborhood streets when the lot is full.

The number of boats served by the ramp appears to be limited by congestion and available parking more than demand. The recent opening of Belleair Causeway Boat Ramp reduced the demand and use at Seminole Boat Launch but there is still congestion at peak times and high demand for boat trailer parking.

The in-water area at the boat launch is bounded by adjacent shallow water with seagrass. The ramp has an 80 to 100 ft wide dredged area in front of the ramps and staging docks for boat use. Beyond the dredged area to the south, the water is too shallow for safe navigation. These areas are emergent during extreme low tides and the seagrass is subject to damage from boat propellers.

Comprehensive Boating Plan Findings

The Comprehensive Boating Plan market analysis indicates that Clearwater is a highly desirable boating location. Many boaters use the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway near Clearwater for recreation and use the Clearwater Inlet to access the Gulf of Mexico. The market analysis also shows that boaters are seeking slips and boating access in the Clearwater area beyond what is available at the existing public and private marinas. Construction of new marina slips and boat ramps to meet the demand is limited by permitting challenges due to protections afforded to seagrass habitat as well as private ownership of much of the waterfront.

Analysis of other boating destinations shows that the Clearwater region has a high number of boat users and sufficient boating access (ability to use a boat either via marinas, boat launches or other means) to become a boating destination. While additional wet slips or a high and dry facility would satisfy some of the demand for slips in the market area, they are not necessary for Clearwater to become a boating destination.

For Clearwater to become a boating destination, the existing public facilities need to be programmed in a coordinated fashion to provide the various types of elements that make other boating destinations successful in attracting visitors. Analysis shows that boating destinations generally succeed based on the popularity of the landside activities available to boaters and non-boaters. These attractors are places or activities for the visitors to experience once they arrive and include signature waterfront restaurants, greenspace that encourages passive (non-event) use while supporting active (event) uses, public art, signature waterfront hotels, and family-friendly activities like splash pads and playgrounds. Boating destinations also have convenience facilities for boaters including restrooms and wayfinding. Finally, boating destinations should be seen as safe for all visitors, including families, with regards to crime.

Redevelopment Options

Redevelopment options at Seminole Boat Launch are intended to enhance boat ramp operations in order to make them safer and more efficient while also encouraging non-boaters to visit the waterfront. Design of these options should consider the ramp's location in a residential neighborhood with development options that are consistent with the neighborhood's character and use.

Non-boater opportunities that are consistent with the Comprehensive Boating Plan and the goal of making Clearwater a boating destination include enhancing the waterfront park at the western tip of the site, providing clear walkways and paths to traverse the site while keeping pedestrians safe from boat trailer traffic, and enhancing security at the site. Park enhancement could entail improved site furniture and seating, elevated views, updated landscaping, and informational signage.

Opportunities to enhance functionality for boaters include updating and enhancing the existing boater supply store and grab-and-go food service, providing publicly accessible restrooms, and constructing additional staging docks for handling boats during launch and retrieval (construction of these staging docks will likely require dredging and environmental mitigation for associated seagrass impacts). Staffing the boat launch during peak demand periods would provide an opportunity to assist boaters in



launching and retrieving boats while also providing additional security and opportunities for customer service.

In addition, the parking area should be reconfigured to increase parking stall size. Current stalls are narrow and too short, leading to trailers overlapping two spaces and unused stalls. The overflow lot at the corner of Seminole St. and Osceola Ave. should be paved and striped for boat trailers. Traffic flow into the site could be improved by adding a center queuing lane for trailers to use while waiting for ramp access, allowing cars to bypass the waiting line.

The boat launch area should also add an “attractor” to compliment the Clearwater Harbor Marina area and Clearwater Beach Marina area. Possible attractors include a destination waterfront hotel, a restaurant, or other similar public gathering space that would appeal to boaters and non-boaters. This attractor should be coordinated to have boat slips available for guests and should provide views of the marina and harbor.

High and dry boat storage has been proposed for the adjacent private parcel. A high and dry storage facility would satisfy some demand for additional slips/boating access in Clearwater. However, a high and dry facility is not an attractor and is not a component that would make Clearwater a “boating destination”.

Boating destinations also should protect the primary asset that boaters are there to use. Specifically, consideration should be given to ensuring that “Clearwater stays clear”. Policy should be implemented to further protect seagrass and marine mammals while also preventing runoff and other potential degradation to water quality. As noted by ULI:

“This may include engagement of a qualified entity to periodically monitor marine health, creating policies that help protect marine life and the quality of water, and empowering the harbormaster or similar position with enforcing these policies. The cleanliness of the water is part of the brand of the city and will help the city live up to its name.”

Other environmental protection measures include educational signage describing the importance of and ways to protect seagrass and other critical habitats as well as avoidance of manatees and marine mammals. Runoff from boats and the parking lot area should be captured and treated to reduce pollutants entering the harbor.

Planning Level Cost Estimates

Boating-specific elements in the recommendations above included the enhanced access docks and associated dredging and access structures. Access docks may be fixed or floating and may range in price from \$60 per square foot (timber) to \$120 per square foot (floating concrete).

A typical 10 ft x 100 ft dock would cost on the order of \$60,000 to \$120,000 plus additional costs for access platforms and gangways related to the floating dock and dredging costs for both options. Dredging costs are most directly influenced by disposal of the dredged material. Costs can range from \$10 per cubic yard (local reuse of material as fill or similar) to \$50 per cubic yard or higher (hauling to nearby disposal facility). Dredging an area that is 20 ft x 100 ft would cost on the order of \$20,000 to



\$100,000. Summing the dock infrastructure and dredging, the range of costs for each of the 10 ft x 100 ft docks could range from \$100,000 to \$250,000. Design and permitting costs are expected to range from \$40,000 to \$60,000 including surveys of the bathymetry and seagrasses.

Funds for construction and design of these docks could potentially be obtained through the Boating Infrastructure Grant Program (BIGP). The BIGP awards grants annually and successful applicants typically provide cost sharing on the order of 30 to 50% of the total requested cost.

Other elements such as park enhancements and upgrades to the existing marina store will have varying costs depending upon the final design and are not included in this summary.

