



BOAT LAUNCH FACT SHEET

DID YOU KNOW?

The Fort Worden boat launch has been around since the mid-1970s. The 2-lane, concrete structure is currently open to the public and heavily used by boaters spring-summer. The launch handles an estimated 2,000 motorized and 2,500 non-motorized launches per year! The launch has been historically problematic to maintain due to significant amounts of sand and debris buildup on the launch each year. In order to keep the facility functioning, park staff regularly remove this sand and debris. This work requires permits from WDFW and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and careful management in order to not impact sensitive adjacent habitat.

WASHINGTON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION HAS DEVELOPED A CONCEPT DESIGN FOR THE BOAT LAUNCH AT FORT WORDEN STATE PARK

Background

In 2006 Washington State Parks completed a Classification and Land Management Plan (CAMP) for Fort Worden State Park. CAMP plans are Commission approved policy that directs staff in the management of a park. The Fort Worden Land Classifications designated the boat launch and wharf as a Recreation Area to allow existing boating activities to continue. It is the only area

within the park that allows for power boating and launch ramps. In 2008 Washington State Parks completed Part II of its long-range planning effort for Fort Worden State Park. This was a public planning effort that culminated with the Commission adoption of three planning documents; one of which, the Fort Worden Site and Facilities Use and Development Plan, specifically identifies the boat launch and recommends maintaining it in its current location.

BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE

Parks staff have consulted with State and Federal natural resource agencies on how best to manage the sand buildup on the launch. Best available science indicates elevated boat launches are more environmentally friendly than the dated at-grade design. Elevated launches allow for uninhibited movement of sand and driftwood in the nearshore habitat and require significantly less invasive maintenance.

Concept development

In 2016 Parks staff applied for a planning grant to seek funding for the design of a new elevated boat launch, the grant was successful. Then, in 2018 Parks staff began a predesign planning process for a separate but connected project, also called out in the CAMP plan,



addressing the pier structure adjacent to the boat launch. The proximity of the two structures and the logistics of their design and construction naturally resulted in the launch being incorporated into the overall re-design of the area. The pre-design planning effort included two public meetings and culminated in a concept plan for the entire Fort Worden marine area. Concept elements include replacement of the existing pier and boat launch as well as upland improvements to pedestrian and vehicle circulation and parking. The proposed improvements aim to enhance recreational use, provide safer access, reduce maintenance costs and restore nearshore habitat and processes. The project also seeks to unify the marine area and is exploring alternatives for possible expansion of building and operational facilities with the Port Townsend Marine Science Center.



The Fort Worden boat launch provides recreational and access opportunities to designated “Shorelines of Statewide Significance.” Shorelines of the state are regulated by the Washington [Shoreline Management Act of 1971](#) (SMA; Chapter 90.58 RCW), which provides for protection and enhanced public access to state shorelines. The SMA requires all counties and most towns and cities with shorelines to develop and implement Shoreline Master Programs that must include provisions for public access to publicly owned areas. The boat launch at Fort Worden was considered in the development of the [City of Port Townsend’s Shoreline Master Program](#) (SMP) and maintaining the launch is supported by the following SMP policies:

Policy 8.5.1 Maintain existing boat launch areas at Boat Haven Marina, Monroe Street (Salmon Club), at Point Hudson and at Fort Worden State Park for future Port, commercial and recreational uses. The boat ramp at North Beach Park should not be rebuilt; it should be removed, and the beach be restored.

Policy 8.5.2 Install, maintain and rebuild boat launches in such a manner as to minimize adverse effects on natural and physical shoreline resources.

PROJECT NEXT STEPS:

With the development of a concept complete, the next step will be the design and environmental review process. The environmental review process will provide for additional public feedback on the project design and mitigation alternatives.

Construction will be dependent on funding and contingent on obtaining all necessary permits and approvals.

HAVE QUESTIONS? WANT TO STAY UPDATED? CHECK OUT OUR WEB PAGE OR CONTACT ONE OF OUR PROJECT TEAM: bit.ly/FortWordenMarineArea

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