

FORT WORDEN PIER & BOAT LAUNCH FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1) How often is the existing boat launch used?

The existing boat launch at Fort Worden has been in use since its construction in the mid-1970s. The boat launch is a popular amenity for the recreational boating community and is regularly used by sea kayaks, canoes, small recreation vessels, and sport fishing vessels. Peak usage is during the spring and summer crabbing and salmon seasons. The launch has had ongoing challenges with maintenance and accessibility due to the constant accumulation of sand and debris and permitting restrictions. Estimated annual boat launch usage is approximately 2,000 motorized and 2,500 non-motorized launches per year. On a busy summer day, up to 50 vessels (both motorized and non-motorized) may use the launch.

2) Why is the boat launch at Fort Worden needed if there are other boat launch facilities in town?

The Fort Worden boat launch provides recreational and access opportunities to a designated “Shoreline 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.

The Fort Worden boat launch is important because it provides safe and efficient access to Mid-Channel Bank, one of the most popular fishing areas in the region. Mid-Channel Bank is located directly north of Marrowstone Island and stretches north towards Point Wilson. Small boaters rely on the Fort Worden boat launch because it is closer to the target fishing area, is more protected and has less tidal action (smaller waves), is outside of the ferry route, and is safer when fog rolls in.

3) Have you considered other locations for the boat launch?

The location of the boat launch is guided by the adopted [land classifications](#) for Fort Worden State Park, which were developed through a comprehensive public planning process. Land classifications, similar to zoning, set the appropriate use and development intensities within the park and are regulated by chapter 352-16 of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). The classifications were chosen to provide the highest level of protection to the park’s historic and cultural resources while considering current and projected recreational, educational, and cultural use of the park.

Recreational boating, including launching from the park boat ramp, continues as an important recreational function of the park. Since the military historically launched vessels in this area, providing similar modern recreational opportunities is consistent with the site's historic preservation and interpretation. Consequently, the Commission classified the existing 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.

Retaining the facilities at this location is also consistent with the [Fort Worden Site and Facilities Use & Development Plan](#) (developed as part of the long-range planning effort for the park), which recommends that the "Boat Launch and Mooring area should generally remain in its present configuration." In addition, moving the existing facilities to a new location in the park would incur avoidable significant environmental impacts to sensitive nearshore habitat.

4) Have you considered sea level rise in the project?

Yes, sea level rise was one of the preliminary design considerations for the project. The [Washington Coastal Resilience Project's latest sea level rise projections](#) will be used to ensure that the project is designed for coastal resiliency and addresses Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requirements pertaining to flood levels.

5) What are the permitting requirements for the project?

The boat launch and pier improvements will require permits or approvals from the following agencies/entities:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Washington Department of Ecology
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
- Native American Tribes
- City of Port Townsend

6) Will there be additional opportunities to comment on the project?

Yes, if approved to move forward with the design and construction phases, the project will require environmental review and analysis under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). Environmental documents prepared for SEPA will be circulated for public review and comment consistent with state SEPA Rules ([Chapter 197-11 WAC](#)). Reviewers will have the opportunity to examine the environmental analysis and weigh in before agencies make any final permitting decisions.