HARBOUR AUTHORITIES FORUM

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WHEATLEY, ONTARIO

HA MANAGES FISHING CAPITAL'S HARBOUR

Ontario has always been popular with recreational boaters and sport fishers. That's not surprising, since one sixth of its terrain — that's 177,390 square kilometres! — is covered by rivers and lakes, and the province is bordered by the Great Lakes in the south and Hudson Bay in the north. What may be surprising is that Ontario is home to the "Freshwater Fishing Capital of North America."

That honour goes to the town of Wheatley, located 16 kilometres east of Point Pelee National Park and 50 kilometres southeast of Windsor, on the northwest shore of Lake Erie. Wheatley Harbour is the largest inland fishery in North America in terms of landed catch. Approximately 300 commercial fishers catch yellow perch, pickerel and bass with a landed value of $14 million.

"The fishery means great economic benefits for the community," says Ken Snider, who has been the Harbour Supervisor since 1998, and was the Harbour Manager for 19 years before that. He estimates the economic spin-off for the community to be $120 million. "Wheatley's been a fishing town since the 1800s, and the harbour is an essential part of the community."

The community is also an essential part of the harbour. In November 1998, the Wheatley Harbour Authority (HA) was formed to manage the harbour. The nine-person executive committee is made of local residents: seven fishers, a ship builder and a representative from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. They represent hundreds of people who use the harbour or depend on it for employment.

North America's Freshwater Fish Capital – Wheatley, Ontario.

The executive meets every month, except during the winter when the harbour is usually closed in January and February. The group sets priorities for harbour maintenance and repair, and addresses the concerns of harbour users.

"The Harbour Authority running the harbour gives the fishers a feeling of ownership," says Mr. Snider. "They don't take it for granted, and they take good care of it."

Wheatley Harbour's 60-berth, full-service commercial fishing centre is home to 50 commercial fishing boats that pay annual wharfage fees of $5 per foot. In the summer, the harbour also houses up to 10 pleasure crafts at a time. Three fisheries and a boat builder lease harbour land. The harbour also has a launch ramp for pleasure boats, for which the HA is considering charging a fee.

"The Harbour Authority has been able to keep the wharfage fees at a level where the local commercial fishers can afford them," says

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NEWFOUNDLAND

ST. BRIDE'S HARBOUR REBUILDS AFTER STORM

On September 23, 1999, the people of St. Bride's endured tropical storm Gert's last blast as the downgraded hurricane passed Newfoundland. The fourth major hurricane of the 1999 Atlantic hurricane season, Gert battered Bermuda before heading north.

The storm brought rain and winds of up to 113 kilometres (70 miles) per hour, and it churned the Atlantic Ocean into a frenzy. Nine-metre high waves crashed over the giant breakwater to pound St. Bride's Harbour, located on the southern tip of the Avalon Peninsula, on the east coast of Placentia Bay.

A section of the spray wall was destroyed, the wharf and breakwater were damaged, and sheds, nets and fences were washed away. Three men were swept into and later rescued from the water while trying to secure their boats. In all, five boats were lost and more than 30 were battered. Damage to the harbour and boats exceeded $1 million.

Assessing storm damage at St. Bride's.

While the people of St. Bride's won't soon forget Gert, they're working hard to pick up the pieces left by the storm.

"Everyone pulled together after the storm," says Jamie Dalton, Vice President of the St. Bride's Harbour Authority. "People helped each other get their boats secured, and they cleaned up the beaches and picked up debris. Everyone had a hand in it."

Major repairs to the harbour began in January and are expected to be finished this year. Bruce Downer of Public Works and Government Services Canada says more rock is being added to the breakwater, which rises nine metres above the water level. The 15-metre (50-foot) section of the spray wall that collapsed during the storm is being replaced and more steel reinforcement is being added to the entire wall.

For the tiny community of St. Bride's, the economy is directly tied to the harbour. According to an award-winning

FROM THE EDITOR

In this issue, we turn inland to look at two freshwater fisheries in Ontario and Manitoba, and we check in on St. Bride's Harbour in Newfoundland to see how it has recovered from Tropical Storm Gert. Thanks to everyone involved with these harbours for taking time to speak with *Forum*, and for sharing their stories with us.

Don't forget that *Forum* is always looking for story ideas — be sure to let us know what innovations, projects and events are happening at your harbour.

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Tropical storm Gert brought waves nine metres high.

Web site in the SchoolNet's GrassRoots Program designed by the St. Bride's Fatima Academy school, most people in this community fish during the summer months or work in the local fish plant.

Aloysius McGrath, the Harbour Supervisor for the last five years, estimates 90 per cent of the town depends on the fishery, which brings in cod, crab, lobsters, scallops, lumpfish and flatfish. The harbour is managed by the five-member St. Bride's Harbour Authority, which was formed in 1991. The HA represents about 450 Cape Shore fishers who use the harbour.

Having local management run the harbour's day-to-day operation has made a difference, according to Mr. Dalton. "We've done a good job," he says. "Things work well, everyone keeps the wharf clean, garbage is collected … things like that."

The HA funds its operation by charging berthage fees and collecting money from fish sold on the wharf. The local fish plant owner and buyers who come during the summer season pay a set price per pound to the HA.

The harbour accommodates 72 fishing boats, between 8 and 15 metres (25 and 50 feet) in length, with a marginal wharf, two floating docks, a finger pier, and a slipway. The harbour was recently dredged and blasted to create a basin for new floating docks. Once completed, these docks will give St. Bride's Harbour more berthage and reduce congestion on the wharf.

While the harbour's main use is for commercial fishing, pleasure boats have come to St. Bride's, attracted by the beauty of the land, and the nearby Cape St. Mary's seabird ecological reserve.

Last year, a cruise ship waited in the bay while her passengers took smaller boats into St. Bride's on their way to see the birds. A local store owner proclaimed that day to be his business' best in 30 years.

If that ship returns this year, passengers will find the harbour a little altered, but the spirit of St. Bride's remains the same.

HA Manages Fishing Capital's Harbour

Continued from page 1

Mr. Snider, "and the harbour's day-to-day operations are self-sufficient."

However, large maintenance projects require extra funding — especially for dredging the harbour, a yearly activity at Wheatley.

An offshore rock pile built in the area to protect boats from the surge causes sand to catch and collect in the mouth of the harbour. The low water level in Lake Erie over the past few years has made the problem worse.

Wheatley Harbour was dredged in the fall of 1999 to a depth of 2.1 metres, thanks to a cost-sharing federal investment in harbour improvements. Another project involved replacing the timber pile fender system with steel piles and tire fendering. These repairs to Wheatley's docks mean less damage to the docks and boats.

On a smaller scale, the Harbour Authority is making some repairs to the launch ramp to get it ready for pleasure boaters to use this spring. Although the commercial fishers and recreational harbour users occasionally have problems — such as a boat going through a fishing net — Mr. Snider reports that they equitably share the harbour and surrounding water.

Every year, the harbour hosts a fishing exhibition on the August long weekend for the 1,800 residents of Wheatley and visitors to the town. The event is a chance for the community to get a closer look at the harbour and the commercial fishery. With tug boat races, demonstrations, and plenty of fresh fish, the exhibition is popular way to bring the community and the harbour together.

MANITOBA

DUCK BAY HA GETS INNOVATIVE FUNDING

Pop quiz: You have enough money to a) pay for the materials and labour to build an 18-metre (60-foot) wharf, or b) pay for the materials for a 35-metre (116-foot) wharf, but have no funds for the labour. What do you do?

The Duck Bay Harbour Authority in Manitoba, when faced with this situation, got innovative. Rather than settle for a smaller wharf, it set out to find extra funding for the labour. And the results were a win-win situation for the harbour and the community.

"We got our wharf and six local men got employment," says Bryan Thompson, one of the HA's five directors. "Everyone wins."

Formed less than a year ago, the HA took over the management of Duck Bay Harbour, on the west shore of Lake Winnipegosis. About 128 kilometres from Dauphin, the harbour is located in the remote community of Duck Bay, which is surrounded by water on three sides and by bush on the fourth. Since Duck Bay is served by only one road, the harbour offers an important means of evacuation if the road were cut off, by forest fire for example.

The harbour serves the 500 residents of Duck Bay, 12 or 13 commercial fishing boats and a fish plant. A floating dock is used for smaller boats. The fishery runs year round, and last year's catch totaled 624,000 kilograms. While pickerel is starting to pick up, the main catch is northern pike and mullets. Thompson estimates that 90 per cent of Duck Bay's population is involved in fishing. True to its origins as a Hudson's Bay Company trading post, Duck Bay also lists trapping as a major economic activity.

Two winters ago, the deteriorating wharf was damaged beyond repair by ice. At the time, funds from Small Craft Harbours provided a temporary dock. In December 1999, SCH announced additional funds to reconstruct the existing wharf and armour the remaining portion to provide breakwater protection. To make the most of the funding, the HA, which is responsible for managing the project, set out to secure funding for the labour.

The wharf at Duck Bay before the Harbour Authority rebuilt it.

"We knew there were programs out there that could help," says Mr. Thompson, "so we started phoning."

Human Resources Development Canada was the first to contribute, agreeing to pay for two labourers between the ages of 18 and 29 as part of its youth labour program. The Manitoba Metis Federation gave $10,000, and Manitoba Education and Training put in $11,000. In all, six unemployed local men were hired for six weeks.

The community also got involved. Showing their commitment to and support for the project, local residents donated tools and equipment, and provided secure storage for the materials. A front-end loader was loaned and its operator donated his time, the town lent its garage for the construction, and all the administrative support was volunteered.

"Mr. Thompson took time away from his own business to coordinate and organize the project," says James Leisle, an engineer with Small Craft Harbours' Winnipeg office, who was involved with the project. "Both he and the community made significant contributions. The project wouldn't have been possible without the community effort."

Work on the 2.5 by 10 metre (8 by 16 foot) timber crib sections began on land in January. Once the rock to fill the crib was delivered in February, the structure was moved into the bay and placed. Work was scheduled to be completed in March.

With its first successful project under its belt, the HA will turn its attention to securing funds for dredging. Thanks to its location in the bay, the harbour only needs to be dredged about every 10 years. But time and low water levels are taking their toll and dredging will need to be done soon.

"We don't have much in the way of expenses," says Mr. Thompson, "but we need to decide how to generate money for repairs. We don't currently charge for docking [due to the wharf's former condition], but that's an option we'll have to look at."

If the HA continues to show the initiative that made the new wharf a reality, you can be sure you'll hear more about Duck Bay.

FRCC and HAs: A Mutual Interest

Maintaining the economy and the sustainability of stocks is a balancing act with far-ranging effects. Harbour Authorities are in a unique position to know both what's happening on the fishing grounds and what economic and operational impact fisheries management has on fishers, harbours and the community.

On the east coast, the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council (FRCC) is a valuable resource for HAs as a source of information about conservation and as a forum for their observations about the groundfishery.

"FRCC recommendations have an impact on the stakeholders the HAs represent," says Osborne Burke, who is a member of the FRCC, a member of the Maritimes Harbour Authority Advisory Council, and the president of the Harbour Authority of Bay St. Lawrence on the northern tip of Cape Breton Island. "The groundfishery has an interest in what the FRCC is doing because it affects their yearly activities and — more importantly — the long-term future of the groundfishery."

What is the FRCC?

The FRCC, formed in 1993, is a government organization at "arm's length" from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). Its job is to make public recommendations to the Minister on conservation issues — such as total allowable catches — and to provide advice on areas of scientific research, assessment priorities, and international jurisdiction.

"We're here to represent the fish," says Mr. Burke. "We take scientific data and the experiences and observations of the groundfishers, and we use it as the basis of our recommendations on various groundfish stocks to the Minister."

A partnership between the scientific and academic community and the fishing industry, the FRCC has 15 members appointed by the Minister. Chosen on merit and standing in the community, the members are drawn from a mix of disciplines. The "science" members — from government departments, universities and international posts — have backgrounds that include fisheries management and economics. The "industry" members are knowledgeable about fishing and have industry experience.

How can you have a say?

"The FRCC holds public consultations that anyone can attend to speak about the issues that concern them," says Mr. Burke, an inshore groundfisher. "We need the input and knowledge from the industry, as well as from science."

Those public consultations are important for HA members to attend. After all, speaking to the FRCC is a good way to be sure your concerns and experiences are taken into account. To be effective in getting your message to the FRCC, it's important to plan what you want to say or present in relation to the groundfish stocks.

According to Mr. Burke, presentations range from a fisher saying his or her piece to hired presenters making a case. But it's not so much how you say it, as what you say.

"The most effective way is to have a written brief that the consultation team can take back to the whole council," Mr. Burke says. "Present any information that will support your observations on the water, such as log sheets and comparisons with previous years."

"We want to know what you've seen over the year," he says. "The more people who turn out to the consultations, the better the picture we get."

FRCC publications, such as discussion papers, conservation frameworks and science priorities, can be downloaded from the FRCC Web site (*www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/frcc*) or ordered by contacting the FRCC Secretariat at (613) 998-0433.

The Web site also features news and events, and has links to related sites.

PLASTICS: MORE BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

The floating breakwater at Prince Rupert's Rushbrooke Harbour in British Columbia looks a bit odd by traditional standards. Two long plastic pipes, 107 centimetres (42 inches) in diameter, are held 8 metres (26 feet) apart, like a giant catamaran. Another single-pipe breakwater floats nearby.

"We never could have got a traditional breakwater of this quality for our budget," says Rick Hill, the General Manager of the Port Edward Harbour Authority that manages Rushbrooke. "Using plastics meant we got a better product for our money and we were able to make changes to the layout to better protect the vessels and the whole harbour system."

The use of plastic building materials in harbours is being pioneered by Small Craft Harbours as a cost-saving and endurable alternative to traditional materials such as wood and iron that rot and corrode.

The 280-metre plastic breakwater moored at Prince Rupert's Rushbrooke site replaced a deteriorating log bundle breakwater that had lasted only nine years.

USES FOR PLASTICS

The timber in floating log-bundle breakwaters — used when water is too deep for rock-fill breakwaters — can be replaced with large diameter polyethylene pipe. Recycled railroad rails inside the pipe add stiffness. Styrofoam plastics add buoyancy.

Anchor chain can be replaced with multi-strand plastic composite rope, which lasts longer, is easier to handle, and simplifies the repair and maintenance requirements by eliminating the heavy shipboard equipment needed for chain.

Mooring buoys, traditionally constructed of steel and foam-filled tires, can get quite large and heavy in order to support their heavy anchor chains. By using the plastic rope described above, orange plastic buoys can be used instead. They cost less and are easier to see.

The use of plastic pile well rub strips reduces friction damage on piles and float structures. Installed on the pile and pile wells in floats, the plastic helps preserve the pilings, increasing their life.

The use of plastic wraps on pilings also reduces wear and tear and eliminates a potential source of environmental concern due to "shavings" of treated wood entering the water.

Dry fire lines, which bring water from a hydrant or pumper truck to the wharf and float system, allow for a quick response to a fire. Traditionally, these lines are made out of steel pipe, which makes them expensive to build and can cause floatation problems. Working with the federal Fire Commissioner and local fire departments, SCH has started using plastic pipe for some drylines. Plastic pipe is lightweight, costs less, and is easier to install, resulting in facilities being made more secure and even seeing reductions in insurance premiums.

"To some degree, every harbour in the Pacific Region is using plastics," says Adrian Rowland, SHC's Regional Engineer. "The projects are easy to implement, are environmentally sound, and cost less than traditional materials."

Plastic floating breakwaters, rope, mooring buoys, pile/well rub strips, and dry fire lines are currently being used on the Pacific coast, and other products are being developed. Plastics can reduce maintenance and extend the life of harbour structures and moorings by replacing traditional timber materials, which are costly and susceptible to "shipworm," and by reducing the use of steel connections and attachments that corrode in salt water.

SCH engineers provide the technical expertise needed to develop the projects using plastics, and then the project is prototyped at a harbour.

The pilot project is a chance to test the idea, make modifications, and monitor the project before making it widely available. Projects usually take from two to four years to refine and improve so that they are enduring, easy to implement and have a low cost.

"Projects using plastic are Harbour-Authority friendly," says Mr. Rowland. "HAs can participate fully in construction projects using plastics because they are easy to work with and they don't require the heavy machinery that some steel products do."

Mr. Rowland cites the plastic mooring buoys anchored with synthetic rope as an example. The traditional buoys, constructed of steel and foam-filled tires, were anchored with heavy chains. Maintenance and positioning required a large ship to bring equipment to the buoy. Now, with lightweight plastic products, local divers can be trained to service the buoys. This means a float plane or small boat is all that's required.

Rushbrooke's breakwater has a mooring system that, according to Mr. Hill, has exceeded expectations. "This reduced expenses drastically," he says. "Even repairs are easier. A diver can simply tie new line to the viable old line if it breaks. There's no need for new anchor blocks."

"I would recommend this type of project for any harbour that needs floats, breakwaters, or containment bumper logs," says Mr. Hill. "It has so many benefits over wood and steel."

For more information about the use of plastics, please contact Adrian Rowland at (604) 666-7528.

"To some degree, every harbour in the Pacific Region is using plastics."

Viability Study Benefits from Early Input

On January 10 and 11, 2000, Small Craft Harbours (SCH) regional representatives and nine Harbour Authority (HA) representatives from across Canada met in Ottawa to discuss the Harbour Authority Viability Study being conducted by SCH.

The first step in the consultation process, the meeting gave SCH a chance to tell the HA representatives about the purpose and scope of the study, and HA representatives a chance to make suggestions to and comment on the elements of the study before it was started.

"The input of the HAs at this point was important to make sure the study will collect relevant information and address topics HAs believe is important for the harbours," says Gary Lacey, Senior Policy and Program Advisor with SCH, who is coordinating the study.

By examining the current revenues and expenses of the HAs, potential additional revenues, and the allocation of operating expenses and maintenance funds, the study aims to identify the attributes or key success factors that HAs need to be successful both organizationally and financially.

The study will also define minor maintenance as it relates to the goal of having HAs break even operationally by 2001. It will identify the opportunities HAs have and the challenges they face as they move toward self-sufficiency, and help them get the most from the money they spend.

With feedback from the meeting, the study's survey and case study components were revised. Both the survey and the case studies will collect information on demographics, finances and strategies, harbour operations, community support and the HAs' relationship with Small Craft Harbours. The national survey was mailed to 383 Harbour Authorities in January. Thirty-eight HAs (which didn't get the survey) participated in case studies. These on-site interviews gave SCH the opportunity to collect more in-depth information.

The final piece of the study is to analyse the financial information that SCH keeps in its database. The study results will be available in mid- to late-April.

Dennis Aucoin, a member of the Harbour Authority of Cheticamp in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and chairperson of the Maritime's Harbour Authority Advisory Council, was one of the attendees. He feels the input of the HAs shaped the study by broadening the context of the questions. "The new questions will give them [SCH] the data they need, and also generate new ideas," he says.

"This was the first time we had a chance to sit down together at the national level, and talk region to region," Mr. Aucoin says of the meeting. "We didn't just discuss the study, we voiced our concerns and we talked about where the program is going."

"We have a unique partnering opportunity: SCH provides the infrastructure and the HAs provide the expertise. Together, we deliver a valuable service to our clients," says Mr. Lacey. "This study is the start of ongoing consultation with HAs."

✔ TIP No. 7 – The Other Side of Plastics

This issue features an article on the use of plastics in harbours. The same features that make plastics desirable — they are durable, inexpensive and lightweight — also makes them an environmental problem when improperly disposed of. Plastic doesn't break down easily, and can remain in the marine environment for years.

Plastic litter, such as rope, containers, grocery bags, trash bags, cup lids and foam pieces, can:

- *hurt or kill wildfowl and sea creatures if they eat it or become entangled;*
- *get caught in boat propellers;*
- *clog water intakes and block pumping systems; and*
- *degrade beaches and shorelines.*

Enviro-tip #6 gave suggestions for waste disposal and recycling, but what can be done to reduce the use of plastic?

➤ Have a look

What sorts of plastics are used in the Harbour Authority office and by harbour users? Do you have Styrofoam cups by the coffee machine? Do recreational boaters pack picnic lunches in plastic bags?

➤ What to do

Once you identify the kinds of plastic products used on the harbour, find ways to replace them with environmentally friendly products. Consider even the simplest things such as using a mug instead of a Styrofoam cup for coffee.

Post signs reminding boaters of the damage plastics can cause. You can involve local schools by having a poster contest.

Report ships or boaters who throw plastics overboard to the local Canadian Coast Guard.

Organize a community clean-up for beach areas littered with debris to increase awareness of the problem.

Participate in the National Marine Plastics Debris Program by writing to Marine Environment Division, Environment Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0H3.

➤ Your role

Make sure harbour users are aware of the proper disposal and recycling procedures for plastics, and be sure to take action if boaters are found tossing plastics into the water. Set a good example by eliminating disposable plastics used by the Harbour Authority.

Dear Harby

Why is it important to take minutes at a Harbour Authority meeting?

It's important to have a written record of issues discussed and decisions made at general and annual meetings of the Harbour Authority membership, committee meetings and Board of Directors meetings. Minutes provide members of the Harbour Authority with:

- a clear summary of HA activities;
- a way to let members who didn't attend a meeting know what happened;
- a reminder of future expected action; and
- a record of decisions and why they were made.

Minutes don't record everything said during a meeting. Instead, they summarize discussions, record who made and seconded motions and amendments, and indicate voting results. Only motions should be recorded word-for-word, and the Harbour Authority should decide how much detail is appropriate for other matters.

Minutes should contain:

- the name of the committee they're being taken for;
- the date, time and location of the meeting;
- the names of everyone present, and the names of people invited but not attending;
- approval of the previous minutes, or amendments to them;
- an acknowledgment of reports received or presented;
- unfinished business from previous meetings;
- correspondence and new business;
- the time the meeting was adjourned;
- the date, time and location of the next meeting; and
- the minute-taker's and chairperson's signatures on the last page.

For more information on taking minutes, see Section 2.4.5 and Appendix 2-H of the Harbour Authority Manual.