

BOATING ACCESS TASK FORCE



Final Report and Recommendations

Approved October 18, 2005

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INTRODUCTION

In May of 2005, the Boating Access Task Force was convened by Pinellas County Administration in response to concern over economic trends that were threatening the future of boat access in Pinellas County. The issue was highlighted by the conversion, or pending conversion of several marina properties to residential uses, resulting in the loss of public access to boat storage and water access. In addition, increasing competition at boat ramps on weekends for parking and water access evidenced a need to look at better understanding and managing demand on these facilities. Because of the pace of marinas being converted to other uses, finding ways to not only preserve, but to also increase public boating access to the water has been deemed critical, not just in Pinellas County, but throughout the State.

THE VISION

The Task Force was timely, aligning with the completion of the Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan, which assessed some of the same issues of public access for boaters. In fact, the data collection, staff assessment, public meetings, focus groups, and survey results associated with the Master Plan process concluded with this Vision for boating access in Pinellas County:

A VISION FOR BOATING ACCESS

To provide the greatest possible access to Pinellas County waters for both recreational and commercial boaters, while protecting the integrity of natural resources, and enhancing the County's reputation as the preeminent boating/diving/fishing center of Florida.

This Vision, presented at the first Boating Access Task Force Meeting was the starting place for discussion.

PURPOSE OF THE TASK FORCE

The purpose of the Task Force was discussed at the first meeting, and was described as follows:

- To identify the obstacles to achieving this Vision.
- To help identify innovative and effective strategies for sustaining and enhancing public boating access to Pinellas County waters.

- To develop recommendations for consideration by elected officials on how to best implement the changes that came out of the 2005 legislative session.
- To encourage boating interests to be partners with local governments on solutions.

Importantly, and integral to the reason for the Task Force, is an understanding that to achieve such an expansive Vision requires collaboration and partnership with both public and private partners.

This Report presents, at its conclusion, the recommendations arrived at by the Task Force, for consideration by the Board of County Commissioners.

TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

County Commissioner Susan Latvala chaired the Boating Access Task Force, with staff support from County Administration, the Planning Department, the Parks and Recreation Department and the Environmental Management Department.

In all, there were five meetings of the Task Force. Membership grew with each successive meeting. Every municipality with a waterfront was invited to participate, as were representatives from the marine industry, area boaters, marine scientists and the environmental community. A membership list is included as **Attachment B** to this Report.

Each meeting was also attended by a number of interested citizens, including boaters, representatives from environmental organizations, and individuals with individual interests. Each agenda provided the opportunity for citizen input.

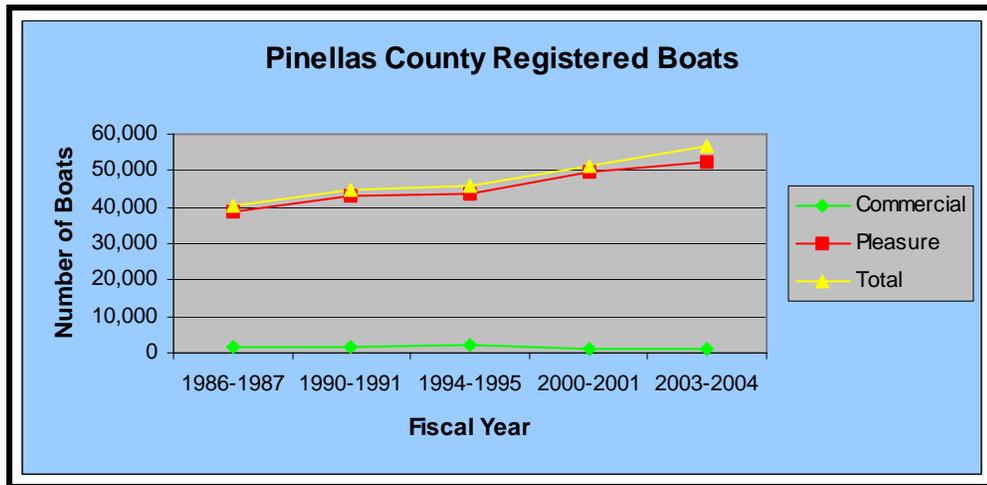
In order to make information readily available to members and interested citizens, a website was established where meeting agendas, meetings minutes, and supporting information could be posted.

(Please refer to: www.pinellascounty.org/boating/default.htm)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The initial meetings reviewed boating data, statistics and findings. Perhaps the most notable statistic is the fact that Pinellas County has the largest number of registered pleasure boats in the State of Florida, and the number of boaters in Pinellas County is increasing as evident in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Pinellas County Registered Boat Trends



Sources: FL Dept. of Hwy Safety & Motor Vehicles and the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan

Table 1, however, indicates that the once-stable commercial marina industry in Pinellas County is beginning to change, reacting and responding to escalating taxes, the scarcity of land, and persistent pressure from residential/condominium developers who want to buy their property. Although the overall number of wet slips in the County has been increasing, wet slips at marinas for lease to the public are disappearing with the recent commercial marina to condominium conversions. In addition, dry storage at commercial marinas experienced a dramatic decline in numbers just this year.

Table 1: Number of Marina Slips in Pinellas County: 1996 and 2005

Marina Type	1996 Slips		2005 Slips (pre-conversions)		2005 Slips (post-conversions)*	
	Wet	Dry	Wet	Dry	Wet	Dry
Commercial	2,728	4,031	2,937	5,572	2,596	4,612
Municipal/State	1,424	0	1,557	0	1,557	0
Membership	868	0	482	92	482	92
Hotel/Resort	103	0	218	0	218	0
Other**	20	0	29	0	29	0
Total	5,143	4,031	5,223	5,664	4,882 (-341)	4,704 (-960)

Source: Pinellas County Planning Department, 2005

Notes: Does not include condominium or property association marinas.

Does not include anticipated future expansion of municipal slips.

*Conversions include Clearwater Bay, Clearwater High & Dry, Huber Yacht Harbor, and Bay Pines.

**Includes marinas that could not be categorized by type.

While commercial marina slips are starting to disappear, a new phenomenon is the emergence of “dockominiums” which are actually adding wet slips to the inventory. In two recent cases, the sale and dismantling of a traditional marina was followed by the construction of a waterfront condominium with both private wet slips and a percentage of publicly-available wet slips for rent. Island Yacht Estates includes the only currently operating dockominium, and the Hubbard Marina conversion is planned to include the other. Currently, information on dockominiums is anecdotal, as data is not being captured in the development review process. However, this phenomenon may play an important role in meeting the need for publicly-available wet slips, and better analysis of their impact on slip capacity and demand is required.

Commercial marinas are not the only target for conversion to other uses. Boat yards are subject to the same economic pressure, and each boat yard loss incrementally affects the ability to support the County’s commercial fishing and commercial charter industry.

Overall, Florida remains the top destination in the Country for marine-based recreation, with the supporting industry creating well over 180,000 jobs and providing over \$15.7 billion annually to the State economy.

SUMMARY OF MEETINGS

During the course of the five meetings, a range of topics was discussed and subsequently narrowed down to form a set of recommendations for consideration by the Board of County Commissioners.

At the first meeting, current conditions (e.g., number of boat ramps, boat lanes, wet and dry marina slips, etc.) were reviewed, as well as the status of existing regulations that governed the location or expansion of boat ramps and marinas. In particular, the Water and Navigation Control Authority regulations were discussed, as well as the role of the County’s Comprehensive Plan, and land use regulations, in addressing the need for, and location of, marinas and boat slips. In addition, several regulatory changes that came out of the 2005 legislative session were reviewed, including tax deferral incentives, expedited permitting, etc.

At the next meeting, a review of what other counties and municipalities are doing to address the need for boat access, and to preserve existing boat access locations, was presented. In addition, staff reviewed the permitting process for water-dependent facilities, including requirements for compatibility with surrounding uses, impacts on the environment, public safety, etc. At this meeting, initial discussion regarding funding options came up, as well as initial ideas for sites to consider for new or expanded facilities.

The third meeting provided an opportunity for feedback on the plans and ideas from the local municipalities, including the idea of mooring fields. The meeting also allowed for discussion of policy issues, including the concept of “no net loss,” of boat slips, the tax deferral legislation, the idea of buying development rights, funding scenarios, etc. Several individual sites were discussed that might provide new, or enhanced boating, or boat storage, opportunities.

The Task Force reviewed a draft letter to marina owners at the next meeting – the letter from the County was to go out to marina owners and operators to apprise them of the County’s interest in preserving their operation, the ideas being considered by the Task Force, including partnerships, and asking that they please advise the County before they considered selling their property. In addition, staff provided initial assessments of each site under consideration. Boater education ideas, and staging area improvements, were also discussed as a means of facilitating better boat ramp operations.

At the final meeting, the refined site list was reviewed, boater education updates were provided, policy issues were reviewed and fine-tuned, as were funding issues. Response to the letter of interest from the County to marina owners/operators had been overwhelming, requiring significant follow-up. Permitting concerns from the development community were also discussed, including the pros and cons of pursuing exemptions for marinas from the development of regional impact (DRI) process.

Appendix C includes the meeting agendas and **Appendix D** includes the meeting minutes from each meeting, providing a more detailed description of the issues and ideas discussed.

While the meetings and recommendations covered small boats and large boats, boat access, boater behavior and boat storage, it appears that the most critical concern among the boating community remains conversion and ultimate loss of marina operations – largely to residential uses. Driven by high taxes and a frenetic high dollar condominium market, marina owners often feel they have no choice but to sell what has often been a long-standing family operation. Paramount among the concerns expressed at Task Force meetings was the need to make the “cost of doing business” cheaper so that the marina operator could compete financially against the tantalizing offers from waterfront developers. In addition, the weekend boater who trailers his/her boat clearly is looking for more efficient and less crowded access to the water, evidencing the need for new and expanded, and better managed, boat ramp operations. In addition, it was clear that a countywide approach to solutions was required, and there was interest among the Task Force participants in collaboration and partnership.

Ultimately, the Task Force agreed on the following list of **RECOMMENDATIONS** for consideration by the Board.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS



Discussion and Recommendations for Increasing Access at Selected State and County Properties

The following sites were “short-listed” after review by the Task Force and preliminary investigation by staff (see **Figure 2** for general locations and **Appendix A** for a general concept of each site).

War Veteran’s County Park – (County property) plans for expansion of existing parking area are already underway; additional upland area is also being looked at for new parking facilities.

- The current plan for parking area expansion is relatively easy, and planning is underway for implementation. Approximately 54 additional boaters will be accommodated **Estimated Cost: \$200,000 (funds are currently allocated)**
- The ability to use additional upland area for additional parking requires additional environmental review and permitting to realistically assess feasibility. Approximately 35 additional boaters could be accommodated if the project were permissible. **Estimated Cost: \$175,000 (no funds are currently allocated)**

Recommended Action: authorize staff to (1) continue to proceed with site planning and permitting for the parking area expansion, and to (2) continue to investigate the feasibility of, including the ability to permit, the additional upland area expansion.

Belleair Boat Ramp – (County property) the recommendation from the Task Force is to evaluate the feasibility of providing an additional 50 to 60 parking spaces

- To accomplish this would require a new seawall and extensive fill. It would also involve extensive permitting, as well as the likelihood of neighborhood compatibility issues. Approximately 50 additional boaters could be accommodated.
- **Estimated Cost: \$750,000 (no funds are currently allocated)**

Stauffer Superfund Site

Honeymoon Island State Park

Belleair Causeway Boat Ramp

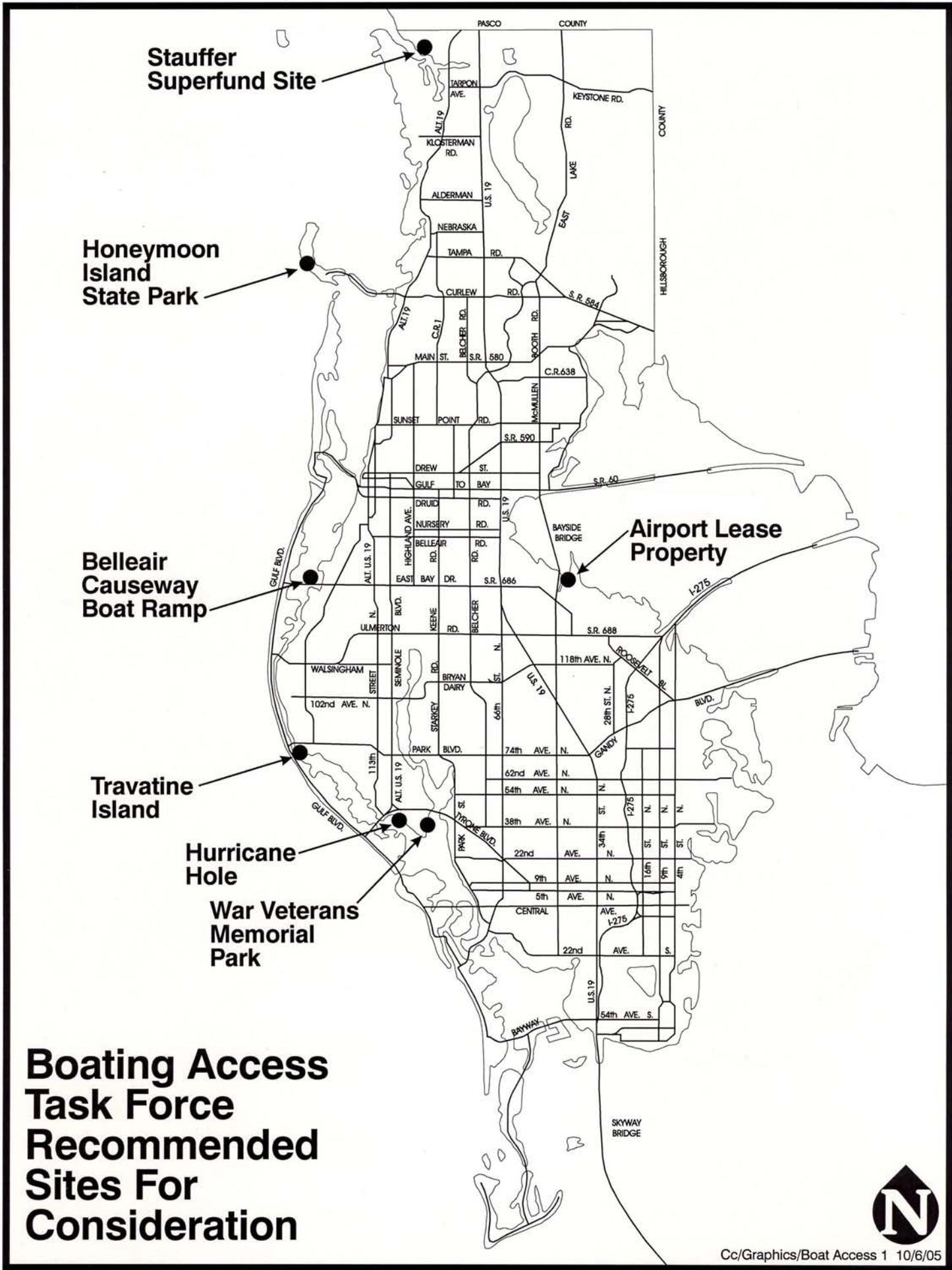
Travatine Island

Hurricane Hole

War Veterans Memorial Park

Airport Lease Property

Boating Access Task Force Recommended Sites For Consideration



Recommended Action: authorize staff to determine the feasibility of, including the ability to permit, a seawall with associated fill.

Travatine Island – (County property) this spoil island off of Park Boulevard is largely covered in invasive/exotic vegetation. The site provides deepwater access to the Intracoastal Waterway, and is directly across from the Park Boulevard Ramp.

- Site development would include removal of exotics and habitat restoration. Vehicle access would be off of Park Boulevard, avoiding the residential neighborhood. Development could include a boat ramp and marina, and various support facilities (e.g., restaurant, bait shop, etc.). Space for approximately 150 boat **trailer parking and/or hi and dri marina slips could be accommodated at a ramp and marina facility.**
- **Estimated Cost: depends on the facility design (no funds are currently allocated)**

Recommended Action: authorize staff to (1) continue with conceptual site planning, including investigating feasibility and permissibility of the site, and (2) seek Request for Negotiation (RFN).

Hurricane Hole – this property is owned by St. Petersburg College. Initial discussion with the College indicates potential interest in a partnership that would allow development of a marina and support facilities, a potential mooring field, and an educational partnership which could include, among other things, a marine science lab.

- An upland support/marina-type facility would be required (for sewage pump-out, parking, monitoring/enforcement of the mooring operation, etc.). Development of the mooring facility would include improvements to water circulation and water quality in the Hurricane Hole basin. Permitting would be extensive, but appears feasible.
- **Estimated Cost: depends on the facility design (no funds are currently allocated)**

Recommended Action: (1) formalize the partnership with the County, (2) continue to investigate/develop a realistic site plan, including permitting requirements, for the property, and (3) seek an RFN.

Airport Lease Property - property is owned by Pinellas County and the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport.

- The site has potential for a boat ramp, wet slips and support facilities. It allows for deepwater access and would have minimal environmental constraints.
- **Estimated Cost: depends on facility design (no funds are currently allocated)**

Recommended Action: continue to (1) investigate/develop, with Airport staff, a realistic site plan, and (2) seek an RFN.

Honeymoon Island (State Park) – The site is considered desirable for a boat ramp due to its more northerly location. The findings from the Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan also indicated the need for boat facilities in north County.

- this site has more extensive environmental issues and constraints; the County is preparing an environmental impact statement for consideration by the Department of Environmental Protection in order to determine definitively the suitability (or lack of suitability) of the site for a boat ramp. In addition to environmental considerations, traffic congestion on the small, constrained roadway presents an issue, as does potential neighborhood opposition.
- **Estimated Cost: N.A.**

Recommended Action: Based upon the findings, Staff recommends this site be removed from consideration.

Stauffer site – This is a Superfund site; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and site representatives will be finalizing a site remediation plan by early next year. This site would provide for development of a diverse array of recreational (including non-water dependent) opportunities, and is of a size to provide countywide benefit.

- County staff are preparing a conceptual site plan at this time for consideration by the U.S. EPA and Stauffer representatives. That plan will depict a boating and recreational purpose for the site. **Conversations between County staff and U.S. EPA have been ongoing but a more formal dialogue and**

commitment needs to occur. Of the sites considered, this one is considered to be time-sensitive.

- Estimated cost: unknown at this time; depends on negotiations with U.S. EPA and site representatives

Recommended Action: Authorize staff to (1) immediately proceed with specific negotiations with the U.S. EPA and site representatives, (2) seek an RFN, and (3) present conceptual master plan to the Board in the future.



Discussion and Recommendations on Boater Education and Staging Area Improvements To Facilitate And Improve Boat Ramp Etiquette And Operations

Based upon the Task Force recommendation, County staff will be working with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Tampa Bay Estuary Program on new and better education and signage for boaters, encouraging better behavior both on and off the water, particularly at boat ramps and in boat trailer parking areas. Educational materials and signage should be available at each County boat ramp by January 2006. The City of Clearwater is doing the same with their local Power Squadron. Educational materials and signage are planned to be made available (at basic production cost) to the municipalities as well so that a consistent message is conveyed countywide. In addition, the County is hoping to improve its staging areas/operations at the Ft. DeSoto, War Veterans and Park Boulevard boat ramps, so that the boat launches function more efficiently – effectively increasing the number of boats each ramp can handle.

Estimated Cost: \$5,600 for educational materials and signage; staging areas/courtesy docks estimated at \$65,000 each (funds for the staging area improvements are not currently allocated)

Recommended Action: no specific action required other than to recommend that Staff identify and pursue grant opportunities to accomplish the staging area improvements.



Discussion and Recommendations for Preserving Existing Marina Properties through Acquisition and Partnership

Following mailout of the letter of interest to marina owners (see **Appendix E**), a variety of responses were received. The responses ranged from interest in outright purchase of a commercial marina operation to opportunities for partnerships in their operation. In addition, there were requests for assistance with permitting issues and with tax hurdles.

At the Task Force meetings, some marina owners and marina developers also cited escalating taxes and various regulatory roadblocks as contributors to a decline in the marina industry.

The following strategies are just some of the ways the County can encourage the continuity of existing marina operations. They include ideas for acquisition of marinas, new partnerships, and new ideas on regulations. Really, all of these strategies would be available in the boat access “tool box,” so that each new opportunity could be individually negotiated based upon the specific opportunity, and ultimately benefits the boating public, the County and the private partner.

▪ Acquisition of Existing Marinas and/or Development Rights

Marina acquisition does not necessarily mean the County becomes a marina operator. Depending upon the interest of the seller, and the specific opportunity provided by the property and/or the marina operation to the County, an appropriate partnership agreement would be drafted to benefit both the seller and the County. The net result would be continuation of the commercial marina operation. Improvements to the marina facility could be streamlined, as local governments are now able to take advantage of an expedited permitting process enacted by the 2005 legislature. At this time, several opportunities for this type of arrangement have been presented to the County, following mailout of the County’s letter of interest.

Acquisition of development rights is similar to outright purchase of the marina, as the property would no longer have the ability or right to redevelop to another use - its (re)development potential will have effectively been purchased by the County. What the purchase of development rights would do then, is essentially institutionalize the existing marina use as the only viable use. The benefit to the property owner would be similar to that associated with outright purchase.

However, due to the loss of future development rights, it is likely that outright purchase of the property is going to be the more desirable approach of the two to the property owner.

- **Public-Private Partnerships to Facilitate New or Improved Boat Access**

Under a partnership scenario, the County could lease the marina operation, or aspects of the operation, to a qualified operator(s). Or, if a marina operator needs help with the permitting process, capital to facilitate an expansion, or help with maintenance and operation issues, etc., a different type of partnership and assistance would apply.

For example, the new expedited permitting process made available to local governments as a result of the 2005 Legislature provides an incentive for partnership between local governments and private boat facilities. Under certain public-private partnership arrangements, the expedited permitting advantage available to local governments could apply to the overall enhancement/development project. For example, permitting would likely be streamlined and Development of Regional Impact (DRI) review would not be required.

The County could also offer technical assistance, assistance with the traditional permitting process, help with capital outlay, etc. – with the understanding that, in return, public boat access would be a guaranteed. The appropriate legal arrangements for this type of partnership, including the length and terms of the partnership, and provisions for assuring public boating access, would need to be worked out individually for each partnership opportunity.

Estimated cost: with the potential for several types of offers, ranging from out-right acquisition to assistance with management, enhancement, and upgrades, the funding estimate (particularly for acquisition) could be *several millions of dollars*; BUT the idea of the partnership is to balance initial costs against long-term revenues from lease arrangements, grants, etc., so that ultimately the financial impact is neutral.

Recommended Action: Authorize staff to begin the RFN process to address immediate opportunities. Staff would ideally like to bring back a “package” of boat access, marina purchases, partnerships and solutions at one time for Board consideration, including for funding decisions.



Discussion and Recommendations of Planning and Regulatory Considerations

Acquisition (with associated partnership) is an immediate solution to the boat access/boat storage issue. But for the long-term, solutions from a planning and development regulation perspective are required to better address the preservation of our water-dependent land uses. There are certain regulatory strategies that might contribute to the preservation, enhancement and development of water-dependent uses.

Importantly, planning and regulatory solutions that apply only to the unincorporated area will not address what is really a countywide problem. Therefore, a countywide policy-level commitment that recognizes the value and contribution of water-dependent land uses to the economy, character and quality of Pinellas County life is required. This can be accomplished in several ways.

- **Changes to the County's Future Land Use Map and the Countywide Future Land Use Plan**

To date, the Board of County Commissioners, in their administration of the Pinellas County Future Land Use Map, have not approved any land use changes that have resulted in the conversion of a marina or boat yard use to a non water-dependent land use, nor have County staff presented any such changes to the Board for consideration. The Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan actually contains some policy guidance on giving priority to water-dependent land uses, but it is anticipated that, in association with the major evaluation and update to the Comprehensive Plan that is underway, additional and more direct policies and commitments will be included.

In a few municipalities, the local Commission or Council have approved amendments to their municipal future land use maps which converted marina properties to residential condominiums. When these land use amendments have subsequently been presented to the Countywide Planning Authority for consideration, each has been approved. Clearly, the relationship between local land use decisions and the recent conversion of some marina properties is inextricable.

The Countywide Future Land Use Plan can provide one opportunity to address solutions countywide, incorporating a firm policy commitment by the Countywide Planning Authority to the protection and

preservation of water-dependent land uses. The current work by the County planning staff in association with the update to the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan can provide a starting framework for this approach.

- **No-Net-Loss Policy**

Some local governments around the State and the Country are beginning to explore the idea of a no-net (slip) loss policy; meaning, if a development project eliminates a certain number of boat slips available to the public, it must replace a certain number. It is obviously not this simple or straightforward, and such a policy requires additional consideration before it is adopted. The idea is currently being explored in association with the evaluation and update to the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan. During the coming year, amendments to the County's Comprehensive Plan will be prepared for consideration by the Board of County Commissioners, establishing new goals, objectives and policies for the Board's planning, programs and regulations. The no-net-loss idea will be evaluated during this coming year to see if it is realistic, feasible, and would contribute to the protection of water-dependent land uses. Again, because the loss of marina slips is a multi-jurisdictional problem, The Countywide Future Land Use Plan may provide one opportunity for a countywide approach.

- **Waterfront Overlay**

The identification and protection of Working Waterfronts was a priority for the 2005 legislative session. The Tarpon Springs Sponge Docks provide perhaps one of the best examples of a working waterfront in this County. However, the County's recreational waterfronts (marinas and boat ramps) are also working waterfronts in the sense that they support the County's charter boat, recreational fishing and leisure boating industry. The idea of developing a land use overlay or special zoning district to specifically recognize the water-dependent use and purpose of a property(ies) or district could help to stave off aggressive redevelopers who are interested in residential uses and/or tourist accommodations.

Importantly though, the overlay or district could provide the justification for some tax relief. For example, with current tax assessments based on the idea of highest and best use, marinas and boatyards are consistently being assessed as if the best use is residential/condominium. According to marina owners on the Task Force and in the audience at the Task Force meetings, this has led to outrageous increases in annual property taxes. Perhaps the overlay could provide the basis for considerations similar to the "greenbelt" or "bluebelt" tax exemption. Regardless, it is clear that additional

exploration of the range of opportunities provided by the concept is warranted.

Because of this, the idea of a waterfront overlay is already identified for further analysis in the Evaluation and Appraisal Report for the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan. Like other land use overlays or districts that affect the use of land, it would likely be implemented via the County's Future Land Use Map and land development regulations if adopted.

While the Countywide Future Land Use Plan, can - through the respective land use plan amendment process - provide the ability to apply the waterfront overlay within the County and the cities, it should be noted that amendments to the Countywide Land Use Plan cannot be initiated by anyone other than the local government with jurisdiction over the specific property(ies). What the Countywide Plan can do is make the category/overlay available for use by each local government. Importantly, this means that the local government taking advantage of the category will need to include related measures in their own local comprehensive plan.

- **Exemption from Chapter 380, F.S. Development of Regional Impact (DRI) Review for Boating Facilities**

In the 2002 Legislative Session, the State authorized an exemption from the Development of Regional Impact review process for marina and boating facility construction in counties or cities with adopted boating facility siting plans, or similar criteria in their comprehensive plans. One of the primary purposes of a boating facility siting plan is to ensure protection of manatees and other marine resources from boating activity. Boating facility siting plans are required by the State in those counties that have to have a manatee protection plan - Pinellas County is not one of those counties. While not required, the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan included specific marina siting provisions in 1989. This fact, along with the fact that Pinellas County has countywide Water and Navigation Control Authority, formed the basis for the County's request to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), for the ability to apply the marina DRI exemption locally. Unfortunately, DCA did not agree with the County. Staff continues to believe, however, that the exemption is warranted, based on our strong environmental protection program, sound land use planning, and the unique water and navigation control authority granted to us by the State. In light of the recent legislative direction regarding the need to better protect and encourage water-dependent uses, it is the right time to ask that our request for the exemption be reconsidered, and/or to bring the subject back up legislatively for clarification.

Tax Deferral for Marinas

The 2005 Legislature appeared to provide an incentive for preservation of marina and waterfront operations by allowing for local government adoption of a Tax Deferral Ordinance, with the intention of providing some tax burden relief to marina operators who agreed to provide public access. However, an evaluation of the details reveals that it is not a straightforward incentive, and in fact, it is unlikely that a marina owner would take advantage of the option as there are various annual reporting requirements; an obvious accumulation, versus, abatement, of taxes; and substantial questions about how the deferral process would work. Consequently, this is another matter that could benefit from clarification in the next legislative session.

Recommended Actions:

Direct County Planning staff to strengthen policies for protection of water-dependent land uses in the Comprehensive Plan, and evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of the no-net-loss and waterfront overlay concepts in the process of developing the upcoming amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

Use the countywide planning process as a means of strengthening policy-level protection for water-dependent land uses, and for applying additional protective measures through the land use plan amendment process.

Direct staff to re-submit the request for an exemption from the DRI process for marinas to DCA.

Include DRI exemption, tax deferral/tax exemption, and potential for other taxing solutions for consideration by the 2006 Legislature.



Intergovernmental Coordination Recommendations and Public-Public Partnerships

The unincorporated County represents a very small percentage of the County's waterfront. If the Board of County Commissioners acts upon these recommendations a strong statement is being made regarding the need to protect the future of our waterfronts and affordable public access to the most defining feature of this County – our coastal waters. But the County cannot make a big difference without its municipal partners. To make a difference, partnerships and agreement between the County and the municipalities will be required, particularly in regard to policies that determine the importance, value and treatment of water-dependent land uses. Several local governments were at the Task Force table, and clearly there is much forward-thinking and innovation among our municipal partners, many of whom have been in the public marina and boat ramp business for years. Currently the cities of St. Petersburg, Clearwater and Safety Harbor have expressed an interest in some specific partnerships for providing enhanced access/improvements. Collectively, we can capitalize on partnerships, share ideas and costs, devise common approaches to boating access and boating safety, and support common policy and planning approaches that fundamentally recognize the economic, recreational and quality of life value of access to our greatest natural resource - Pinellas County waters. Specifically, this group can also work through and help to refine the policy issues, bringing commonality to approaches but also being a sounding board for countywide proposals.

Recommended Action: invite, by formal letter and resolution, each local government participating in the Task Force to collaborate in an Intergovernmental Coordination Workgroup, to be facilitated by the Pinellas County Park Department. The group will continue to work on common problems, solutions, policies, opportunities and partnerships regarding public waterfront access



Funding Recommendations

Obviously, most of the solutions will cost money. So the question is, where will the money come from? The partnership opportunities will be intended to ultimately have a positive financial impact (after a likely initial expenditure) – but clearly, things like property acquisition and site development can carry big initial expenses, but through an appropriately structured partnership, there is a long term payback. While certain of the recommendations can be acted on now with existing dollars, several do not have a current or committed source of funding. Ideally, there is a need to identify both short and long term funding strategies for preserving, enhancing, and developing additional public access opportunities to Pinellas County waters.

Recommended Action:

Direct staff to begin the Request for Negotiation (RFN) process to accomplish mutually beneficial business partnerships and arrangements.

Identify a bond package to kick-off boat access acquisition, or related capital investment requirement.

In partnership with the municipalities, and in conjunction with the intergovernmental coordination committee, develop a boat access component to the Penny (infrastructure sales tax) list.



Conclusion

The Task Force experience has helped to explain, refine and clarify the condition of boat access and boat storage in this County. It has also provided the opportunity for interested boaters, citizens with environmental concerns, marina interests, elected officials, and County and municipal staff to share ideas, formulate new strategies and commit to working together to assure that public access to, but also the protection of, Pinellas County waters, remains a priority.

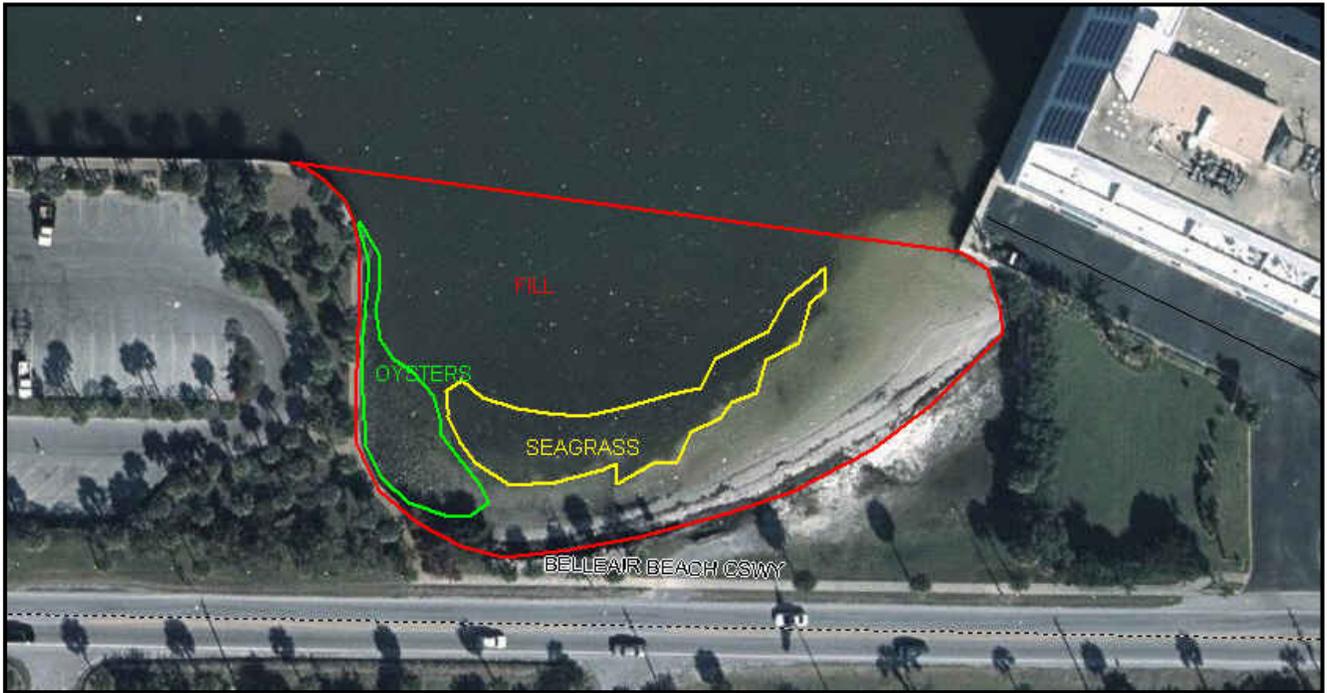
With the conclusion of the Task Force, and development of the resultant recommendations, a diverse array of short and long term strategies are now presented for consideration, agreement and action.

**Appendix A:
Conceptual Site Plans for
Boating Access Task Force
Recommended Sites**

War Veterans County Park



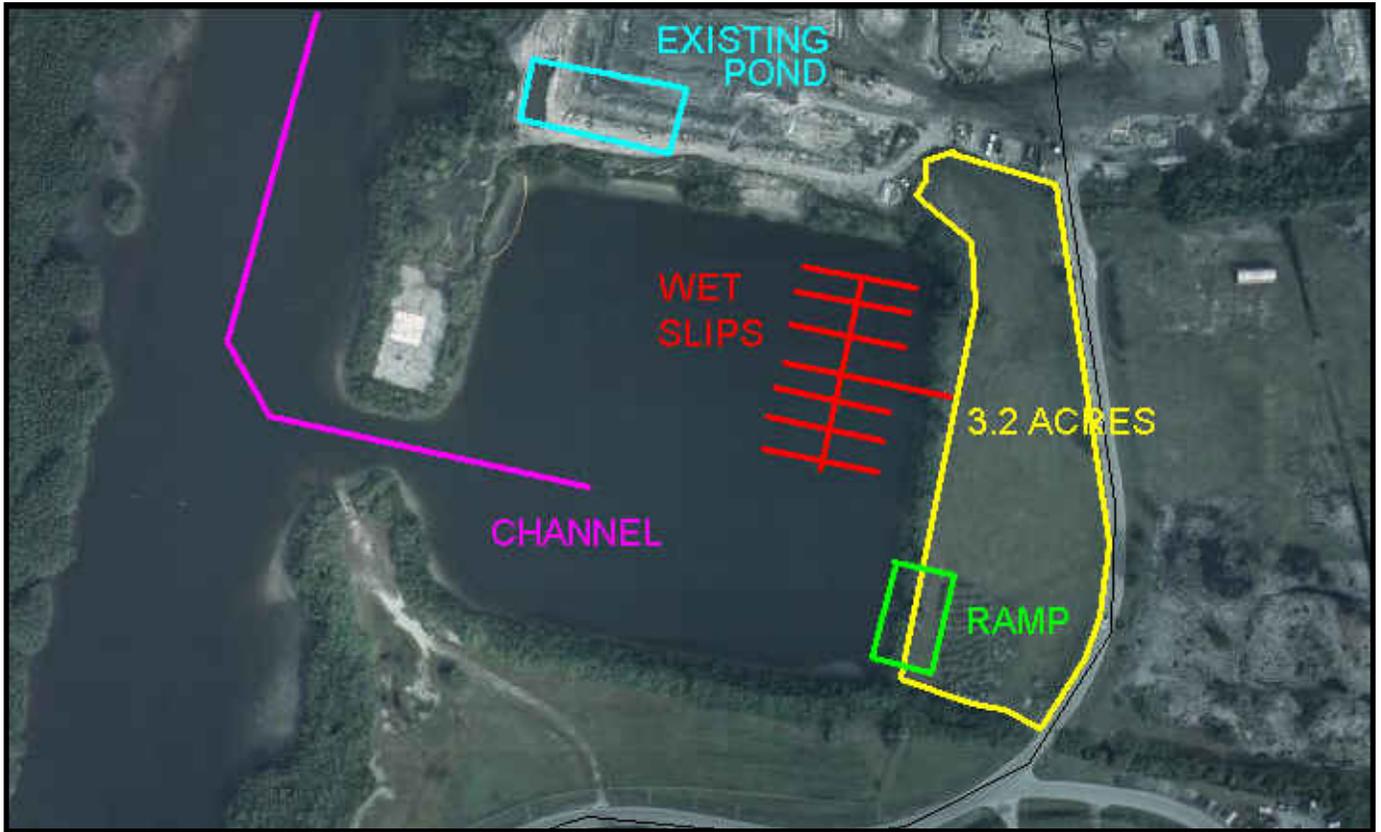
Belleair Boat Ramp



Travatine Island



Airport Lease Property



Stauffer Superfund Site





APPENDIX B: Boating Access Task Team Members

<u>NAME</u>	<u>AFFILIATION</u>
Kara Bauer	Commissioner - City of Safety Harbor
Rodney Chapman	City of Tarpon Springs
Frank Dame	President/CEO, FloridaBoatersGuide.com
John A. Doglione	Mayor, City of Dunedin
David Dunbar	President, People's Bank
Denis Frain	Harbormaster, City of Gulfport
Judy Geiger	Central Marine
Bruce Haddock	City of Oldsmar
Cathy Hayduke	City of Treasure Island
Steve Hickok	Tarpon Springs Yacht Services
Mark Hubbard	John's Pass Marina
Bill King	General Mgr., Galati Marine
John C. Landon	Landon, Moore & Associates, Inc.
Mark La-Prade	President, Thunder Marine
Heidi Lovett	Senior Projects Mgr., MRAG Americas, Inc.
Capt. Dave Markett	Florida Guides Assn.
Capt. Dave Marsicano	City of Madeira Beach
Capt. Doug Metko	Florida Guides Assn.
Walt Miller	Mgr. Marina & Port, City of St. Petersburg
Jim Moore	Home Port Marina
Bill Morris	City of Clearwater
Andrew M. Nicholson	President, Challenger Enterprises, Inc.

Jay Powers	Property Manager, Navron Corp.
Jim Reid	Home Port Marina
Lynn Rives	Director, Parks and Rec. City of Oldsmar
William B. Sargent	Research Scientist, FFWCC
Reid Silverboard	City Manager, City of Belleair Beach
Doug Speeler	President, Speeler Enterprises
Matthew Spoor	Leisure Services, City of Safety Harbor
Bill Stokes	Chairman, Sierra Club
Bruce Stott	Interested Boater
Russell Thompson	General Mgr., Harborage Marina
Michael W. Whelan	Leisure Services, City of St. Pete Beach
Will Wilkins	CLW Real Estate Group

Appendix C: Boating Access Task Force Meeting Agendas

Please refer to www.pinellascounty.org/boating/agenda.htm

Appendix D: Boating Access Task Force Meeting Minutes

Please refer to www.pinellascounty.org/boating/minutes.htm

APPENDIX E: Sample Letter To Marina Owners

Dear:

You may be aware of the recent attention being given to the loss of public marinas, and the sale and conversion of marinas to other uses. In fact, Pinellas County recently formed a Boating Access Task Force, comprised of boaters, several municipal representatives, and environmental interests to try and identify ways to prevent further loss of waterfront access.

Because of this concern, I am writing to let you know that the County is very interested in the long-term viability of boat access and marina operations in this County, and several ideas are being explored at this time regarding ways to keep marina operations in this County. This includes an interest in potentially purchasing existing marinas from willing sellers, as well as entering into partnerships for construction and/or operation of new or expanded marinas.

If you are interested in finding out more about the County's interest, and whether there might be an opportunity for individual marina owners and the County to be partners in preserving waterfront access for the future, please contact Jake Stowers, Assistant County Administrator, at 464-3485, or email him at jstowers@pinellascounty.org. If you are thinking of selling your operation now, or in the future, we would also like to hear from you.

In addition to a potential interest in purchase, some of the new ideas being explored include various incentives and partnership opportunities to make it more financially attractive for marinas to stay in operation for the long term.

I would encourage you to visit the Boating Access website for information on the progress of the Boating Access Task Force, at:

<http://www.pinellascounty.org/boating/default.htm>

Please feel free to provide your thoughts and ideas on the progress of the Task Force as well.

We look forward to hearing from you if you wish to discuss any opportunities we might have to work together to preserve the future of both recreational and commercial boating as an integral part of our waterfront community.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Spratt
County Administrator