



# **NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT**

## **HARFORD PIER SITE PLAN**



**Submitted To:**

PORT SAN LUIS HARBOR DISTRICT

May 12, 2021



INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Harford Pier is at a transition point, with a vacant restaurant site, a Fisherman’s Market Pilot Project, a new lessee - the Harford Pier Fish Market, and the District has entered into a request for proposal process for a new term for an existing lease. Several of the buildings leased to these former tenants have numerous problems, including the need to replace the decking underlying the space, seriously deferred maintenance, to changes in consumer expectations. The scope of projects needed to address these multiple deficiencies makes this an ideal time to reassess the space and amenities provided on the pier and provide a future vision to guide those projects to assure long-term relevance to the needs of the community.

This needs assessment is a starting element in a larger site planning process. It is aimed at determining the demands for the services and related amenities by the various constituencies that use the pier: different types of fishermen, recreational boaters, tourists and local consumers, and the businesses that serve them. Updating a demand profile from among these groups is intended to inform the elements needed on the pier now and into the future and establish their respective sizes.

The focus of the needs assessment is on the pier, but Harford Pier exists in the context of access from both the land and ocean. Where necessary, the needs assessment recognizes these vital relationships, sometimes referring to demands coming from outside the pier, and sometimes suggesting that the best solutions to some demands can be met off of the pier itself.

Organization of the Narrative

The results of the needs assessment are presented in four main parts:

**Methods:** this section describes in more detail the user groups targeted for feedback and the manner of getting information on the adequacy of support provided by the pier of their existing and anticipated activities and/or operations.

**Findings:** the more useful findings resulting from the engagement with the user groups, sometimes supplemented with interesting information that won’t necessarily inform a pier site plan, but may be useful in other Harbor District communications or operations.

**Site Planning Elements:** the specific elements suggested for inclusion in the pier site plan accompanied by information on size or quantity, many of which will be included and some others that may be considered and rejected.

**Related Findings and Suggestions:** Those findings that do not directly affect planning of the pier itself, but are worthy of follow through, such as coordination with ongoing planning by other agencies, potential improvements off the pier that would support its use, or elements that could more effectively be located off the pier.

METHODS

Multiple methods were used due to different ways of reaching and interacting with each type of users and the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In some cases, methods had to be changed after being implemented due to changes in public health guidelines.

Since methods were strongly related to each user group targeted, it makes sense to describe each type of user and the method ultimately used to understand that group's needs. A common set of questions was developed that was then modified and expanded for each of the groups listed below before approaching respondents:

**Commercial Fishermen:** Harford Pier has always been a working pier, so commercial fishermen were considered a key constituency throughout the project. The original intent of going onto the pier to conduct one-on-one interviews. Ultimately, however, a Zoom meeting was conducted with members of the Port San Luis Commercial Fishermen's Association (PSLCFA). The planned questions were opened up to group discussion, and the participants were invited to discuss issues important to them in addition to the original questions.

**Sportfishing Operator:** A face-to-face interview with the owner of Patriot Sportfishing was conducted at his business location on the pier.

**Pier Tenant Merchants:** At this time, the only active merchant (besides Patriot Sportfishing) was Mersea's Seafood Restaurant. The general manager of Mersea's was interviewed in person.

**Tourists and RV Campers:** One group of questions was determined to be relevant to both groups. Face-to-face interviews were conducted of people leaving the pier on foot over a number of days until changes in public health guidelines made this approach inappropriate. A telephone interview was subsequently conducted with a known RV camper.

**Recreational Pier Fishermen:** These were interviewed as they left the pier.

**Sportfishing Customers:** The plan was to meet the returning boats, but the pandemic guidelines became more restrictive before this could be accomplished. The questions were reviewed with the operator of Patriot Sportfishing, who provided insights based on customer comments he had received.

**Small Boat Operators:** The interviewer took to the water by kayak with a clipboard of interview forms and interviewed people using kayaks and SUPs in the vicinity of the pier.

**Mooring Patrons:** Some owners of boats on moorings were interviewed by kayak while on their boats.

**Transiting Crews:** Questions were developed but the opportunity never presented itself to interview crews of transiting vessels.

**District Staff:** A group interview was held on Zoom with the Harbor Manager, Facilities Manager and Business Manager.

**Avila Valley Advisory Council:** A Zoom meeting was conducted with the AVAC.

**Harbor District Commissioners:** Four of the five commissioners were interviewed by telephone or Zoom. One of the commissioners also participated in the Zoom meeting with the AVAC.

**San Luis Yacht Club:** the Commodore of the SLYC was interviewed by telephone. By agreement a follow-up email was sent with an invitation to the club's members to submit their comments directly, but none were received.

Additional interviews were conducted by telephone or Zoom with the following people who had previously proposed projects for the Harford Pier or who had operational experience at other piers useful for the physical planning phase of this study:

- the manager of the Tuna Harbor Fisherman’s Market in San Diego;
- Doug Morris, who proposed a launch and dock facility for small keelboats;
- the San Luis Obispo County planner assigned to the Avila Valley and surrounding areas;
- Dr. Denise Allen, from the AVAC who called to follow up with some personal observations;
- a developer who proposed lodging with a restaurant at the location of the former Olde Port Inn.

Because of the difficulties in accessing some of the user groups due to the pandemic, it was finally decided to put a survey online at the opening of the spring camping season. The survey had three branches of questions for RV campers, mooring patrons, and all others. Invitations with a link were put on the Harbor District’s website and emailed to its contact list of customers.

**FINDINGS**

While each user group had expected unique interests for the pier, some interesting common themes also emerged from the interviews. The following summarizes some of the most useful findings:

**Character**

One of the more interesting findings, and one that was not targeted in any of the interview questions, was that the character of the Harford Pier as it exists was important to most users. People liked the working character of the pier and the low key atmosphere, despite the work going on. Many appreciated its differences with and distance from the Avila Pier. Users of the Harford Pier also seemed to particularly appreciate the ability to view wildlife from it. The message seemed to be to allow each of the piers to remain geared to their respective audiences with their individual characteristics.

**Function**

The PSLCFA was not alone in advocating to keep commercial fishing as a dominant role of the Harford Pier. There were many voices citing its importance, and nobody argued to the contrary.

**Support for Commercial Fishing**

Adding or enhancing a few services that would support commercial fishing operations were mentioned by the commercial fishermen and supported by others who would benefit:

- the quantity of ice produced was not as much of an issue as the ability to load ice into boats by chute as used to be available;
- the ability to receive and store frozen bait on pallets was brought up by the commercial fishermen, but would serve Patriot Sportfishing as well;
- the commercial fishermen echoed other users’ calls for the option of landing at a dock, in their case to support some types of loading;
- they also shared the need for truck loading capabilities with the other businesses.

### **Fisherman's Market**

The trial run of the fisherman's market started in the former Olde Port Fish Market space during the needs assessment phase of this study. Social Media, word of mouth, and advertising was effective, and the public quickly embraced the program such that the major problem was the fishermen selling out very quickly. Interviews with other fishermen's markets and District staff indicate that there is a synergy that develops between periodic fishermen's markets and permanent fish markets with regular hours that are mutually beneficial to both.

### **Lost Businesses are Missed**

While commercial fishing is regarded the most important function of the Harford Pier, the Olde Port Inn and Olde Port Fish Market (soon to be replaced) are missed all user groups in general. A large proportion of respondents call for these businesses to be replaced.

### **Landing Boats**

Different user groups want the ability to land on the pier from the water to be enhanced. Commercial fishermen, mooring patrons, and small boat operators all want the ability to tie up and land for some period of time without climbing a ladder. This is a combined physical planning and policy issue. Different types of boat operators want to be able to tie up temporarily for longer than it takes to take on or drop off passengers to conduct brief business on the pier or on shore.

### **Vehicle Loading**

Although we asked specifically, nobody we talked to were concerned about conflicts or safety between vehicles and pedestrians. The most important aspect of vehicular access was the ability to load or unload a vehicle on the pier. Loading zones for trucks were important for commercial interests such as the commercial fishermen and restaurant, while loading zones for passenger vehicles was important to sportfishing customers and recreational pier fishermen, who want to get on the pier, drop one of their passengers with their equipment for the day, and had back off-pier to find parking.

### **Parking Availability**

Everybody realizes that parking is a limited resource, both on the pier and on land. Most respondents felt that the previously mentioned ability to load vehicles on the pier was much more important than parking on the pier. The second most cited issue was some method at the entrance to the pier indicating if there was any parking available. Patrons would appreciate knowing when it is not worth driving onto the pier in the first place, only to turn around (often with difficulty) and leave to find parking on land. The third cited issue was the availability of disability parking spaces. Finally, a number of respondents mentioned support for bicycles related to the possibility of Harford Pier becoming the end of the expanded Bob Jones Trail.

### **Public Toilets**

The general manager of Mersea's and survey respondents mentioned that both public and customer access to toilets was a problem, and was easily confirmed with observations. This is addressed in detail in the *Site Planning Elements* section of this report.

## Skiff Storage

Mooring patrons had two requests that could be addressed in the site plan: additional storage for skiffs and their motors and improved safety for launching and accessing skiffs.

## Other Findings

A number of items came up that have limited constituencies or support:

**Small Keelboat Hoist and Dock:** A proposal to locate a hoist adequate for a small, open keelboats with a dock area from which to run regattas is an idea raised by and largely kept alive by one enthusiast. Meeting the demand for more commercial and public landing capacity would also benefit small keelboats, but there are other options for improving launching that do not involve the pier.

**Lodging:** Including lodging on the pier has been previously proposed. While the idea itself is feasible, it does not fit in with the community's goals for the Harford Pier and previous comments received from the permitting agency — the California Coastal Commission — were unresponsive.

**Food Services:** In addition to general support for another restaurant, there were miscellaneous requests for specific types of offerings, such as bars, brew pubs, and steak houses, but no clear trends.

**Marine Services:** There were also miscellaneous requests for specific marine services, such as a bait and tackle supply. Some of the requested services are not best addressed with the site plan, such as bottom cleaning, mechanics, and water taxi hours.

## SITE PLANNING ELEMENTS

Based on findings from the interviews and survey, the following elements have been identified for potential inclusion in the Harford Pier Site Plan:

### Elements to Remain

A number of elements seemed to be satisfactory from their users perspective at least in terms of the amount of space provided. This includes the following functions, with only a couple of qualifying comments provided following the list:

- Skiff Storage
- Wilcox Fisheries (Old Ice House)
- Mersea's Seafood Restaurant (and it's public toilet)
- Live Fish Storage
- Offices
- Pump Station
- Fish Cleaning Rack
- Trash and Recycling Enclosure
- Hoists

There are functional reasons for the Harbor Patrol office to be on the pier, but not so the Harbor District's accounting and planning **offices**. Without alternative space, however, there is no reason to actively seek to relocate them off the pier to make room for some other function.

If the opportunity rises to provide convenient space off the pier, it should be considered at that time.

The pier's main **trash enclosure** is located in the vicinity of some of Mersea's outdoor customer seating. Although reasonably located relative to prevailing winds, the trash enclosure can be a source of odors relatively close to this outdoor dining area. Of course, Mersea's is one of the principal sources of the waste producing these odors. Nevertheless, it is worth exploring other options for the location of the trash enclosure during the planning phase of the study.

## **Replacement Elements**

### Harford Pier Fish Market

Replacement of the fish market space in-kind is in contract negotiations at this writing. The scope includes 1,524 gross square feet of interior space and two adjacent non-exclusive exterior use areas of 220 square feet and 300 square feet.

### Restaurant and Bar

A CDP is in progress for replacement in-kind. This also makes sense for the restaurant and bar to work within existing permits while having adequate space for operations: 5,930 gross square feet.

## **Existing Elements to Renovate**

### Sportfishing Office

This is already in a negotiations stage at the time of this report. The scope has been defined by an RFP, and involves moving the existing office to enable repairs to the deck supporting it. The site plan study can coordinate with the negotiations in progress to reflect the likely location on the pier: 800 gross square feet.

### Public Landing

The proposal for the new public landing dock could affect one of the existing landings or neither of them depending on the final design solution.

### Ice Maker and Storage

The idea was raised by the PSLCFA, but could also serve sportfishing operations as well. The commercial fishermen wanted storage for at least two pallets with frozen bait. With a third pallet for sportfishing, floor level storage only, a minimum of 75 square feet of additional freezer would be required. This could be added to a project to provide a loading chute to existing ice production and storage or a separate fixture located convenient to commercial fishing and sportfishing operations. Additional study would be required to determine if the existing container and equipment could be incorporated into the expanded facility: 235 gross square feet.

### Parking

With parking prohibited under the canopy by the Fire Marshal, there is limited opportunity to expand the number of spaces significantly. The site plan should test the following changes to parking and loading:

- Addition of a single ADA parking space alongside the two allocated for Patriot Sportfishing, usable by but not limited to their customers.
- Reallocation, perhaps with some reconfiguration of parking at the terminus to add a loading zone for a two-axle truck.
- Planning should provide loading spaces for passenger vehicles at Patriot Sportfishing and the terminus and commercial loading for two-axel trucks the stair to Patriot Sportfishing's landing, the terminus convenient to Wilcox Fisheries and Mersea's, adjacent to the commercial fishing operation at the east side of the pier, and convenient to the new restaurant and bar and fish market. Some locations could serve a number of these users.
- The addition of bicycle racks at the entrance to the pier, Patriot Sportfishing, and at or past the terminus to complement the possible expansion of the Bob Jones Trail.
- Evaluate digital parking counting and signage systems to inform drivers of the availability of parking on the pier. It is very likely that metered parking would be accepted by users to pay for and maintain the system.
- Maintain one ADA parking space and a minimum of 14 standard parking spaces required by settlement agreement at the Terminus.

Patriot Sportfishing: 560 square feet;  
Terminus: 6,100 square feet.

## **New Elements**

### Public Landing Dock

User comments were for the ability to have a landing with temporary tie-ups for a range of boats from small kayaks and paddleboards, ocean-going recreational vessels, and commercial fishing vessels of up to 55 feet. The purpose would be to enable landing for a sufficient length of time to conduct business or patronize a merchant on the pier, approximately 90 minutes.

While there are numerous approaches to accomplish this, one landing that could accommodate both functions would be an approximately 67 foot dock set off from the pier about 15 feet with a gangway from the pier. This could be an extension of the existing public landing between bents 26 to 28.

Ocean-going boats, both commercial and recreational could use the outer edge of the dock primarily for loading and unloading or runs to the Harbor Office. Smaller boats could tie up on the inner edge of the dock long enough for lunch or dinner, use public toilets, and so on.

Discussion items for finalizing the scope would be the option of a 122 foot dock, hose bib with potable water, a 15 to 20 amp, 120V outlet, and relocation of the pumpout for marine sanitation systems. A pressure washer was mentioned in the online survey, but the water source would enable patrons to use their own equipment: 540 gross square feet.

### Harbor Patrol Landing

This feature is near completion during the final edits of this report. A separate landing for the Harbor Patrol will enable patrol boats to be more easily kept ready for launch and avoid competition for landing resources with other user groups. A landing similar in scope to the existing public landing tied to existing stairs and ramps would serve this function. 340 gross square feet.

Fisherman’s Market

The space that was occupied by the previous fish market is being used for the pilot project of the fishermen’s market on Harford Pier. Long-range planning should enable both the fish market and fisherman’s market to operate at the same time to make use of the typical synergy experienced at other harbors. Accommodating the fishermen’s market is a matter of allocating sufficient space that can be temporarily set up on an otherwise free area of the pier.

The ideal would be space for 10 pop-up canopies for individual fishermen and an area with three adjacent pop-ups for fish cleaning with access to water, power, and a means to drain melted ice. The public requires space to meander between individual fishermen’s stalls and the stalls need access to the fish cleaning area. The exact scope of what could be accomplished on the Harford Pier can be determined in subsequent study to plan the layout of the pier. 2,600 gross square feet.

Public Restrooms

The Minimum Plumbing Facilities tables of the Uniform Plumbing Code are used throughout most of the United States to determine the number of toilets needed. Piers are not specifically covered, but most of Harford Pier’s functions are. Assuming the open areas of the pier constitute a “public way” with no requirements except the approach to the sportfishing landing functions as a waiting area, the various uses would need 5.23 toilets, as shown in Table A.1:

**Table 1: Toilet Fixtures Needed**

	Existing or Proposed sf	Occupant Load	Toilet Fixtures
<b>Existing To Remain</b>			
Sportfishing Office	800	4.00	0.04
Sportfishing Waiting	—	40.00	1.00
Wilcox Fisheries	1,122	2.92	0.03
Mersea's Seafood Restaurant	2,029	106.00	1.06
Live Fish Storage	437	0.09	0.00
Harford Pier Fish Market	1,524	7.62	0.08
Restaurant and Bar	5,930	188.12	1.88
Offices	3,840	19.20	0.83
Pump Station	148	-	0.00
Fish Cleaning Rack	170	0.09	0.00
Public Landing	342	-	0.00
Ice Maker and Storage	160	0.03	0.00
Trash and Recycling Enclosure	180	-	0.00
Skiff Storage	2,700	0.54	0.00
Parking	6,103	-	0.00
<i>(continued next page)</i>			

Table A.1: Toilet Fixtures Needed (continued)

	Existing or Proposed sf	Occupant Load	Toilet Fixtures
<b>New</b>			
Public Landing Dock	536	5.36	0.13
Harbor Patrol Landing	340	3.40	0.09
Frozen Bait Storage	75	0.02	0.00
Fishermen's Market	2,600	13.00	0.13
<b>Total Fixtures</b>			<b>5.27</b>

By comparison, the Santa Monica Municipal Pier has 41 toilets and urinals for 291,600 square feet. The same number of fixtures per square foot for Harford Pier would be 8.2. So, the two methods are consistent with one another indicating the need for 5 to 8 toilets and urinals.

It is very likely that operators of the new restaurant and bar will prefer to have its customer and staff toilets within its immediate lease space. With the existing customer and public toilet room at Mersea’s and the toilet at the District’s accounting office, it is recommended that two single occupancy toilet rooms be provided for public use. The provision of toilet facilities would be as follows:

District Accounting Office	1	
Mersea’s	2	(one located for staff use only)
Restaurant and Bar	2	
Public	2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	

Public restrooms 118 gross square feet.

Vertical Conveyance

If the proposed restaurant and bar has two floors, it will require a conveyance to the upper floor under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Anticipating this, it is recommended that site planning explore the possibility of serving existing upper floor areas with any conveyance provided with the restaurant and bar.

Summary of Planning Elements

Table A.2 on the following page summarizes the elements described above.

Table A.2: Planning Elements Summary

	Scope
<b>Elements to Remain</b>	
Skiff Storage	2,700 gsf
Wilcox Fisheries	1,122 gsf
Mersea’s Seafood Restaurant	2,029 gsf
Live Fish Storage	437 gsf
Offices	3,840 gsf
Pump Station	148 gsf
Fish Cleaning Rack	170 gsf
Trash and Recycling Enclosure	180 gsf
Hoists	5 Units
<b>Replacement Elements</b>	
Retail/Wholesale Fish Market	1,775 gsf
Restaurant and Bar	5,930 gsf
<b>Existing to Renovate</b>	
Sportfishing Office	800 gsf
Ice Maker and Storage	235 gsf
Sportfishing Parking (3)	1,278 gsf
Terminus Parking & Loading (16)	5,945 gsf
<b>New Elements</b>	
Public Landing Dock	536 gsf
Harbor Patrol Landing	340 gsf
Fishermen’s Market	2,600 gsf
Public Restrooms	500 gsf

**Final Toilet Demand Estimate**

	Existing or Proposed sf	Main Level sf	Occupant Load	Fixtures
<b>Existing To Remain</b>				
Sportfishing Office	800	800	4.00	0.04
Sportfishing Waiting	—	—	40.00	1.00
Wilcox Fisheries	1,122	561	2.92	0.03
Mersea's Seafood Restaurant	2,029	1447	106.00	1.06
Live Fish Storage	437	437	0.09	0.00
Harford Pier Fish Market	1,524	1,524	7.62	0.08
Restaurant and Bar	5,930	3,860	188.12	1.88
Offices	3,840	1980	19.20	0.83
Pump Station	148	148	-	0
Fish Cleaning Rack	170	170	0.09	0.00
Public Landing	342		-	0
Ice Maker and Storage	160	160	0.03	0.00
Trash and Recycling Enclosure	180	180	-	0
Skiff Storage	2,700	2,700	0.54	0.00
Parking	6,103	6,103	-	0
<b>New</b>				
Public Landing Dock	536		5.36	0.13
Harbor Patrol Landing	340		3.40	0.09
Frozen Bait Storage	75	75	0.02	0.00
Fishermen's Market	2,600	2,600	13.00	0.13
Total Fixtures				5.27
Less Existing at Mersea's and Accounting Office				-2
<b>Additional Fixtures Needed</b>				<b>3.27</b>
<b>Recommended New Toilets</b>				
Public				2
Restaurant and Bar				2

**NA Table 1: Planning Elements Summary**

	Scope
<b>Elements to Remain</b>	
Skiff Storage	2,700 gsf
Wilcox Fisheries	1,122 gsf
Mersea's Seafood Restaurant	2,029 gsf
Live Fish Storage	437 gsf
Offices	3,840 gsf
Pump Station	148 gsf
Fish Cleaning Rack	170 gsf
Trash and Recycling Enclosure	180 gsf
Hoists	5 Units
<b>Replacement Elements</b>	
Harford Pier Fish Market	1,775 gsf
Restaurant and Bar	5,679 gsf
<b>Existing to Renovate</b>	
Sportfishing Office	800 gsf
Ice Maker and Storage	235 gsf
Sportfishing Parking (3)	1,278 gsf
Terminus Parking & Loading (16)	5,945 gsf
<b>New Elements</b>	
Public Landing Dock	536 gsf
Harbor Patrol Landing	340 gsf
Fishermen's Market	2,600 gsf
Public Restrooms (2 @ 59 sf)	118 gsf