

# Management of Small Docks and Piers

## Where to Get Additional Information or Assistance

### What NOAA is doing—

In response to concerns expressed by coastal resource managers, NOAA agencies have taken a number of steps to improve the capabilities of state and local dock management. These include the following:

#### *NOAA Small Docks and Piers Web Site—*

NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management has established a web site dedicated to issues related to small dock and pier management. The site is located at <http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/dock.html>.

#### *The Science of Impacts from Small Docks—*

In January of 2003, NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) sponsored an invitational workshop to review the state of scientific knowledge related to the impacts of small docks and piers. The workshop results are summarized in a report entitled "Environmental and Aesthetic Impacts of Small Docks and Piers: Workshop Report"

This workshop report provides a critical synthesis of potential consequences of the construction, presence, and use of small docks and piers on the coastal environment. Shading, contamination, and boating associated with docks are discussed, as well as navigation, aesthetic, and quality of life issues.

Copies of the report may be downloaded from the web at: [www.nccos.noaa.gov/publications/notables.html#dp](http://www.nccos.noaa.gov/publications/notables.html#dp). For further information contact Ruth Kelty at NCCOS; (301) 713-3020 ext. 133 or [Ruth.Kelty@noaa.gov](mailto:Ruth.Kelty@noaa.gov).

#### *Dock and Pier Bibliography—*

As a result of the science workshop, NCCOS has established a Web-based bibliography of information on docks and piers at <http://www3.nos.noaa.gov/forms/nccoslib/dpsearch.lasso>.

The bibliography is searchable by author and title as well as the following keywords:

- vegetation, shading
- contaminants, pollution, CCA, water quality
- sediments, sedimentation
- recreation, boating, recreational uses, marinas, boating impacts, water craft, marinas
- navigation
- planning, public access, zoning, shoreline regulations
- construction, design

- visual impacts, VIA, visual assessment, aesthetics, quality of life, survey, perceptions, social science

The citations in the bibliography pertain to published literature and unpublished reports about various aspects of the biological, physical, chemical, ecological, and aesthetic impacts of small docks and piers. References were submitted by participants at the abovementioned science workshop and other forums. NCCOS does not have copies of these articles. For further information or to add citations contact Ruth Kelty at NCCOS; (301) 713-3020 ext. 133 or Ruth.Kelty@noaa.gov.

*Management Tools related to Docks and Piers—*

In November 2003, a second invitational workshop was sponsored by NCCOS, the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), and the Coastal Services Center (CSC) to review management options, both regulatory and non-regulatory, related to small docks and piers. A summary of this workshop, entitled "Management Tools to Minimize the Impacts of Residential Docks and Piers", may be downloaded from the OCRM web site at <http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/dock.html#4>. For further information, contact Allison Castellan of OCRM at (301) 713-3155 ext. 225 or Allison.Castellan@noaa.gov.

*Data Base of State Programs—*

OCRM and NCCOS have established a web-based, searchable, database to house summary information about how coastal states manage small docks and piers. The database, located at <http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/dock.html#5>, allows states to enter information about the standards they use to manage residential docks and piers, focusing on:

- permitting;
- planning and zoning;
- leasing;
- acquisition;
- dock siting,
- design and construction requirements;
- available outreach materials on dock and pier management; and
- standard operating procedures for evaluating permit applications.

The database can be browsed or queried to allow coastal managers concerned about particular impacts of docks or piers (*i.e.*, shading, aesthetics) to find standards other states have developed to mitigate that impact and the laws that uphold them. Information in the database can also be used to develop new standard operating procedures (SOPs) and support denials when the impacts of a proposed project are unreasonable. By linking the science and management of residential docks and piers, the database will help state and local managers improve and justify their regulations, as well as their permitting and planning processes used to manage dock placement and design.

For further information, contact Allison Castellan of OCRM at (301) 713-3155 ext. 125 or Allison.Castellan@noaa.gov.

### *Inventory of Laws, Regulations, and Policies related to Residential docks—*

The Coastal Services Center (CSC) has compiled information about several state dock management programs (statutes, regulations, and policies). Regional summaries for the southeast (North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida) and northeast (Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut) include information about:

- Impacts of concern: environmental, navigation or public trust
- Statutory authorities
- State and local permitting processes
- Dock dimension standards
- Contact information for each state

The southeast summary is only available in hard copy but the northeast report is available online at [http://www.csc.noaa.gov/products/New\\_England\\_Dock\\_Pier\\_Inventory.pdf](http://www.csc.noaa.gov/products/New_England_Dock_Pier_Inventory.pdf). For further information, contact Zac Hart at the CSC at (843)740-1175 or [Zac.Hart@noaa.gov](mailto:Zac.Hart@noaa.gov).

### *Visual Impact Management—*

As a result of the November 2003 workshop, NCCOS funded the preparation of a publication on managing the visual impacts related to small docks which should be released as an NCCOS Technical Report in 2005.

The report will address techniques in assessing visual impacts, summarizes the legal methods available for management of these impacts, and provides case studies where visual impacts have been a major part of management actions. For further information or to add citations contact Ruth Kelty at NCCOS; (301) 713-3020 ext. 133 or [Ruth.Kelty@noaa.gov](mailto:Ruth.Kelty@noaa.gov).

### *Dock Growth: Visualizing Alternatives—*

The Coastal Services Center (CSC) has also partnered with the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management to develop a demonstration project that uses 3-D computer visualizations to illustrate how various development scenarios, including different levels of dock build-out, can change a shoreline's appearance and functionality. This technology can be used to predict aesthetic concerns, public access issues, and navigational impacts more easily. The demonstration can be viewed at [http://www.csc.noaa.gov/dock\\_growth/index.html](http://www.csc.noaa.gov/dock_growth/index.html). While the demonstration tool was developed for a specific site in Massachusetts, the software is available for free to create other visual simulations at <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/visualizations/>. For additional information contact Zac Hart at the CSC; (843)740-1175 or [Zac.Hart@noaa.gov](mailto:Zac.Hart@noaa.gov).

### *Training Materials related to Management of Small Docks—*

NCCOS and OCRM have contracted for the preparation of this workbook and complementing PowerPoint slide shows. The workbook and PowerPoint presentations cover the following topics:

- An introduction to the issues related to small dock and pier impacts and management,
- A review of environmental impacts,
- A review of impacts to navigation and public access,
- A review of visual impacts,

- A review of regulatory and non-regulatory techniques that can be used in small dock management,
- A summary of Best Management Practices available for small dock management, and
- Sources for additional information and assistance.

### **What Are Other Sources for Assistance?—**

There are a number of other sources for information about dock and pier management. They include:

#### *State Coastal Management Programs—*

State Coastal Management Programs often have technical staff familiar with dock-related issues. They also are generally an excellent initial contact regarding regulatory programs, standards, and contact people at the state, federal, and local level.

For information about any state coastal management program, go to <http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/mystate/welcome.html>.

#### *National Estuarine Research Reserves—*

One of the principal missions of the Research Reserves is to get scientific and technical information to decision-makers. Each Research Reserve has established a Coastal Training Program that host workshops on topics related to coastal management issues, including management of docks and piers.

For a list of the Research Reserves and contact information, go to <http://nerrs.noaa.gov/Reserves.html>.

#### *State regulatory programs—*

Most states have environmental permitting agencies that focus on wetlands and coastal resources. Most states also have agencies that manage the public waters of the state. These two programs may be located in one office or spread over state or local entities.

For general information and contacts for these programs in your state, contact your state's coastal zone management office or National Estuarine Research Reserve.

#### *State Sea Grant Programs—*

The NOAA Sea Grant program's mission is "to enhance the practical use & conservation of coastal, marine and Great Lakes resources to create a sustainable economy & environment." NOAA funds Sea Grant Offices in 32 universities around the country. Each of these involves a network of scientists and policy experts that may be able to help with dock issues.

For a list of the Sea Grant colleges and other offices, go to [www.nsgo.seagrant.org/colleges/colleges.html](http://www.nsgo.seagrant.org/colleges/colleges.html).

#### *US Army Corps of Engineers District Regulatory Programs—*

The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has oversight over structures in navigable waterways, including a permitting program. Many of the Corps activities are administered jointly with state environmental or waterways programs. Several of the Corps District Offices have staff with a great understanding of issues related to dock management.

For more information about the Corps' regulatory programs and contact information for the District Offices, go to [www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/cecwo/reg/](http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/cecwo/reg/).

*The Internet—*

There are a myriad of sites on the Internet dedicated to docks, their construction, their impacts, and management techniques. Use any search engine to search for topics of interest.