

Report to Council



Date: February 7, 2022
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Management and Operations of Municipal Boating Facilities
Department: Real Estate

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Real Estate department dated February 7, 2022, with respect to the Management and Operations of Municipal Boating Facilities.

Purpose:

To update Council on the Management and Operations of Municipal Boating Facilities.

Background:

Okanagan Lake was noted as a very important asset throughout the Imagine Kelowna process and needing to improve public access to the lakefront was one of two priorities noted amongst residents. Preserving the Lake as a shared resource is essential, and residents shared the importance of balancing recreational quality of life opportunities with environmental protection, water quality, and public ownership of the waterfront.

For Staff, the management and operations of the City's three municipal boat launches represent a tangible and practical opportunity to ensure fair and equitable Lake access for residents, visitors, and businesses alike.

The City's three main boat launches are Cook Road, Water Street, and Sutherland Bay. A brief description of each is provided below.

Cook Road

The Cook Road boat launch is located just north of Mission Creek and adjacent to the Hotel Eldorado. This double launch is primarily used for small recreational boats and has two floating docks. While there are four launching lanes, only three have access to a dock. The boat launch is in a shallow area with a significant pulse of sediment movement from Mission Creek causing accretion and depth issues at the ramp. This currently requires annual dredging, and a long-term solution is being pursued in partnership

with the neighboring development. The parking lot associated with this boat launch has been recently redesigned with formal tie-down and tie-up areas increasing efficiencies of the launch.

Water Street

The Water Street boat launch is located downtown, adjacent to the Kelowna Yacht Club. It is a double launch and is well utilized by commercial and private vessels. It has three wooden floating docks which allow boats to tie up in any of the four lanes. The launch is in need of significant investment to maintain and improve its functionality for the long term. This is the only location in Kelowna able to accommodate larger boats.

Sutherland Bay

The Sutherland Bay boat launch is in the north end at the base of Knox Mountain. The launch is undeveloped with only a concrete ramp leading into the water, and there is no dock. The boat launch is shallow and mainly used by locals or people with small watercraft, such as jet skis.

Launch Activity

In summer 2021, Urban Systems was engaged to analyze the activity of the three boat launches. Their analysis is summarized below.

Estimated Monthly Demand

Boat launch activity is seasonal and weather dependent. A typical season for boat launches is from the beginning of April to the end of September, with the highest usage in July and August. Figure 1 shows the demand for boat trailer parking at the Cook Road launch, which is a good indicator of launch usage, between 2019 and 2021.

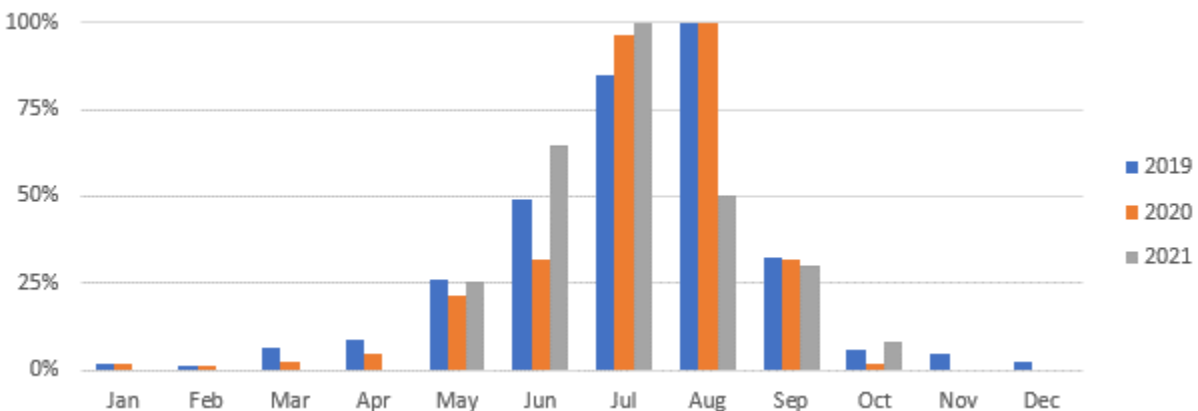


Figure 1: Demand for parking of boat trailers at Cook Rd (2019-2021.)

Peak Hours

There is no clear peak hour for launch use, as shown below in Figure 2. Boats are typically launched in the morning and afternoon and retrieved in the evening.

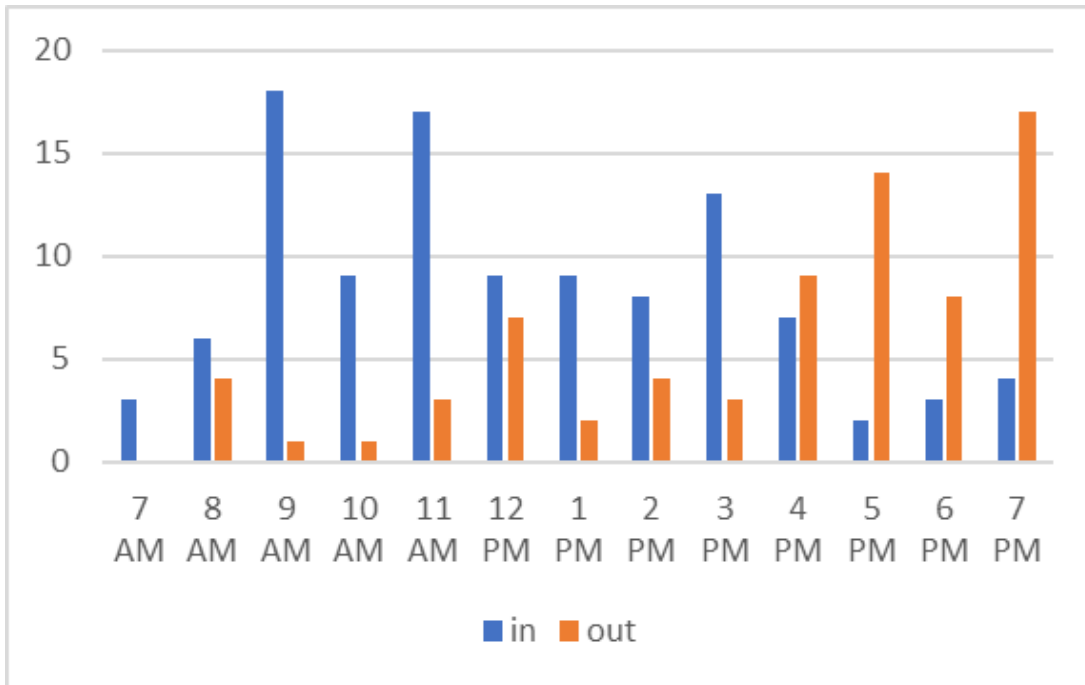


Figure 2: Typical weekend launch use by the hour (Water Street, July 10th, 2021.)

Estimated Annual Demand

Extrapolating data from onsite observations and parking data, Urban Systems estimated the annual demand for each boat launch (Figure 3). A launch and later retrieval of the boat is noted as two separate instances of using a launch. Demand is highly variable and impacted by weather and local fires. Further, the observed demand in 2021 may be underestimated due to the impacts of the COVID-19 Public Health Orders and local wildfires.

	Cook Road	Water Street	Sutherland Bay
Annual Demand	15,000 – 20,000	10,000 – 15,000	2,000 – 4,000
# of Launches Observed at Peak Hour	25	23	10

Figure 3: Estimated annual demand for City boat launches

Annual Maintenance Expense

The boat launches require significant annual maintenance to ensure they remain functional. Figure 4 shows a summary of the expenses from the past five years, including the dredging of the Cook Road launch.

City Boat Launches – Annual Expenses				
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
\$133,680	\$99,655	\$234,918	\$196,840	\$181,498

Figure 4: Boat launch annual expense, all 3 boat launches

Capital Improvements

Staff have determined the floating docks at Cook Road are at their end of life, Water Street docks are past their end of life, and both locations need the wooden docks to be rebuilt. Additionally, in a report dated November 9, 2021, a hydrologic engineer recommended improvements to both concrete ramps to minimize future scouring. As of this report, there has been no assessment of Sutherland Bay. Figure 5 summarizes the estimated pending capital expenses.

Location	Description	Estm. Budget Amount	Sub-total
Water Street	Wooden Floating Docks	\$350,000	\$650,000
	Ramp Improvements	\$300,000	
Cook Rd	Wooden Floating Docks	\$250,000	\$500,000
	Ramp Improvements	\$250,000	
Total Estimated Capital Budget			\$1,150,000

Figure 5: Estimated pending capital expenses

Discussion:

Public boat launch amenities are used only by specific user types relating to a specific activity. Business use of these public amenities is an additional consideration in determining appropriate capital investment, maintenance and funding models. In addition to companies who sell and maintain boats, there has been a recent increase in businesses that offer valet, dryland boat rental, and boat club services. These companies have monetized the launch use through their businesses.

It is estimated that there are two valet companies, ten dryland boat rental businesses, and three dryland boat clubs utilizing municipal boat launches. It is further estimated these commercial users account for approximately 25% of the total boat launch usage.

Commercial usage of the City's boat launch facilities has resulted in a number of complaints, primarily centered around vehicles and boat trailers left unattended in the boat launch, refueling inappropriately, inexperienced boat drivers and companies using the area to conduct businesses, thereby restricting others' access to the launch. These greatly decrease the efficiency and safety of the boat launches.

Similar to parking, boat launch amenities are used not only by residents, but by visitors, and more so by specific user groups which aligns with management strategies that would indicate a cost-recovery model that doesn't rely on general taxation. Further, business use of public amenities elsewhere, as in parks, requires permits and fees.

In July 2021, the Parks and Public Spaces Bylaw (10680) was amended to address these issues; however, further measures are required to curtail the ongoing pressures anticipated in the 2022 summer season.

Next Steps

Phase I

Staff anticipate returning to Council within the next month to seek Council support for a program that will apply to commercial operators using the municipal launches. This program would be in effect in time for the 2022 boating season.

Phase II

Urban Systems is currently conducting a holistic and comprehensive operational review and assessment of municipal boating facilities, including stakeholder and public engagement. The result of this review will include a report which will:

- deliver a 15-year plan to guide decision-making about improvements to existing facilities;
- plan for the expansion of facilities’
- analyze daily operations and monetization opportunities;
- suggest overall cost recovery; and,
- prioritize capital improvements in the long-term.

The results of this report will be presented to Council later this year. Staff anticipate that any action items associated with this report would be implemented in time for the 2023 boating season.

Existing Policy

Council’s 2019-2022 priorities identified measures supporting staff’s recommendations, specifically relevant to this report:

- Non-taxation revenue is increasing,
- Infrastructure deficit is reduced, and
- Key sites are proactivity planned.

Internal Circulation:

Communications
Parking Services
Bylaw Services
Building Services
Parks and Building Planning

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:
Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:
Existing Policy:
Financial/Budgetary Considerations:
External Agency/Public Comments:
Communications Comments:

Submitted by: J. Adamson, Manager, Property Management

Approved for inclusion: J. Säufferer, Real Estate Department Manager

Attachments: 1. Schedule A - PowerPoint