



San Mateo County Harbor District

Board of Harbor Commissioners

Tom Mattusch, President
Virginia Chang Kiraly, Vice President
Robert Bernardo, Secretary
Edmundo Larenas, Treasurer
Sabrina Brennan, Commissioner

Steve McGrath, General Manager
Steven D. Miller, District Counsel

June 12, 2017

Oil Spill Prevention Ordinance Change

Dear Pillar Point Harbor, Oyster Point Marina Tenants and Concerned Parties,

As you may be aware, over the last few months we have observed an increase of oil sheens at both Pillar Point Harbor and Oyster Point Marina. Obviously, when there is a significant increase in boat movement, it is more likely that we would have an increase in contaminated bilge water discharge. That said, we are responsible for making sure the waters are kept as clean as possible. All persons are required by law to report **any** oil sheen observed, no matter how small. We have received numerous complaints and had to report multiple oil sheens to Govt. agencies. These observed oil pollution incidents prompted multiple visits from Save our Shores, CCC, DBW and USCG. Of course, we all wish to keep our waters clean and we don't believe any boater intentionally discharged oil into the Harbor/Marina waters. However, some boaters may not be educated in efforts they can take to prevent oil spills. We are going to work with CCC, DBW and Save our Shores representatives to offer additional oil spill prevention education to boaters.

In addition, it has been suggested that we amend our current Ordinance Code to reflect the importance of taking all reasonable actions to prevent oils spills and make clear to the boat owners and contractors/operators they are responsible for any oil spill their vessel may cause. It has also been suggested that we, as many other Calif. Harbors/Marinas do, require all vessels operating in the San Mateo County Harbor District controlled waters to have oil absorbent material in their vessel bilge, as 90% of oil sheens are caused from oily bilge water being discharged.

Below is the current Ordinance Code for your information. As you can see, the section "D" regarding oil discharge is admittedly very brief. The District wishes to adhere to Best Practices and acknowledge advice given us from Govt. officials trying to help with our oil spill challenges. Therefore, the District has drafted the below amendment to section "D" which will be presented to the Harbor Board for approval. However, before doing so, we wanted to let you know and offer an opportunity for feedback, as this will affect all boaters in District controlled waters. Please know that District staff, as with all Ordinance enforcement, will always use good, fair and reasonable judgment when taking any action to ensure compliance. The objective is not to write citations, only to keep our waters clean by having the ability to require responsible actions by boaters.

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The District wishes to maintain our excellent relationship with all Govt. agencies and our valued tenants. We hope to partner with you to address this difficult challenge. Obviously, we do not want PPH or OPM to be thought of as environmentally irresponsible. To the contrary, we want all to know that our boating community takes water cleanliness very seriously.

- Current Ordinance Code 3.30.140 section D.

“No person shall dump or discharge any oil, spirits, flammable liquids or contaminated bilge water into the waters of the District.”

- Proposed amendment to Ordinance Code 3.30.140 section D, which was written after significant research and discussion with Govt. agencies.

“No person shall dump or discharge any oil, spirits, flammable liquids or contaminated bilge water into the waters of the District. All vessels berthed, moored or operating in the waters of the District must have a BIO-SOK, or a generic equivalent oil absorb pad/pillow, installed in its bilge in order to prevent oil or fuel from being pumped overboard. Dispersing agents or emulsifying soaps may not be used, as they cause oil to sink and are worse for the environment than if the oil had been left alone. Vessel operators are responsible for inspecting the condition of the bilge prior to the activation of a bilge pump. Proper precautions must be taken when performing mechanical work on any vessel. Used engine oil, oil filters and oil absorbent materials must be taken to the oil recycling center. Oil, oil filters or used oil absorbent materials cannot be disposed of by dumping them either on the ground, in a dumpster, into a drain or overboard. Vessel owners are responsible for their contractors and any failure of their contractors to comply.”

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or suggestions. We sincerely hope to work as a team with our valued tenants and Harbor/Marina users to combat this challenge.

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