

Opposition to latest dock management plan growing Coast-wide

Residents are still digesting the potential impacts of recent updates to the province and shishàh Nation's 2021 Pender Harbour dock management plan.

The new document, a draft amendment titled "shishàh swiya Dock Management Plan," was released Nov. 24 and will apply to all of the shishàh Nation's traditional territory and includes a number of controversial changes from the 2021 document.

Key among those changes are restrictions on the size of docks, a ban on boathouses and a proposal to apply the DMP to all freshwater lakes.

"When they first came out with the dock management plan, docks couldn't be wider than 1.5 metres," said Peter Robson, president of the Pender Harbour and Area Residents Association.

"We told them it was crazy and they kept it there until this draft where they finally recognized that it was a legislated hazard."

PHARA's insistence that a three-metre width was preferable and a 2.44-metre dock width should be the

minimum were finally acknowledged in a recently released engineering report commissioned by the province and shishàh Nation last year.

According to the "Review of Pender Harbour Dock Best Management Practices," prepared by McElhanney Ltd. (Jan. 17, 2023):

"The maximum width of the float causes safety concerns, specifically due to the stability of the float.

"It is recommended that the float widths are not limited by width, and instead the float area is limited.

"This allows for the floats to be customizable, and still safe."

Instead of a maximum dock width, the new document proposes a maximum floating surface area of 30m² (323 sq. ft.).

Now, Robson is questioning the new math.

"It's about enough for a 30-foot boat, right?"

The preferred three-metre dock width, with a maximum area of 30m², would allow for a maximum dock length of 10 metres, or 33 feet.

At the minimum width of 2.44 metres, the largest the draft plan

would safely allow is a 40-foot dock. The DMP doesn't offer advice for dock owners with boats over 40 feet in length.

Robson said there are a number of examples in which the engineering report contradicts some of the changes they've made in the draft.

"If they're worried about the environment, removing docks is going to be much more harmful than leaving them where they are," he said.

Robson is as confused as others about why the province and the band refuse to listen.

"I know the band is angry with us, stretching way back to (June) 2015 when they had that meeting," he said.

"But I think the community has a right to be upset because this was thrown at them without any consultation.

"If somebody had maybe talked to the local people first, it might have calmed things down."

Robson said PHARA has been continually snubbed in efforts to arrange a meeting with the shishàh.

"We've had no replies at all.

"We've sent them copies of all