

Mud Bay Dock – A bit of History

The following information was provided by Barb Neild, who was the Mud Bay Dock PIRA Director until this last June 2005. I have added a few full names and dollar figures and dates to provide a bit more detail for dock users.

The Mud Bay Dock was originally built by an island family (the Annabels) who had a summer cabin here, operated a tugboat and used Mud Bay as a booming ground. They and some few others used and maintained the dock for their boats when in residence at their cabins on PI. This is going back to the late 1950's--a time when there were very few permanent residents here and PI was not a part of the City of Nanaimo.

The Nanaimo Harbour Commission became responsible for the waters in the 1960's and there was no formal foreshore lease in place for some time. As the island became more populated, more people lived here permanently and more used the Mud Bay Dock. From day one those who used the dock have been responsible for its upkeep, maintenance and repairs on a volunteer basis. There were no user fees, the users donated time and money and did what they could. The dock has always been a public community dock and still is.

In the late 1960's the Nanaimo Harbour Commission became responsible for these waters in and around Nanaimo harbour, but the informal arrangement stood until 1985 when the NHC imposed a ten-year foreshore lease at a cost of \$50 a year for ten years. The exact physical extent of the foreshore lease was mapped and determined.

Nanaimo became part of the City of Nanaimo in 1974 and PIRA, which had been an ad hoc committee of PI residents until then, became a formally registered society and took on responsibility for management of the Mud Bay Dock. When the ten-year lease referred to above expired, the new lease became much more expensive and liability insurance became a condition of the lease. It was then that annual dues for dock users were instituted, initially \$75 per year. Recently the Nanaimo Harbour Commission became the Port Authority and they are the current leaseholders. Current fees are \$100 per year per boat.

Through all this there has often been dissention and dispute, but a spirit of cooperation has slowly emerged and prevailed. Barb said that since she first came here, in 1975, this spirit of cooperation and community vis-à-vis the dock has come a long way and is at its best at the present time—at least the best she has ever seen it.

With the imposition of fees came the matters of collection and arrears, etc. Some could not see why these were necessary and refused to pay. Others felt that their contributions of labour and/or materials excused them from paying fees. At this time, almost everyone who uses the dock understands the fixed costs involved and pays their dues. There have always been some who cannot afford to pay the total fee in one payment, and they have always been allowed to pay over time, even monthly if necessary. (This is why when the last dock Committee Report to PIRA report said 42 users had paid dues, the amount did not total exactly \$4200. Some still have part payment to make--and Barb assures us they will.) Most summer users pay a pro-rated amount for the time they are using the dock. This has always been expected.

Dock users have meetings periodically to discuss and implement repairs or improvements as needed. For the last several years that has been spearheaded by Ed Iwaskow, Larry Iwaskow and Don Corfield.

PIRA has always had one Director responsible for the Mud Bay Dock Committee. Most recently that has been Barb Neild and Don Corfield. As of this year it is Cathy Pearson, who chairs the Mud Bay Dock Committee and reports regularly to PIRA meetings and who monitors the expenditures, working closely with the treasurer. To date, this person has always been a Mud Bay Dock user.

PIRA maintains a separate Dock Account and pays dock expenses from this account. There is one general liability insurance policy covering PIRA as the lessee for \$2,000,000 public liability. The other insurance cost to the dock account is a portion of the PIRA's Directors' Liability Insurance. The Port Authority charges over \$1200 per year. In total we pay out well over \$3,000 in fees and insurance before we even look at dock maintenance or improvements.

One major bill comes due in August and the other two on November 1, 2005 and December 1, 2005. These fees and costs have been increasing every year. For now, our dock fees are \$100 per year. That is less than the cost of a pack of cigarettes per month. **For those few users who have not paid yet for the period October 31, 2004 to October 30 2005, it is not too late. You can drop a cheque off at the Pearsons' at 9 Pirate 's Lane, made out to PIRA, and we will get it to the PIRA Treasurer. All dock users who have paid their fees have a Mud Bay dock Decal issued. They change every year.**

There is now the issue of overcrowding as the dock is being used, especially in the summer, beyond its capacity. Since it cannot be lengthened or extended--the maximum lease footprint is in use--users have to resort to rafting and this is a problem for anyone who has a regular working schedule. Barb Neild has major safety concerns about how that rafting is being done. Perhaps we should have instructions written up for safe rafting practices.

The problem of limited dock space is exacerbated by the drying of most of the dock at low tide.

Mud Bay Dock was not a dock designed and built to specs all at once. It has grown with the island in a much more organic fashion. It is presently used by over 50 boaters/residents, many of whom are PIRA members. Problems such as the one of capacity and what to do about it should be addressed by meetings of dock users working with PIRA. If that is done, a creative and workable solution can be found.

I am hoping to hold an informal Dock Users Meeting in September. Will advise when more details are available. Aug 2005

Cathy Pearson, PIRA Director on the Mud Bay Dock Committee
July 2005