

# The Boat Owners Speak.

## The results are in for the first BOA permittee satisfaction survey

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Whew... It's done! The first BOA Permittee Satisfaction Survey is complete, the numbers are in, the report written and BOA can now begin to study how best to respond to boat owner's interests, issues and concerns in both Alamitos Bay Marina and Shoreline Marina.

Let's look first at what we found out about the survey participants: We learned, for example, that most of you, almost 60%, were in ABM. We also learned that more than half of you had permits in the Long Beach marinas for more than 10 years, with sailboats in the 30-40 foot range being the vessel most commonly reported.

A quarter of survey participants had liveaboard permits, double the nominal 10% of liveaboard permits in the marina, and not surprising given their more direct involvement in the marinas. As expected, yacht club and BOA membership numbers were in the minority compared with the overall number of permittees in the marinas.

The introductory section included a question about the Gangway Gazette, which BOA publishes on a quarterly basis. A surprising number of people offered comments, almost all of them favorable, which was satisfying to those of us who work on it.

A comment that came up more than once suggested that the GG be published more often. We're looking at ways to do this, and most likely it will involve going electronic. More on this as the details are worked out.

Speaking of comments, the first question in the Marina management section, asking for opinions around the recent slip fee adjustment, got plenty.

Interestingly, the Yes and No responses to the question "... are you satisfied that the formula used to determine slip rates is fair and equitable?" broke within a few percentage points of each other.

However, the accompanying comments did not reflect this. The folks who did not believe in the part about "fair and equitable" didn't have any problem telling us so. The comments written in ALL CAPS with lots of exclamation marks stuck pretty much to the issue of monthly slip fees. Here's some sample comments:

- "It penalizes older, narrow beam boats like mine, which will not use the width of the new slips proposed. If I paid for my current slip's square footage I wouldn't complain, but that's not what I think will happen."
- "It ignores that sailboats take up less square feet than power boats."
- "Unfortunately, the slip fees are ultimately based upon how much the Marina management can stuff into the projected budget which is a factor in the formula. I do not agree with all of the INCLUDED expenses in their budget as published in the Marina Reader. The Marina management can simply inflate their purposed expenses to get the slip fee increase that they want."

However, there were a good number of comments that reflected a concern that the higher slip fees were being used to make up for sources of marina revenue, such as slips being unfilled in preparation for a rebuild that seems farther away than ever.

Some examples:

- “Using a cost recovery method to determine how much revenue the Marina needs is CRAZY since there seems to be NO urgency to reduce costs other than forcing employees to take unpaid time off.”
- “I am concerned that there is no accountability for cost control and that ultimately the costs may be more, and out of character with a municipally owned marina. Also, in the event that the number of unoccupied slips increases due to the worsening economy, the costs could escalate greatly for those left.”

The ABM rebuild came up in another question that had to do with your money. Because the opportunity for state financing has collapsed, you were asked if you would agree to a mix of high cost bonds and cash collected from slip fees to finance the rebuild. This plan was rejected by over 90% of you.

Several questions dealt with general issues that concern most of us in the marina:

The Marina Watch program has had an on again/off again history that has discouraged many would-be participants. BOA is in the process of reactivating that program and needs your help to get things going.

Email the Liveboard and Security VP through the LBMBOA website at: <http://www.lbmboa.org/> if you would like to participate or simply want more information about the program.

Maintenance is a pretty common topic on the docks and one that BOA has been working on aggressively.

A fair number of you (41%) were satisfied with the current procedures for getting a response from maintenance. A slightly smaller number were not satisfied, and the remainder (22%), were not aware that there was a procedure for getting a maintenance issue resolved. BOA will continue to work with the Maintenance Department on this.

Another question was aimed at gauging how you prioritized multiple issues. Dock and parking lot security were both rated as Important, as were restroom and grounds upkeep. Illegal liveboards and dinghy storage were both rated Somewhat Important.

The only item that didn't get anyone's vote was Animal control. As I look at my neighbor's bimini though, I find this beyond understanding.

Three questions focused on marina policies that permittees consistently asked to have put in the survey.

The first question asked you to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how confident you were that responses you receive from the Marine Bureau accurately reflect existing regulations. The rating average for this question was 2.81, which explains why there often seems to be a lot of confusion about what the regulations are.

That response ties in directly to the question that asked if you would support a request that the bureau keep a full and complete list of regulations on its website. You indicated you would overwhelmingly (97%) support such a request.

This is probably a good time to clarify what these two questions mean because this one, and the next one, asking if you would support a request to keep an updated list of applications for various slip changes publically available, are both getting at the same thing.

The issue here is that many folks told us that there seems to be a high level of inconsistency when it comes to what the rules are. This is no surprise. The marina system is huge and with so

many issues to resolve on a daily basis, and without a listing of regulations, decisions often have to be made on an ad hoc basis.

Responding like this on a daily basis, much less year after year, is bound to create confusion among permittees and marina management, both on the way regulations are promulgated and how they're enforced.

This probably goes a long way in explaining why less than a quarter of the people who took the survey indicated a high level of confidence in responses from the Marine bureau to their queries and 96% of the respondents supported a request to keep a full and complete listing of marina regulations publicly available on its website.

Closely allied with the issues of the non-availability of marina regulations is the perceived lack of transparency around the various lists maintained by the Bureau.

Although Marine Bureau policy requires that these lists, including first-time slip permits, transfers and liveaboard permits, are based on first in-first out, this has not always been the case, as many of us know.

Permittees in both marinas said they knew of examples that seem to contradict this, and some 85% of survey respondents would support a request that these lists be updated monthly and posted for everyone to see.

Finally, the survey contained some questions related specifically to one marina or the other.

ABM permittees, by 67% would support extending the gangways in Basin 4, even though this would have the effect of reducing the main channel width by 35 feet.

On the question of moving the Sunday Farmer's Market, respondents were evenly split. Most of the comments against the market were based on the lack of parking and lack of efficient cleanup.

Shoreline boat owners were asked to indicate the top three unresolved issues at SLM. Responses were a need for ladders on fingers for emergencies, dinghy storage and illegal parking on the mole road, in that order.

Another Shoreline-related question asked respondents if they had seen an improvement in parking during special events as a result of BOAs efforts, particularly a Speakers' Forum at the Shoreline YC last year. While 60% of the respondents felt that there was no improvement, the remaining 40% saw improvement.

There's no history on this question so we'll all have to wait for future responses to tell us whether we're making any headway on this issue.

So there you have it. BOA's first Permittee Satisfaction Survey.

We can't claim our debut effort was perfect, but these initial responses you provided will serve as a baseline as BOA continues to monitor the issues and concerns of marina boat owners. These results provide the critical guidance we need as we plan the future direction of the organization.

Meanwhile, we'll continue reviewing and refining the processes, including the annual survey, that help us to know what's important to you as permittees in the marinas. BOA is here to help make the Long Beach Marinas what you want them to be and can be. We encourage you to join us in that effort.