

Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee

Voluntary Anchor-Out Eelgrass Protection Buoys Permitting Report

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MARINE SURVEYS & ASSESSMENTS
267 Hudson Street
Port Townsend WA 98368
(360) 385-4073
marine.surveys.inc@gmail.com

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Introduction

The Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee (JCMRC) contracted Marine Surveys & Assessments (MSA) in 2015 to provide environmental assessment and permitting services for the installation of five voluntary anchor-out eelgrass protection buoys. These five new buoys will be in addition to the existing buoys off downtown Port Townsend's waterfront and will expand the existing protection area southwest to Boat Haven Beach. MSA agreed to provide its services at a reduced cost in sponsorship of this project (*See Cost Estimate - Appendix A*). A 2014 Port Townsend Eelgrass Survey report (*Appendix B*) from Marine Resources Consultants was provided by the JCMRC as a resource for identifying suitable buoy locations as well as for permitting purposes. Contracting was completed in early March with a project goal of receiving permits and installing buoys before the Wooden Boat Festival which starts September 9th.

Methods

MSA began the project by reviewing the 2014 Port Townsend Eelgrass Survey report and cross referenced it with agency natural resource databases such as NOAA's Emergency Response Management Application (ERMA) to identify the most suitable location for the buoys and assess the habitats and species that may be affected by this project. The suitability of the buoy locations were determined by the following factors in order of importance: presence of eelgrass, possibility of boats anchoring at the location, depth, and ability to maintain 25 ft buffer from eelgrass bed. The locations of the five buoys (*Appendix C*) were chosen based on these parameters.

MSA determined the necessary permits and applications for this project based on communications and meetings with regulatory agencies staff. Table 1 below provides information on the permits and applications determined to be necessary for this project as well as the regulatory agencies, the contact person, and pertinent comments.

Table 1. Permits/Applications, Regulators, and Contacts

Permit/Application	Regulator and Contact	Comments
Shoreline Exemption	City of Port Townsend (CoPT) - Judy Surber	Exempted under WAC 197-11-800 (2) (k), \$243 fee
State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Checklist - Exempted	Same as above	Exempted
Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA)	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) - Chris Waldbillig	\$150 fee
Aquatic Use Authorization - amendment	Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) - Bridget Kaminski-Richardson	\$25 fee
Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application (JARPA)	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) - Jon Paull	No Fee, U.S. Coast Guard review initiated by USACE
Specific Project Information Form (SPIF) for Aids to Navigation	Same as above	Same as above

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)'s Specific Project Information form for Aids to Navigation (SPIF – *Appendix D*) and Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application (JARPA– *Appendix E*) forms, as well as the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA– *Appendix F*) Checklist for the City of Port Townsend, and online Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) application form for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) were filled out using project information provided by the JCMRC as well as the findings of the 2014 Port Townsend Eelgrass Survey report and our environmental assessment. Submittal dates for this project's permit applications are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Permits/Applications Submittal Dates

Permit/Application	Regulator	Submittal Dates
Shoreline Exemption	CoPT	Late April 2015
State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Checklist - Exempted	Same as above	Same as above
Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA)	WDFW	Late April 2015
Aquatic Use Authorization - amendment	WDNR	Late April 2015
Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application (JARPA)	USACE	Late April 2015
Specific Project Information Form (SPIF) for Aids to Navigation	Same as above	Same as above

Two of the buoys were proposed to be placed west of Boat Haven Beach and outside the areas surveyed in the 2014 Port Townsend Eelgrass Survey report. However due to scheduling constraints it was not possible to survey that area until after the permit applications needed to be in order to meet the project timeline. MSA bypassed this hurdle by proposing those two buoys to be placed in depths of -30 Mean Lower Low water (MLLW) and/or at least 25 ft away from any eelgrass observed during installation. A 2015 Port Townsend Eelgrass survey (report – *Appendix G*) was conducted by Marine Resources Consultants on July 18th 2015, and the information provided was used to verify the location of the two most western buoys.

The proposed buoys are approximately one foot in diameter and five feet long. They will be attached with ground tackle to helix anchors screwed into the bottom substrate. The ground tackle will incorporate mid-line floats so that small winter buoy markers can be installed when the larger marker buoys are removed in the winter. This will facilitate finding the helix anchors when the larger marker buoys are installed in the spring. The buoys will have the Coastal Guard required markings as well as the Voluntary No-Anchor Zone for the protection of existing eelgrass beds. The ground tackle consisted of 3/8" double braided nylon, knots in the rope instead of splices (using a bowline knot with Yosemite finish and whipped in four places with nylon twist ties), installing 1/2" nylon thimbles eyes formed by the knots, and using 3/8" galvanized swivels and shackles on both ends of the gear. For gear flotation at mid-line we used donated black nylon buoys from Taylor Shellfish. Six to eight foot long marine grade helical screw anchors/ground anchors were used to anchor the buoys at proposed locations. All hardware was obtained by JCMRC members from marine hardware stores, marine grade helical screw anchors/ground anchors can be purchased from Admiral Ship Supply in Port Townsend's Boat Haven.

Results

All project permits were received on time for buoy installation before the start of the 2015 Wooden Boat Festival on September 9th. The following is a table of the permits issued, date received, and appendix references:

Table 3. Permits, Dates Issued, Reference

Permit/Application	Date Issued	Reference
Shoreline Exemption	5/28/15	Appendix J & K
Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA)	6/4/15	Appendix L
Aquatic Use Authorization - amendment	8/20/15	Appendix M
Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application (JARPA)	6/9/15	Appendix N

JCMRC members present during the installation of the buoys provided a report (*Appendix H*) on that day's events. The report provides insights into personnel and equipment needs as well as problems encountered during the installation. MSA also helped the JCMRC promote awareness of the buoys by entering their positions and descriptions into Active Captain a boating navigational app that directly outreach to boating community through a variety of boating software and apps (*Appendix I*).

JCMRC recorded the DNR lease amendment to DNR #22-080830 with the County. Recording number is #593760 done on August 27, 2015.