

Public Meeting 3/19/24 – Manchester Harbor Management Plan

Climate Change:

Participants were interested in better understanding the information behind the maps, models, and projections that will be used in the plan and in the Town's other climate work. As part of this, it might be useful to:

- see how different models vary
- look at historical records and sources of information
- understand the Town's priorities/intentions with regard to responding to climate change

There was also interest in knowing how changing water levels will impact things like regulations – for example, will newly inundated areas be regulated differently than they are now (e.g., new wetlands, new flood zones)

People expressed concern for flooding risks. Particular concerns identified included:

- The marinas, boat yard, yacht club – they will likely flood. How can they adapt? What steps can be taken to ensure continued services they provide?
- How will the waterways change – for example, will tidal flats be submerged always moving forward? Will sediment shifting change/worsen? Will waves get bigger or approach from new angles?
- Reed Park – This site already sees flooding under present conditions
- Singing Beach – it would naturally retreat but is held in place by a revetment
- The Railroad tracks
- Fuel tanks at Manchester Marine are in the flood zone. There has been discussion about the potential for the Town to take on offering fuel.

People also identified ongoing projects for which they'd like more information, including:

- Elevating the Rotunda at Tuck's Point

Future projects that came up for discussion include:

- A harbor barrier like the one in New Bedford that would open and close as needed
- Education about the impacts of climate change
- Researching past wave attenuation structures (e.g., the breakwater near the Yacht Club) to see what has been permitted and could be useful moving forward
- What are the protective features of the islands and how might that change with sea level rise?

- A town-wide effort to track storm surges
- Identify future projects and begin permitting for them now

Dredging:

Attendees identified several locations in need of dredging, including:

- Masconomo Park
- In the vicinity of the Yacht Club and Tuck's Point where they've seen increased sedimentation
- Outer areas of the harbor where water is rising/encroaching - what are the rules for dredging areas with increased water levels that were once marshland?

Potential projects include:

- Conducting a sediment study to understand how sediment is moving in and around the harbor
- Exploring whether there is an opportunity to combine the Town's dredging with private dredging projects too (e.g, the Yacht Club)

Participants discussed Manchester's choice to deauthorize as a federal navigation project. This eliminates federal funding for dredging, but also removes oversight of the harbor by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Water Quality, Natural Resources & Commercial/Recreational Fishing:

Participants raised the importance of understanding how activities in the watershed impact the waterways.

Specific concerns included:

- PFAS
- Dumping of oil
- Maintenance of catch basin
- Fertilizer
- Increase in usage of areas in Sand Dollar cove where eelgrass beds
- Potential tannins leach from leaves in Sawmill Brook, leading to brown colored water in harbor (people perceive water quality to be "poor")
- Sewage pipe outflow

Commerical and Recreational Fishing specific:

- Note of oyster seeding going at commercial docks to help with water quality.
- Town would like to identify areas for potential oyster growing.
- Moorings and WWTP make it difficult for using areas in harbor for aquaculture
- Retaining fishing access in town is important for the economy.

Boating & Navigation:

Participants noted several concerns about the anchored and rafted boats in Sand Dollar Cove: (1) Noise - would like to see some effort made to limit noise through education or regulations perhaps; (2) Safety - due to overcrowding and a party atmosphere on summer weekends; (3) Environmental impacts - boats anchoring on eelgrass. Many people also use kayaks and stand-up paddleboards in the cove, which was viewed as a great use of the area.

Other needs/issues and comments identified by attendees

- Additional boat ramps (e.g., Tuck's Point)
- Services for boat washing at the town ramp/inner harbor
- Lack of places to park a boat trailer at near town ramp at inner harbor. Manchester limits parking for trailers which limits transient boaters coming into town.
- Parking during summer weekends at inner harbor/Masconomo park can be hard to find.
- Public access around inner harbor is limited
- Another location for fuel and service
- Longer hours for the fuel dock at Manchester Marine
- Perceived increase in mooring docks – cause congestion and aesthetic concern
- Bow-stern moorings are being implemented in areas of Proctor Cove, which will protect the navigation channels from boat swing
- Reinstall navigation aids on Half Tide Rock
- Expand number and placement of no wake buoys at the entrance to the harbor
- Weekend powerboat traffic around Misery Island creates safety concerns for youth sail training and racing. As a result, these activities have moved to the area around House Island.
- Need for improved boater safety and awareness, while acknowledging many boating safety classes are available but perhaps not widely utilized.
- Increased acknowledgement of the need to pump out

- Town has underutilized resources for hosting larger sailing events (Floats – MSA, MYC, Town; beaches for launching – Chowder House, Rotunda; park and field)

Public Access

Generally speaking, attendees noted that there is a decent amount of public access to the waterfronts, but access could be improved in some areas.

Needs/issues identified by attendees:

- Important to maintain iconic views in Manchester (e.g., harbor)
- Possible conflict or confusion about public access on beaches (public vs. private access and who can access what areas); need more education
- General need for more parking – Lobster Cove, Coolidge Point, Town Parking Lot (town is restrictive about parking a trailer at the town parking lot)
- Some people would like more access to the water for fishing
- Boating traffic is too close to Tucks Point Beach (too close to boaters and swimmers)
- Consider adding another boat ramp to Tucks Point
- By Proctor Point, people used to be able to water ski and tube; now there is no safe place to do that
- Consider adding a public fish cleaning spot
- There is a need for public restrooms at White Beach and Masconomo Park
- The town should consider whether additional public access is needed or if there is sufficient access
- Where are places for recreational diving? How can you access them?