

MFAC 2021 QTR 3 Report

This report is submitted to provide observations from May through September 2021 on the Gustavus Dock by Mike Halbert. Mike operated his business off the Gustavus Dock and was present nearly everyday during this period ending September 10, 2021.

The overall impression of activities on the Gustavus Dock is that nothing has changed as far as behavior, etiquette, cooperation, and basic civility despite the effort by the MFAC and City to change Title 8 and make the various patrons responsible for their actions. None of the concerns voiced by the City Council, the MFAC, some of the Gustavus Dock patrons, and the Community as a whole have changed and for the most part are getting worse.

Sea Lions. The current situation with the sea lions is dangerous and appalling. Most charter boats and private boats engaged in fishing are still tossing fish carcasses from their vessels as they clean them. Carcasses are left on swim steps and consequently sea lions are jumping up on swim steps to grab the carcasses. People are still hand feeding sea lions. Those who are leaving the dock with their carcasses are simply tossing them to the sea lions at their moorings or on the way. The sea lions will follow any boat that leaves the dock and surround any vessel that attaches to a mooring. There are now seven sea lions actively mugging boats at the Gustavus Dock. I have not observed any vessel taking their carcasses out to mid-channel as specified in Title 8.

Behavior. There have been multiple incidents of boat operators telling other operators they cannot tie up to the dock, they cannot remain tied up to the dock, or are not welcome at the dock.

Many boats (commercial and private) have remained tied up to the dock for weeks – as if the Gustavus Dock was their personal boat slip.

There is a persistent lack of courtesy towards other dock users when it comes to boat spacing when tied to the dock. At any given time (while the dock is busy) additional space for two or more boats could be created by a little effort to move a vessel forward or back to create more dock space. At best, most of the operators are clueless – unless there is no room for their vessel.

The 15-minute load/unload zone was established to help keep at least on space open for active loading. This spot is completely disregarded by most.

During west/southwest winds the breakwater portion of the float system is largely unusable by most vessels and dangerous when loading and unloading people.

The transfer plate from the gangway to the float has been a source of many falls and near falls. Ben stationed a Traffic Cone at the primary tripping point but a physical change to the raised edge of the transfer plate should be considered.

The Mayor and City Council have tasked the MFAC with making changes to Title 8 as directed. We spent a considerable amount of time debating, listening to input, and recommending changes to Title 8 for the City Council to adopt to make the Gustavus Dock safer, welcoming, and commercially and recreationally satisfying for businesses, visitors, and the Gustavus community.

The Mayor and the City Council are responsible for informing the dock patrons of what the rules are and enforcing those rules when they are not followed. There is a push to expand harbor facilities in the Salmon River in the future. That does not seem feasible if the City cannot manage the current Gustavus Dock and Salmon River Harbor.

Submitted by the MFAC.

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