



"Frank Farago"

To:
cc:
Subject: Fw: Submission to Panel

01/10/2007 02:52 PM

----- Original Message -----

From: Frank Farago
To: info@tswpanel.ca
Sent: Monday, October 01, 2007 2:42 PM
Subject: Fw: Submission to Panel

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From: Frank Farago
To: info@tswpanel.ca
Sent: Sunday, September 30, 2007 5:43 PM
Subject: Submission to Panel

Dear Chairperson,

Please find attached my input to your current study.
I am only representing myself.

Frank Farago

Good Luck,



Frank input tsw.doc

Input
To

Panel on Future of TSW

Summary

The TSW is a natural attraction for boaters, particularly for cruisers, that look upon it as the cleanest, most scenic and secure water highway in North America.

Management of the TSW to a high, uniform standard, for safe boating by all should be a prime objective.

Communications between ALL lockmasters and transiting boaters should be standardized via the use of lock signal lights, and a dedicated channel on VHF radio.

Boat tie-up facilities should be improvedthis is a safety issue.

Establish traffic control in restricted canal sections (lights and or radio) and ensure clean, weed-less water in such areas to aid safe passage of boats side by side.

If current fees cover only a minor portion of the total operating/maintenance costs, consider eliminating them for the purpose of encouraging boater traffic.....the boating public will contribute significantly to the economic viability of small communities along the TSW.

Distinguished Panel Members.

I've read with interest some of your background papers on the web site and found that your review may cover many different aspects of the waterway system. In fact, some of the subjects covered, such as governance, are complex and potentially subject of never ending discussionsso, I would like to "Input" from an active boater's perspective concerning the lock and the canal management.

First, I would like to introduce myself.

I am a retired project manager of a large aluminum company, trained as a mechanical engineer, served as a naval officer in the Canadian Forces and currently a boater doing extensive cruising in inland and coastal waters of North America. My wife and I have completed America's Great Circle Loop, transited the Welland , Trent-Severn, Rideau, Richelieu, Champlain and Erie canal systems in addition to other St. Lawrence seaway locks "en-route". In the USA, we have passed through locks/moveable bridges run both by state and federal authorities in addition to railway companies. Having done some of the waterways several times (TSW-4), our experience covers more than 400 lockings in the past three years.

1.0 – The Locks

The principal interface between the TSW and the “boater clients” are the locks and the staff that operate them.

Your statistical information and our experience indicates a shift in boating patterns, in favour of less boats in total, but perhaps bigger cruising boats that use the TSW as a water high-way between the Great Lakes. Such boaters contribute to the economy of the TSW system, and use both public and commercial facilities, but they are basically “en-route” to somewhere, enjoying the beauty of their surroundings while cruising.

Boats, “in transit”, want to cross many locks in one day. At present, communication between boaters and lockmasters is primitive and non-uniform, opening the potential for misunderstandings and unnecessary annoyance on all sides.

Eg. None of the lockmasters are equipped with VHF radios, and many locks are not equipped with basic red/amber/green lights. Due to elevation differences, often boaters cannot establish visual contact with lockmasters, when locking up, to indicate their intentions. The use of the “Blue Line”, to signal the desire to pass through the lock, is helpful, but inadequateit requires that the lock staff walk to edge of lock and look down to see if there are any boatsthis is NOT done regularly enough, requiring boats in transit to stop and ATTEMPT to tie-up. Some blue line areas are not equipped with bollards, but with eye-rings, virtually un-reachable for cruising boats with decks higher than small motor boats.....making such tie-ups very difficult and potentially dangerous. If light signals indicated the lock activity, a boater may prefer to stand-off and await gate openings and not attempt a blue line tie up.

The cruising guides and some lockmasters suggest the use of the boat’s fog-horn to announce their approach to the lock when no staff are in sight. Well, it is important to note that such signals are not only annoying to the neighbouring communities, but potentially to the lock staff as well, AND human nature being what it is, occasionally, such boaters are subsequently subjected to very safe and very slow service for the rest of that cruising day. Telephoning ahead to the lockmasters is not an option as cell telephone coverage is neither uniform nor reliable along the TSW.

Locking DOWN , also poses problems for cruising boatsthe vertical cables of the lock walls cannot be reached from a boat, and lock staff assistance is required for securing the boat. The “temporary staff” adopt the attitude of the lockmaster, and their manner of assistance may or may not be a credit to the preferred image of the TSW. Heavy emphasis should be put on courteous client service.

Recommendations:

- 1.1 Equip all lockmasters with VHF radios for boat communications on a dedicated working channel.
- 1.2 Equip all locks with standardized light signaling system.
- 1.3 Equip all dock walls with bollards.
- 1.5 Extend operating hours in peak boating season.

2.0 –“Mooring” walls

Such facilities, at the locks, are necessary on the TSW both to support local boating picnickers and transient boaters.

Recommendations:

- 2.1 Equip all fixed walls and floating docks with bollards for safe tie-ups.
- 2.2 Do NOT provide additional services, such as electrical power and water. Maintain “Spartan” park-like atmosphere.
- 2.3 Where possible, extend such docking facilities.

3.0 – Canals

There are two potential problems in some of the man-made canal sections; water depth and overall canal width. Weeds obscure water depth readings of echo-sounders and clog up engine cooling water systems in the extreme, making navigation difficult, to hazardous. With respect to having two cruising vessels pass each other, traveling in opposite directions, it is extremely difficult to near impossible in some sections. The curved canal sections give no indication of approaching traffic, and there are no traffic lights or other aids in traffic control to ensure safe passage. This is mostly a challenge for bigger boats, usually equipped with VHF radio. Although boats over 40ft are requested to announce on Channel 16, when they enter such narrow canal sections, small boats or house-boats make no such announcements, and of course it is the vessel’s width and manoeuvrability that matters, not to mention draft requirements.

Recommendations:

- 3.1 Engage in active weed control program in restricted parts of the waterway, to help safe side-by-side passage of vessels.
- 3.2 Establish a “traffic control system” for narrow canal sections. This could be traffic lights and/or VHF advisory by nearby lockmasters on the VHF radio.

4.0 – Locking Fees

In the USA, federally operated locks (mostly commercial) and the New York State canals do not charge locking fees for pleasure craft, AND have long operating hours during summer months....say, from 0700-2200h. The assumption appears to be that such boaters contribute to the livelihood of small communities along the canal routes, and as such, the powers that be, consider that a fee-less canal service is a justified “economic-subsidy” to the regional population.

Arguably, fees alone, are virtually never adequate to maintain a waterway system operation. Conversely, by reducing same to some “nominal” value, puts into question the

entire economics of such a fee levy process....like, "is the total cost of fee collection covered by the fees?"...the question is similar to the now defunct public-toll-bridge systems.

This subject requires a consultation with the proverbial "crystal ball of management". Boating statistics lead themselves to the interpretation that "cruisers" are increasing in number, with bigger, slower and more fuel efficient boats (diesel engines), as more and more retiring couples take to traveling in the slow lane, watching the world go by their windows. These type of boaters have discovered that the cleanest water, most scenic and safest cruising areas of North America, are in Canada. Also, such cruisers are mostly courteous and are concerned with minimizing their impact in the areas they travel.

Are they of economic benefit to the areas they travel?.....you bet!

They use boating services, food stores, restaurants and souvenir shops and all other shops that are necessary to support day to day living. Every pleasant boating experience brings on repeat visits and by "word of mouth", many other boaters hear of our beautiful, historic waterway system.

Our Canadian waterways are a major part of our tourist attractions. Increased use of the TSW brings economic benefits to the communities along the system in addition to those at either end of the waterway.

My "crystal ball" suggests that IF we manage a well maintained system that focuses on serving the boating clients, the traveling boaters will continue to come in increasing numbers, and their favourable economic impact will boost the sustainability of small towns along the TSW. For these boaters, fee or no-fee will have a minor impact on their decision to visit, however, local boaters would be encouraged to use the TSW by waving all locking fees.