



NEWPORT BEACH

Harbor Commission Staff Report

April 8, 2026
Agenda Item No. 6.6

TO: HARBOR COMMISSION

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TITLE: Harbormaster Update – March 2026 Activities

ABSTRACT:

The Harbormaster oversees the City Harbor Department and is responsible for the management of the City's mooring fields and Balboa Yacht Basin marina, support for the Harbor Commission, municipal code enforcement on the harbor, events and marine activities permitting, safety and rescue operations, management of the Marina Park visitor serving marina, marine sanitation pump out equipment and public pier maintenance, water quality monitoring and maintenance, impound and disposition of abandoned and unclaimed vessels and public relations and information dissemination on and about Newport Harbor as well as several special projects.

This report will update the Harbor Commission and the public on the Harbor Department's recent activities.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
- 2) Receive and file.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

DISCUSSION:

The following is a summary of Harbor Department activities for March 2026. The summary of activities is organized around the department's mission to keep Newport Harbor clean, safe, and well-enjoyed.

Clean

Harbor Safety Officers (HSOs) and Code Enforcement Officers (CEOs) responded to several environmental and cleanliness-related issues throughout the month, demonstrating continued vigilance in protecting harbor water quality and a healthy marine environment.

- Conducted training with several Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers on the use of our trash rover
- Unsanitary conditions associated with an electric vessel in the Balboa Coves were addressed with the registered owner
- Inspections and basic maintenance were carried out on the four trash skimmers for which the City is responsible in the harbor
- CEO Goldfarb was asked to give a talk about derelict vessels and marine debris to the CA Boating Safety Officers Association. He will present a summary of that discussion at a future Harbor Commission meeting
- A problematic boat in impound was removed from the harbor
- A motorcycle was removed from the water beneath the Newport Blvd Bridge
- Several potential unpermitted live-aboards were reported and/or observed. Investigations continue
- Sea lions aboard several moored vessels were addressed
- A vessel observed to be bow heavy was confirmed to be taking on water. The registered owner is deceased. A CEO is working the case to find the responsible parties
- A wash down crew washing a vessel in the Marina Park marina was educated about proper procedures for limiting discharge into the bay
- The CA Division of Boating and Waterways reached out to let us know there were funds available from a SAVE Grant participant that they could not use. We were offered the opportunity to apply for a portion of those unused funds and were awarded another \$9,600 for the removal of surrendered or abandoned vessels. Quick action and great preparedness on the part of our Management Analyst led to this additional award
- A mooring permittee in the A Field reported people living on board his boat without permission. Reports of trespass went unaddressed. We relocated the vessel to a mooring near Marina Park, where it could be observed by the surveillance system. The unpermitted access and use seem to have been resolved, and the vessel will be returned to its mooring
- The recipient of a Notice of Violation (NOV) for living aboard without a permit came in for a visit and education in our office about the requirements for living aboard
- A CEO opened a case on a sunken tender secured to a mooring without the mooring permittee's knowledge or permission. The Coast Guard reviewed our case and expressed their appreciation for addressing the various violations, including the discharge of hazardous materials
- The registered owner of the sunken tender that discharged hazardous materials into the harbor paid the impound fees and released the vessel to the Harbor Department for destruction

- Enforcement of the fishing restriction at West Jetty Park resulted in a positive interaction and compliance by the people involved

Safe

Significant efforts were expended to maintain and improve the safety of the harbor, with an emphasis focused on navigation safety, infrastructure integrity, and code compliance.

- Several instances of youth riding on the bows of boats and enjoying the harbor without wearing Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs) were addressed, resulting in compliance
- A becalmed vessel from the City Recreation program was assisted back to its point of embarkation
- A distressed paddleboarder unable to return to his point of embarkation was rescued from the beach at China Cove
- Another stranded paddleboarder was assisted back to NAC from the PCH Bridge
- A review of the locations and operability of various Private Aids to Navigation (PATONs) was conducted. Needed adjustments or repairs were carried out
- A vessel assigned to a mooring in the F Field was relocated when elements of its tackle failed, creating a hazard
- Extra patrols were arranged and carried out during severe wind conditions. No major incidents were addressed or observed
- Several instances of excessive speed and/or wake by Personal Water Craft (PWC) were addressed with warnings issued
- Several instances of excessive speed by foil boards were addressed with warnings issued and compliance achieved
- Inspired by a comment from a live-aboard permittee, closer inspections of mooring pendants, required thimbles, shackles, and seizing wire were carried out with several deficiencies addressed - 664979 Hydrofoil speeding.. No CFs educated /corrected
- A small, disabled vessel with three adults, two children, and an infant was towed back to the safety of the launch ramp
- A disabled sailing vessel was assisted at the harbor entrance back to the safety of its mooring. This is an unusual example of operations for the Harbor Department, but it shows our capabilities and good judgment
- HSOs attended the Tsunami Partners Meeting as part of refresher training and preparation for such events. Partners included the City of Costa Mesa, HOAG Hospital, Huntington Beach, and Orange County
- An electric vessel which deliberately beached itself at a beach designated for swimming was educated about designated swim areas and limits on motorized vessels within 100' of such designated areas
- Passengers aboard a rented electric vessel were educated about the dangers associated with leaning overboard and dunking their heads while the vessel was making way

Well-enjoyed

Significant efforts were expended to maintain and improve the enjoyment of the harbor while minimizing impacts to safety and navigation.

- Refurbished and refinished finials were reinstalled at various public docks
- Installed new cleat identification plates at various public docks. These cleat IDs help with the enforcement of the time limits and other rules at the public docks
- A large commercial charter vessel lost a fender overboard. The fender was retrieved and returned to the vessel by alert HSOs
- A woman injured while walking barefoot over shells on the beach was assisted with first aid, and a pool net was used to retrieve the phone she dropped off a dock
- An electric boat that ran aground in the upper bay was assisted with a call to a commercial tow provider and advised to wait until the tide came back in
- Signage at the Balboa Marina Public Dock was vandalized. Replacement signage has been ordered, and surveillance footage from the California Recreation Company and a nearby vessel is being reviewed to identify suspects
- A mooring permittee was assisted with a jumper pack for a dead battery
- A joint education opportunity was enjoyed by members of the American Legion Yacht Club, and HSOs focused on knot tying. Much learning and camaraderie resulted
- A member of the public requesting information and an education on the use of public docks at Washington Street was grateful to the HSOs who provided them
- A permitted raft up in the West Anchorage was somewhat larger than anticipated and stayed around longer than anticipated to enjoy the excellent weather. We were pleased they were popular and enjoyed their stay
- A live-aboard permittee in the C Field was assisted with some logistics related to his tender left on a public dock. The permittee, recovering from a medical procedure, expressed gratitude for our alertness and assistance
- A rental concession customer was assisted with directions and support for getting back to his point of embarkation

Odds and Ends

Significant efforts were expended to address harbor-related matters other than cleanliness, safety, and enjoyment.

- Significant support was provided to the dredge operations, including:
 - Relocation of several swim and speed limit buoys
 - Relocation of approximately 80 boats and moorings from the NHYC, F, H, and J Fields
- The required annual CARB commercial watercraft report on patrol vessels was completed and filed. It remains a mystery why we are assessed \$850 for a zero-emission vehicle, the same amount we are assessed for our traditionally powered vessels

- 2026 has brought several new MAP applications, at least five of which have been approved. One interesting one makes use of a refurbished shoreboat for charters
- The advisory language associated with mooring permit transfers was updated to include information on the recent direction from the State Lands Commission. Anyone working with the Permit Technician sees the advisory at the permit desk. Anyone using the online transfer application and permit system sees the advisory as a step in the process
- A small boat auction has been scheduled for April 22
- A town hall meeting for constituents affected by the recent direction from the State Lands Commission has been scheduled for April 21 at the OASIS Senior Center
- The Deputy Harbormaster was recognized by and received a commendation from the CA National Guard Marine Command for organizing, supporting, collaborating, and conducting joint training exercises

The most amusing interaction of the month came in the form of an in-person question (complaint) about the absence of visual and sound signals at the harbor entrance during a foggy Saturday afternoon. It was quickly determined that all ATONs were/are operational. An education on how to activate the sound signal was provided to the questioning (complaining) party, as well as the period and characteristics of the visual signals at the outboard ends of the jetties. The education further included the Coast Guard's shift to Mariner Radio Activated Sound Signals (MRASS) and the inclusion of instructions for how to activate on various NOAA charts in 2015.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the Harbor Commission find this action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Harbor Commission considers the item).

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Harbor Department Statistics Infographic