

CLEAN MARINAS

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The San Mateo County Harbor District maintains Clean Marinas as a major public service goal. The District is an independent special district created under state law by the County Board of Supervisors in 1933. The District was created to build, operate, and maintain harbors in the County, and is now celebrating its 80th anniversary.

The District built its first harbor at Pillar Point on Half Moon Bay between 1959 and the mid-1980s as a harbor of refuge for the commercial fishing fleet and other vessels. At the City of South San Francisco's request, the District took over operation of the City's Oyster Point Marina/Park in 1977.

Clean Marina Certification for Pillar Point and Oyster Point: In spring 2013, the District received its Clean Marina certifications for Pillar Point Harbor and Oyster Point Marina for the first time. Both harbors surpassed the minimum passing criterion of 75%: Oyster Point scored 90% and Pillar Point scored 92%. The Clean Marinas Program is a statewide partnership of public marina operators, private marina owners, and yacht clubs, which aims to provide clean boating facilities and to protect waterways from pollution. Program inspectors came from around the San Francisco Bay Area. They noted the District's program, initiated and carried out by its Harbor Patrol, addresses petrol containment, underwater boat hull cleaning, topside cleaning, marina operations, marina debris, boat sewage discharge, solid waste, liquid waste, fish waste, hazardous materials, and storm water runoff. Our Harbor Patrol crews continue routine management and disposal of a variety of waste materials, public education on the importance of proper disposal, and enforcement of District ordinances.

Harbor District's Place in the Coastside Community: Resource Conservation District Study and Water Quality Sampling: The Harbor District's primary role is to serve the boating public. However, it has solidly established its position in the broader Coastside and Bayside communities. For example, the District has financially supported the County Resource Conservation District's (RCD) June 2013 study to identify sources of fecal contamination in Pillar Point Harbor.

A study highlight is that high canine and bovine fecal bacteria counts recorded at Capistrano Beach and the Deer Creek outfall next to the boat launch ramp **"are a landscape issue, not based at or in the Harbor itself but rather in the upland urban area"** [my emphasis] of El Granada and Princeton.

The study recommends several approaches to solving the problem, including advocating more regular cleaning of upland drainage pipes to reduce contaminated sediment in storm water drainage, encouraging proper disposal of dog feces, pursuing upstream bovine best management practices by landowners, and further investigation of fecal sources from wildlife and sewer inputs to the storm water drainage system.

An important follow-up to the RCD's study is the regular monthly sampling of inner harbor water quality by Harbor District staff. The staff has been trained by the RCD, which takes the samples and analyzes them for various water quality measures. Thus far, the inner harbor remains a "clean marina" relative to the concerns that led to the RCD study.

Solving the Pillar Point Air Force Station's storm water runoff problem: The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) notified the U. S. Air Force that storm water runoff from its Pillar Point Air Force Station, which overlooks the Harbor, was contaminating the environmentally sensitive ocean waters of the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve. The Air Force's consultant proposed rerouting the runoff into Half Moon Bay near Pillar Point Marsh. In July 2010, the Harbor District, fearing contamination of the enclosed Harbor waters which are frequented by the public along Princeton beach, objected to this approach. Eventually, SWRCB approved the Air Force's alternative proposal, which called for on-site treatment of 90% of the runoff and disposal into the ocean, completely bypassing Harbor waters.

Replacing old sewer lines under Johnson Pier and on shore: The District is in the process of replacing old sewer lines under Pillar Point's Johnson Pier and the building occupied by restaurants and shops. These replacements over the next few months are part of the District's ongoing facilities maintenance and upgrade activities at Pillar Point and Oyster Point.

Tightening regulations and enforcement in Pillar Point's Outer Harbor to eliminate dumping of waste materials and other unsafe practices: The Harbor Commission recently adopted ordinance code amendments to strengthen its ability to regulate and reduce environmental hazards in the Outer Harbor. Several private vessels are either moored or anchored in the Outer Harbor under the umbrella of the "harbor of refuge". Many of these vessels are either inoperable or otherwise unseaworthy. Harbor Patrol will continue to ensure that Outer Harbor boaters meet environmental regulations.

These and other efforts reflect the Harbor District's commitment to maintaining Clean Marina status for its harbors.