

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

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This chapter summarizes information gathered through the Delta outreach workshop activities conducted for this study. Various Delta recreation, educational, and operational interest groups attended and shared their thoughts and ideas in a series of public and special-focus workshops. The information recorded through this process is anecdotal and covers a range of preferences, including:

- Physical and facility requirements
- Typical activity patterns
- Attractors (what brings boaters to the Delta)
- Daily, seasonal, and peak-use patterns
- Preferred specific boating locations

When possible, delineated maps of those locations were also produced. It is important to note that the information is based on the expressed opinions, desires, and considerations of the individuals who attended the workshops. Therefore, they may not reflect the universe of opinion related to a particular recreational group or subject. This information is presented as a tandem component to **Chapter 4**, which gives a summary of survey data gathered through three separate statewide-administered surveys regarding recreational use of the Delta. This chapter is intended to provide elaboration and detail about Delta recreational activities in terms of the expressed needs and concerns of the various groups and individuals who participated in the workshop sessions.

Workshop participants and survey respondents were asked to identify what additional facility-related improvements would make the Delta a better location for their recreational activities. They were also asked what they thought the key existing impediments or constraints were that limited the potential of their recreational pursuits in the Delta. A pattern emerges in the responses recorded below. Typically, items identified as “needs” often have a constraint as a counterpart. Recorded opportunities have been limited to desired features or improvements.

Examples of suggested improvements derived from the public and special-focused workshops are shown as concept sketches and included at the end of this chapter. The concept sketches are intended

to serve as examples of potential improvements inspired by the workshop participants.

### **3.2 METHODOLOGY**

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Who recreates in the Delta? Where do they come from and where do they go? What do they do when they get to the Delta? These are the primary questions that served as the starting point for probing the patterns of recreation in the Delta. The initial step in conducting this outreach effort was a determination of the range of types of boat-oriented recreation occurring in the Delta. Recreation-oriented groups, agencies, and individuals that were contacted and invited to attend workshops included water-skiing/wake-boarder organizations, several Delta sports fishing clubs, yacht clubs, windsurfers, non-motorized type boating recreation organizations, enforcement agencies, and water-oriented youth organizations. In addition, six public meetings were conducted throughout the greater Delta region for the purpose of gathering additional input to supplement information gathered in the special group workshop sessions. Where possible, and consistent with the underlying purpose of this Boating Needs Assessment, information provided here has been sorted into two primary categories:

- Large boats - boats 26 feet or greater in length
- Small boats - boats less than 26 feet in length

A questionnaire format was developed as a means of gathering this information. This questionnaire then served as the basis for discussion at the individual workshops. The recorded information summarized in this chapter is derived from the specific responses to the questionnaire as it was presented at each individual workshop.

### **3.3 USER PREFERENCE OVERVIEW**

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#### **BOATS OVER 26 FEET**

There are three primary categories of large boats in the Delta:

- Powerboats
- Sailboats
- Houseboats

The following is a summary of preferences pertaining to these boating categories.

### *Preferences*

**Powerboats.** Powerboat users often have membership in one of the several yacht clubs in the Delta. Typically, powerboat cruising activities are linked to the Delta resource, with most activities involving some form of exploration of the myriad of Delta channels. Some boaters seek social gatherings with other social-minded boaters for “floating” party type venues. Large-boat operators conveyed that the proximity to urban areas and the abundance of marinas and yacht clubs add to the attraction of the Delta. Boating in the Delta is described as more relaxing and sociable, and less expensive, than a comparable boating experience in San Francisco Bay waters. Warm weather and relatively sheltered water conditions were also described as important considerations for choosing to boat in the Delta.

**Sailboats.** Sailboaters are predominantly yacht club membership-based. In contrast with the powerboat cruisers, sailboaters conveyed that they are attracted by the adventurous side of navigating in the confines of the Delta. Sailors typically take trips between the Delta, San Pablo Bay, and beyond to San Francisco Bay. They primarily utilize contiguous waterways with the prerequisite wind conditions for sailing and sufficient water depths and channel widths to safely navigate.

**Houseboats.** Houseboaters tend to move to different locations based on aesthetic and comfort considerations. They are attracted to the warm weather, the solitude, and the unregimented character of the sloughs and channels. Wildlife viewing, along with opportunities for socializing, was cited as the principal attractions for this group.

### *Seasonal and Peak-Use Patterns*

**Powerboats.** Participants stated that motorized boating activities in the Delta tend to be concentrated in the summer months, but can occur throughout the year. Fourth of July weekend is the single peak-use event of the year, followed by all other summer weekends and special event days.

**Sailboats.** Sailboaters tend to concentrate their activities during the summer months primarily because it is the period when the optimum wind conditions are present. While holidays and weekends are generally the peak-use times, sailors will utilize Delta waterways seven days a week throughout the sailing season.

**Houseboats.** Although houseboat rentals are generally available year-round, use is typically low during the winter months. It peaks during the summer months. Both climate and stronger current flows in the main channels are factors in reduced houseboat use during the winter period.

### *Physical Requirements*

**Powerboats.** The primary Delta-related physical limitations identified by this group are water depth and, to a lesser extent, excessive winds. Accordingly, these boaters tend to travel the channels of the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers and the deeper sloughs to access wind-protected anchorage areas. Workshop participants conveyed that, historically, Franks Tract was used as a shortcut, but it is now generally avoided due to aquatic vegetation and hidden obstructions in the water. Power cruiser routes may be as important as their destinations since they can often find suitable anchorages along their route. Furthermore, their routes must be carefully planned to account for various conditions including depth and height clearances and the status of channel locks.

**Sailboats.** Sailboaters prefer deep-water channels and windy conditions. Optimum conditions are not widely distributed throughout the Delta, limiting the range of areas that are typically used by sailboats. They generally travel the main San Joaquin and Sacramento River corridors and anchor at some of the deeper adjoining sloughs such as Potato Slough. Similar to the power cruisers, sailboaters need to preplan their routes in order to avoid obstacles and hazards.

**Houseboats.** Houseboaters show preference for the calmer sloughs and, inversely, generally avoid windy conditions on the main channels. Additionally, with their shallow drafts, they can travel in areas with more shallow waters. However, a significant limitation of this boat category is their relatively small motors, which

limit their navigational range to areas with moderate or low current flows.

***Facility Requirements for Boats Over 26 Feet***

Because large boats tend to be comparatively more self-sufficient, facility dependency is generally limited to facilities that furnish replenishment supplies or provide general services. The following facilities were mentioned during the workshops as required or preferred by this user group:

- Fuel stations
- Pump-out sites
- Berthing sites
- Supply facilities
- Yacht clubs
- Courtesy docks
- Land-side destinations such as restaurants and shops

**BOATS UNDER 26 FEET**

***Background***

While the large yachts and houseboats are generally confined to a contiguous body of water, the small trailerable powerboats, runabouts, and jet-drive boats can be transported by highway vehicle and launched at different water access points. Recreational boaters who fall into the Boats Under 26 Feet category include a full spectrum of water recreational enthusiasts. Boat type and size vary considerably. However, they share the common attribute of being small enough to be trailored by vehicle to launching sites at the water resource.

***Primary Attractors***

Diversity and complexity are the primary draws that attract the owners of small boats to the Delta. As preferences of the different user groups range widely, as described in greater detail in **Section 3.4**, the most important attribute of the Delta appears to be that on any typical day, it offers varying conditions of microclimate and settings for different recreational activities. With the greater maneuverability of the small boats, the small-boat operator can take full advantage of the

Delta’s complex, interconnected system of waterways and its diversity of settings.

***Seasonal and Peak-Use Patterns***

As with boater groups described above, small powerboat use intensifies during the summer months. Because powerboats are typically not equipped with overnight features, higher campground usage in the Delta during this period is indicative of powerboater presence in the Delta.

***Physical Requirements***

Powerboats can basically travel anywhere, except in very shallow water reaches and channels burdened with snags or aquatic vegetation. Their powerful engines combined with their relatively smaller size allow them to cruise the stronger currents of the main channels even though it may make for a very bumpy ride.

***Facility Requirements for Boats Under 26 Feet***

Because the small powerboats are less self-contained (lacking overnight features, restrooms, and food preparation features), users are generally more dependent on land-based facilities. Boaters might use various destinations where they can get off their boat, use the restroom, walk around, let children “burn off some energy,” or engage in some related recreational activity such as swimming, sunbathing, or camping. The following is a list of preferred facilities for this boating category:

- Restrooms
- Day-use areas
- Beaches
- Town docks
- Launch ramps
- Fuel stations
- Campgrounds
- Parking lots

**3.4 SPECIFIC RECREATIONAL GROUP PREFERENCES**

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During the special-focus and public workshops, participants were asked to name, or note on a map, preferred sites and areas where they typically conduct their recreational activities in the Delta.

The following is a summary of the recorded preference information gained from the special-focus and general public workshops.

## **FISHING**

### ***Background***

Historically, Delta waters have been associated with an abundance and diversity of sports fish species. The Delta is advantageously positioned to support an abundance and diversity of aquatic species. The combined factors of high nutrient levels in the water, mixing of fresh and salient waters, rich habitat diversity (attributable to an articulated and varied land-to-water margin), and an abundance of aquatic vegetation contribute to the Delta's ability to support significant quantities and varieties of aquatic species. Some of the more prevalent species include striped bass, black bass, and catfish, all exotic species to the Delta. Other less common species include sturgeon, American shad, salmon, and various pan fish. Fishing often is an incidental activity undertaken by boaters who are in the Delta long enough to participate in multiple recreational activities.

Black bass in particular has become increasingly popular with anglers, both as a competitive sports fish and as a fly-fishing opportunity. Because the Delta has become known for both large volumes of bass and record-sized individual fish, bass fishing tournaments, or derbies, are now held throughout the year in the Delta. Workshop feedback suggests that these activities are increasing in popularity. In fact, workshop attendees suggested that the bass fishery in the Delta might be the species' premier fishery on the West Coast. As evidence of its popularity, bass tournaments held in the Delta now draw as many as 600 anglers at a time.

Boating-based fishing clubs or organizations in the Delta can generally be grouped into two categories: the striped bass groups and the black bass groups. Interestingly, the striped bass groups also generally fish for other fish species, while the black bass groups tend to focus on just the single species. Also, black bass clubs are typically tournament-oriented while the striper clubs are not.

### ***Boating Attractors***

Workshop participants emphatically stated that the availability, quality, and abundance of fish are the primary attractors for anglers as a group. Consequently, water quality is a primary concern for the fisherman since it affects not only the quality of experience, but also the abundance and quality of the desired catch. Anglers tend to be very attuned to the subtle nuances of the Delta, including the tide conditions, microclimate, vegetation, water quality and clarity, and other habitat features. Anglers are generally dependent on the natural conditions in the Delta to the extent that the quality of the resource ensures an abundance and variety of fish. Other specific features that draw anglers to the Delta include:

- close proximity
- ease of accessibility
- warm weather
- geographic variety

### ***Physical Requirements***

Virtually all Delta waters are considered potential fishing areas. Many fish species such as striped bass are transient species that tend to forage or find shelter in many different types of habitats and locations over a period of time. Consequently, anglers tend to "follow the fish" and go to many different Delta locations. Black bass, on the other hand, are more habitat-linked within specific areas. Thus bass anglers tend to look for specific conditions for their fishing activity. In general, most anglers indicated that they typically avoid windy conditions and that daily transitional tides offer the best conditions for fishing.

### ***Facility Requirements***

Most boat anglers tend to use small powerboats. Anglers are typically campground- or home-based and require developed ramps to launch their boats. Anglers tend to be relatively self-contained and typically bring sufficient fishing and food supplies with them rather than purchasing supplies while traveling in the Delta. Black bass tournaments held in the Delta are an anomaly to the typical boat fisherman activities in that they require large facilities. Shore fishing in the Delta tends to occur opportunistically along levee roads at undeveloped

locations. This use pattern results in part from a limited quantity of fishing access points in the Delta and, inversely, the extent of water edge that is in private ownership. The following is a list of preferred facilities for boater-based anglers:

- Launch ramps
- Campgrounds
- Restrooms
- Minimal day-use facilities with shore or pier fishing amenities

### ***Daily, Seasonal, and Peak-Use***

Fishing is a year-round activity in the Delta. Anglers tend to fish when the right conditions occur to catch the variety of fish they desire. Certain fish species are more abundant during specific times of the year. Striped bass tend to be more prevalent in the spring. Sturgeon are prevalent between winter and spring, and black bass between fall and spring. Catfish can be caught year-round. Many of the workshop participants said that they try to avoid the Delta during the peak summer period (June to late August) because fishing activities during that time of year typically resulted in increased conflicts with other boaters. They also expressed that these other boaters' activities "scared the fish away." Others stated that they would launch their boats early in the morning, during the early evening, or sometimes late at night in order to avoid conflicts with other boaters. Anglers are the most prevalent winter-season boaters in the Delta.

### ***Preferred Waterway Use***

Workshop participants mentioned examples of prime fishing locations for black bass such as Big Break, Franks Tract, and Sherman Lake – all inundated islands resulting from failed levees. Fishing sites associated with other species include some of the vast stretches of waterways such as the Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Mokelumne Rivers to specific sloughs. Identified preferred fishing sites or areas are listed as follows:

- Big Break
- Cache Slough
- Dutch Slough
- Franks Tract SRA
- Georgiana Slough

- Hogback Slough
- Horseshoe Bend
- Italian Slough
- Liberty Island vicinity
- Middle River
- Mildred Lake
- Miner Slough
- Mokelumne River from San Joaquin to Hwy 12
- Mokelumne River - near the Delta Cross Channel
- Old River
- Sacramento Deepwater Channel
- Sacramento River - at the dairy near Brannan Island SRA
- Sacramento River - at the "power lines"
- Sacramento River - intersection of Three Mile Slough
- Sacramento River - the Isleton bridge
- Sacramento River - the Rio Vista bridge
- San Joaquin River - Antioch to Potato Slough
- San Joaquin River - intersection of Three Mile Slough
- San Joaquin River - on the San Andreas shoals
- Sherman Lake
- Steamboat Slough
- Sutter's Slough
- Three Mile Slough
- White Slough

## **WATER-SKIING/WAKE-BOARDING**

### ***Background***

According to workshop participants, the Delta has some of the best conditions for water-skiing in California. The water-skiers contacted through this study are principally members of skiing clubs and thus, most of the comments emphasized conditions and features from the perspective of competition skiing rather than informal recreational skiing. Because skiing is a high-speed water sport with significant inherent risks involved, safety is of primary concern to participants. Equally important is finding the optimum sheltered conditions for their activity.

Wake-boarding, similar to water-skiing, also requires placid water conditions. However, wake-boarding occurs at slower speeds and requires a different kind of boat that produces large wakes. There also is a difference in style. Wake-boarders tend to be comparatively more erratic and stunt-oriented. As a newer recreational trend, wake-boarding is attracting a younger age group – very analogous to the snow ski-boarder and skier trends. Because of the difference in skiing styles and preferences, wake-boarding and water-skiing are generally not very compatible when both are conducted in the same general location.

### ***Boating Attractors***

Water-skiers and wake-boarders in search of smooth skiing are attracted to wind-sheltered and warm water conditions. Key factors to the Delta being an ideal location for water-skiing activities include the varying channel widths and water depths, differing orientations to the prevailing winds, and varying edge conditions. The result of these favorable water and microclimate conditions is the availability of optimum skiing locations in different sectors of the Delta throughout the skiing season. This is especially the case in the South Delta, with its proximity to the nearby boating-oriented community of Discovery Bay and the availability of straight and sheltered waterways. As a result, many water-ski clubs have developed private beaches and competition courses in this part of the Delta. Proximity is another important factor. The relatively short driving distance for skiers living in Central Valley and Bay Area urban areas also influences their preference for the Delta.

### ***Physical Requirements***

Workshop participants stated that water-skiers and wake-boarders generally seek smooth, straight, and protected channels. They also prefer channels with a defined traffic direction and generally avoid cross traffic and busy boating intersections. They require approximately 2,400 feet of uninterrupted linear waterway at minimum. As described above, low to no wind conditions are preferred. In the Delta, the calmest conditions most often occur in the morning and during low tide. Inversely, the choppy conditions that are more prevalent in the afternoons and during high tide are avoided. A minimum depth of four feet is required. The

Delta's high levees provide wind protection and vegetated banks are thought to slow the speed of the currents. Participants also stated that optimum conditions for water-skiing and wake-boarding can be found in the dredged canals, on some of the dead-end sloughs, and along segments of the smaller channels such as Old River.

### ***Facility Requirements***

The following is the workshop participant derived list of facilities required for water-skiing and competition-based skiing:

- Launch ramps
- Private competition courses
- Landing/viewing sites with beach, bleachers, deck, or seating areas
- Local dry stack storage/berthing

Recreational skiers differ from competitive skiers by being more family-oriented and typically needing more day-use amenity features such as the following:

- Waterside restrooms
- Beaches
- Parks (day-use areas)
- Marinas

### ***Daily, Seasonal, and Peak-Use***

Though water-skiers, especially the competitive skiers, do use the Delta during the fall and spring seasons, the warm summer period is the prime use period for skiers, especially the recreational skiers. The extended skiing season runs from March through October, with some competitive skiers using Delta sites year-round.

### ***Preferred Waterway Use***

While organized water-ski groups concentrate their activities in the vicinity of Discovery Bay and other private club facilities located in the South Delta, recreational skiers and wake-boarders may seek sheltered and straight waterways throughout the whole Delta. Under ideal weather conditions, skiers and wake-boarders may use sloughs in the North Delta such as Snodgrass and Steamboat Sloughs. In addition, long and straight segments of the major rivers are frequently used for water-skiing. The following list of preferred

water-skiing locations was derived from workshop comments and research:

- Bishop Cut
- Disappointment Slough
- Empire Cut
- Grant Line, Fabian, and Bell Canals
- Holland Cut
- Indian Slough
- Mokelumne River, north fork
- Mokelumne River, south fork, east-west stretch
- Old River - between Woodward/North Victoria Canal and Victoria/North Canal
- Unofficial "Railroad Cut" - two parallel canals between Old River & Middle River with railroad tracks on top
- Sacramento River - upstream of Steamboat Slough
- Snodgrass Slough
- Steamboat Slough
- Telephone Cut
- Victoria Canal & North Canal
- Whiskey Slough
- White Slough
- Woodward Canal & North Victoria Canal

## **WINDSURFING**

### ***Background***

During the latter 1980's, the Delta was determined to be a prime location for windsurfing. Generally concentrated in the West Zone (along the Sacramento River from Rio Vista down to Sherman Island and the western reaches of the San Joaquin River), Delta windsurfing venues have generated a loyal following during the past decade. Overall, the rate of windsurfing activity in the Delta has demonstrated moderate but stable growth, with a likely long-term increase in use, because of the predictable wind conditions. Significantly, the Delta has become increasingly attractive to non-local windsurfers, including windsurfers from other states and countries. Currently, facilities can be described as being from simple to primitive, with the Rio Vista Windsurfing Association (RVWA) having carried

out most of the improvements. To date, launch sites have been the primary targets for improvement. In cooperation with the RVWA, California State Department of Parks and Recreation developed the Windy Cove site at Brannan Island.

### ***Boating Attractors***

Windsurfers are drawn to the ideal wind conditions of the Delta – strong and steady winds, especially against an ebb tide. Cool, moist ocean air drawn inland by the hot, dry interior valley results in strong and steady afternoon wind conditions from late spring through the fall months. Relatively warmer winds and warm waters also compare favorably with the frigid conditions encountered by windsurfers in the San Francisco Bay. An additional feature makes the Delta an ideal location for this sport. The westerly prevailing wind is always in counter-direction to the two main river channels flowing out of the Delta, the Sacramento and the San Joaquin Rivers. This offers the unique advantage of a relatively effortless return ride down current, somewhat analogous to a chairlift at a ski resort.

### ***Physical Requirements***

Sustained southwest winds in an ebbing or choppy tide allow the windsurfer to sail perpendicular to shore-side launch zones. Optimum wind conditions occur during the summer months, when the greatest differentials occur between the valley temperature and cool, ocean-influenced temperatures. Winds tend to be strongest at the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers near Sherman Island Park and to lessen to the east as they become more dispersed. A sustained 15-mph wind is considered to be the minimum velocity for good windsurfing. During the sailing season, the winds tend to be consistent during the morning hours between sunrise and around 10:00 a.m. and then, again later during the afternoon from 3:00 p.m. to sunset.

### ***Facilities Requirements***

Because windsurfers need to carry their boards from the parking area into the water, they require a "walkable" surface to the water, whether it is a sandy beach, a constructed durable ramp, or improvised sandbags placed over levee rocks.

They also need an open area next to the launch to set up their board and sails. Basic access related amenities such as parking and restrooms are required. Finally, outdoor showers and spectator stands would complete an ideal windsurfing or river-access site. These and other secondary facilities preferred by windsurfers are listed below:

- Water-access ramps
- Campgrounds
- Food and services
- Restrooms
- Parking areas
- Showers
- Spectator stands

#### ***Daily, Seasonal, and Peak-Use***

Highest activity levels conform with the Delta’s summer wind cycle, occurring May through August, though some windsurfers may sail the Delta during early spring and late fall when wind conditions are somewhat less favorable. Sail-boarders are typically in the water in the early morning and the afternoon, times when the winds are the most consistent. Weekends and holidays, especially the Fourth of July, are the peak activity times, with many windsurfers camping and recreating during the holiday periods.

#### ***Preferred Waterway Use***

Most windsurfers, perhaps the most site-focused user group in the Delta, confine their activities to the Sacramento River channel from Rio Vista down to Sherman Island, and from Twitchell Island to Little Sherman along the San Joaquin River. The reason for the relatively limited geographic range for this use activity is that the optimum wind and water conditions for the sport are generally limited to this region of the Delta. Several flooded islands were also mentioned as beginning windsurfing spots. These “lakes” may be safer since they tend to present fewer conflicts with other boaters and are generally not affected by river currents. The specific areas identified at the workshop as preferred sites for windsurfing include the following:

- Franks Tract
- Mildred Lake

- Sacramento River – Rio Vista to Sherman Island
- Sherman Lake
- San Joaquin River – Sherman Island to north end of Jersey Island

### **WATERFOWL HUNTING**

#### ***Background***

The Delta region, including its agricultural lands, is a critical waterfowl stopover along the Pacific Flyway. Long associated with a seasonal abundance of migratory birds, the tradition of waterfowl hunting has been an integral part of the Delta’s history. Oddly, because of the Delta’s vast scale, the presence of duck hunters and the abundant waterfowl may go unnoticed until one hears the sound of a gunshot. Hunters typically are in their hunting areas long before sunrise, hiding their small boats under wood and brush-fashioned structures called blinds. They may float dozens of duck decoys to attract birds.

Like anglers, most waterfowl hunters consume their catch, and they are generally concerned about maintaining or preserving the resources that attract waterfowl and other wildlife. While some hunters use the waterways for their activity, others hunt in the agricultural lands, often accessible only by boat during the winter months. The latter are typically members of duck-hunting clubs that have an agreement with the farmer or landowner to establish a clubhouse and to use the fields for their activity. According to the Delta Protection Commission’s *Inventory of Recreational Facilities*, there are about 24 private duck clubs in the Delta. However, because this study focuses on boating and waterway use, only freelance hunting is discussed in detail.

#### ***Boating Attractors***

Waterfowl hunting enthusiasts who attended the special-focus workshop consider the Delta a prime natural resource for waterfowl with ample places to hunt waterfowl by boat. Additionally, the participants said they were drawn to the Delta for other attributes such as its historic features, accessibility to historic sites, and other attractions.

### ***Physical Requirements***

The hunters seek open, shallow waters or marsh areas to avoid the open Delta waters during high wind conditions. Generally, trash and debris in Delta waters are considered problematic for waterfowl hunters.

### ***Facility Requirements***

Currently, many hunters trailer or haul their aluminum boats on their vehicles, park on the levee road shoulder, and carry their boats over the levee rocks down to the water's edge. This impromptu approach is less by choice than due to the lack of sufficient facilities in the appropriate locations, including convenient launch ramps or launch facilities in operation during the hours they need to use them. The facilities required for waterfowl hunters are:

- Car-top launch sites
- Parking area
- Restrooms (both shore and floating)

(Ideally, the restrooms are accessible by boats in portions of the waterway.)

### ***Daily, Seasonal, and Peak-Use***

Duck hunters use the Delta during the designated hunting season, starting in the late fall. Many also visit at other times for cruising, fishing, and other bird-related activities.

### ***Preferred Waterway Use***

Waterfowl hunters focus their activities where waterfowl predictably congregate, generally at the shallow, submerged island areas where tule and other wetland vegetation are found. These areas include the following:

- Mandeville Island
- Sherman Island
- Twitchell Island
- Liberty Island
- Prospect Island

## **CANOE/ KAYAK**

### ***Background***

While still a limited activity in the Delta, paddling sports in general have enjoyed growth in recent years in the Bay-Delta region. However, those contacted at the paddle sport workshop believed that the Delta could become a more popular destination in the future. In general, paddleboat users are most interested in exclusively non-motorized areas, especially those that feature wildlife and natural habitat viewing opportunities. At this time, paddling in the Delta is seasonal, with canoeing and kayaking mostly concentrated in the Delta Meadows vicinity. Paddleboating potentially becomes a more prominent boating activity within the arena of CALFED Bay-Delta Program actions that are focused on powerboat speed restrictions, closures of select channels to powerboat use, and habitat restoration. These new and enhanced areas offer potential opportunities to expand the range and diversity of paddle sport activities in the Delta.

Other areas that were noted as having potential for paddle sport development include upper Snodgrass, McCormack-Williamson Tract, the Consumnes Preserve, Little Franks Tract, the Cache Slough vicinity, and areas around Big Break.

### ***Boating Attractors***

Serene and isolated waterways combined with habitat for wildlife provide a unique paddle touring experience. The mild weather in the Delta, especially during the fall and spring bird seasons, is a bonus attraction.

### ***Physical Requirements***

Participants in paddle type boating typically prefer quiet, sheltered waters that permit easy touring. Paddlers tend to be very attuned to the natural resources, often mixing bird watching or other natural resource based activity with the boating experience. Also, since paddlers often spend unplanned time physically immersed in the water, water quality is of primary concern to this group. Additionally, unlike motorized boat users, stream and tidal currents are primary considerations in determining the length and direction of a trip.

Going with or against the current weighs heavily in making choices about routes, time of travel, and length of trip.

### ***Facility Requirements***

Facility requirements are minimal for this group. Similar to the windsurfers, paddlers typically need to carry their craft from a parking area to the water's edge. Simple launching points near the primary activity areas would be very useful. Other amenities, such as restrooms and trash containers, would be of benefit at these launch points. Wayfaring and interpretive signage would also enhance the paddlers' boating experience.

### ***Daily, Seasonal, and Peak-Use***

Contrary to other boating groups, most of the people who participate in canoeing and kayaking prefer the seasons of fall through spring for their activity. This preference is in part due to the prohibitive temperatures during the hot summer months, but also because these off-season times allow greater wildlife viewing opportunities, particularly for migrating birds. There is also less likelihood of conflicts with other boat traffic. Some users choose quieter water sites such as the Delta Meadows during the summer period.

### ***Preferred Waterway Use***

Preferred areas include the Delta Meadows vicinity, the lower Consumnes and Mokelumne Rivers, Snodgrass and Potato Sloughs, and Railroad Cut. Paddleboat users may frequent some of the more traveled waters during the fall through spring seasons.

## **PERSONAL WATERCRAFT**

### ***Background***

This user group was the most difficult to contact due to the dispersed and non-organized nature of personal watercraft (PWC) use. Despite the fact that PWC racing clubs exist in Northern California, there are apparently no clubs presently established in the Delta vicinity. Clubs that have used the Delta in the past have moved to inland lakes because of increased conflicts with other boating uses.

Field observations, PWC industry representatives, and inferential comments from other boaters suggest that most of the PWC users in the Delta are a relatively younger group of freelance day-users or else boaters who troll PWC crafts along on their powerboating excursions. Other comments and observations suggest that a minority of undisciplined and unruly PWC operators set the tone for PWC as a sport by creating a very negative impression. Considering the unfavorable comments directed at PWC users during the workshops for other focus user groups, the perception of poor operating habits practiced by PWC users is widespread. From their perspective, PWC users contacted were concerned about increasing restrictions imposed on their sport, especially those related to reduced access to specific areas and reduced speed limits. In addition, pending regulations pertaining to more stringent fuel restrictions were mentioned as important to watch, since they could affect future PWC usage in the Delta. Despite these potential future restrictions, there has been a steady growth of PWC use and ownership in recent years. Those interviewed emphasized educational programs – typically sponsored by the Coast Guard and PWC manufacturers – as an important variable related to the sport's future in the Delta.

The future for the PWC as a viable recreational alternative in California is very uncertain at this time. Because of the environmental risks/liabilities as well as accident risks associated with PWC usage, many water recreational areas are either imposing greater restrictions upon their use or banning their use entirely. Although it failed to pass the Assembly vote, AB 759 is an example of the rising sentiment against unregulated use of the PWC. AB 759 would allow local governments to ban personal watercraft, permitting any city or county to adopt an ordinance to forbid the use of personal watercraft in any navigable water that resides in its jurisdiction. Enforcement is another issue that arises with regard to PWC use in the Delta region. Assuming that one or even several of the local jurisdictions presiding over the Delta could pass such an ordinance, the enforcement of such an ordinance could present significant logistical and staffing challenges for the various regulatory entities involved.

## GENERAL PUBLIC

### *Background*

The following comments were recorded during the public workshops that were held. Most of the participants in the public workshops were recreational enthusiasts of some type who did not belong to any specific interest group but used the Delta regularly. Workshop participants ranged from “backyard” boaters from Bethel Island to landowners in Walnut Grove to seasonal boater enthusiasts from Tracy. In general, public workshop participants were family or socially oriented. They participated in multiple water-related activities in the Delta including cruising, powerboating, fishing, water-skiing, and PWC use. They also tended to be day-users in the Delta.

### *Boating Attractors*

There appears to be a desire for quiet camping and day-use areas as expressed by families, contrasted with the desire of young adults for unfettered and unregulated boating-related venues for social activities. Participants identified natural areas, historic sites, water channels, and locations for special-event venues as the kind of Delta features that attract them to visit and use Delta waters.

### *Preferred Anchorages*

Over the years, many places have been recognized as favorable anchoring areas; places where boats are protected from wind and the wakes of passing boats. Low-tide accessible beaches and naturally vegetated areas are generally preferred. Most anchorage areas, whether officially designated or not, are either inundated islands formed by broken levees or waterways adjoined by undisturbed woodlands or marsh areas. In contrast, many of the Delta levees have been stripped of vegetation and are typically clad with rock slope protection. This often creates a relatively stark environment that is not conducive to anchoring out. Anchorage areas mentioned or otherwise identified are:

- Delta Meadows State Recreational Area
- Disappointment Slough
- Five Fingers
- Franks Tract
- Georgiana Slough

- Spud Island
- Horseshoe Bend
- Horseshoe Cove
- Lost Slough
- Mandeville Tip
- Mildred Island (inundated)
- Potato Slough
- Railroad Cut
- Snodgrass Slough
- Steamboat Slough
- Three River Reach
- Westgate Landing (facility)
- White Slough

### *Preferred Routes*

The routes and destination areas boaters take to travel or visit in the Delta are just as important as the anchorage areas. People choose routes, or more accurately, passageways, for their scenic quality as well as maneuverability, linkages, and destinations. The following lists boating routes:

- Connection Slough
- False River
- Fisherman’s Cut
- Middle River
- Miner Slough
- Mokelumne River
- New York Slough
- Old River
- Piper Slough
- Prospect Slough
- Sacramento River
- San Joaquin River/ Stockton Deep Water Channel
- Taylor Slough
- Three Mile Slough
- Georgiana Slough

### *Preferred Facilities*

Family boaters typically preferred day-use facilities and town docks. For the young at heart, the Delta is an attractive area for socializing with other boaters and cruising to areas of social activity hubs such as Lost Isle. Preferred marinas,

launch ramps, destinations, and dining establishments mentioned by workshop participants are:

Marinas

- Big Break Marina
- Herman and Helen’s
- Sugar Barge
- Tracy Oasis
- West Marina
- Wimpy’s Marina
- Tower Park
- Boathouse Marina

Launch ramps

- Discovery Park
- Miller Park
- Paradise Point

Destinations

- Walnut Grove Community Dock
- Westgate Landing
- Lost Isle
- Delta Meadows
- Yacht clubs

Dining

- Al’s Place
- Guisti’s Restaurant

**Facility Requirements**

The public at large specified the requirements of basic services for day-use, especially restrooms and destination areas. They are listed below:

- Restrooms
- Fuel
- Launch ramps
- Marinas
- Day-use facilities
- Beaches
- Public docks

**Daily, Seasonal, and Peak-Use**

Summer weekends, especially during holiday periods, generate the peak visitation for the public at large.

**Preferred Waterway Use**

Comments gathered during the public workshops regarding preferred waterway use were sorted by specific activity type. They have been cited in previous sections addressing those particular activities.

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**3.5 FACILITY NEEDS**

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Workshop participants were asked to comment about specific facility needs as related to their particular activity. Recreational boaters, regardless of user group, generally expressed a desire for low-intensity land-side attractions, such as public day-use facilities, courtesy docks, and restrooms. An important contrast was the consistent response from the different recreational groups to retain the Delta’s rural atmosphere. Facilities most typically considered inadequate include public restrooms, shoreline access points, overnight moorings, courtesy docks, and pump-out stations. The following is a description of workshop-derived input pertaining to facility needs.

**RESTROOMS**

Although somewhat limited to the small-boat category, the lack of restroom facilities was a consistent theme at each of the focused and public workshops. Many workshop participants suggested building “floating” restrooms along the primary boating corridors. These restrooms were conceptually described as being simple structures “built to be self-contained and supported on a floating dock with tie-ups.” Floating restrooms were also of interest to the non-motorized boating user groups. In addition to floating restrooms, participants expressed the need for clean and modern land-side restrooms.

**BOAT ACCESSIBLE DAY-USE AREAS**

Participants conveyed a need for more family-oriented day-use areas where children and adults can casually break from their boating activities. This need for family-oriented day-use areas was corroborated during the consultant’s field excursions in the Delta with the observations of improvised private day-use areas and illegal makeshift docks. An often-mentioned example of

the desired boat-in day-use type of facility is Westgate Landing. Interestingly, a Westgate Landing type facility was, by and large, the most articulated facility need as conveyed by the broadest range of boater types. This ideal boat-in type facility should include permanent clean restrooms, showers, a grass-covered open area, picnic and camping facilities, launch ramps, parking, and secure day-use and overnight boat moorage (either buoys or courtesy docks).

### **PUBLIC BEACHES**

Also important, as conveyed by a majority of participants, is the need for public beach areas strategically located adjoining the heavily used channels and sloughs. The landowners who attended the workshops echoed this need. Landowners stated that boater trespassing activities – especially during the peak summer season – are a serious problem for them. In addition to the issue of trespassing, landowners were concerned about associated liability issues. The underlying problem is that attractive shoreline and beach areas will continue to draw those determined to use them. Without adequate public beach-type facilities, the trespassing on private lands will continue.

### **OVERNIGHT MOORING**

Participants expressed a need for publicly maintained buoy fields in many of the unofficial anchorage areas. Some anchorage waterways, such as Delta Meadows, were reported as being cluttered with non-permitted buoys and floating docks that detract from the scenic quality.

### **TOWN-SITE DOCKS**

Another important facility need identified involved improved accessibility to Delta communities. Specifically, participants expressed a desire for “courtesy-type docks” that would provide access to town sites and the visitor services available in the towns. Given the dispersed nature of the Delta, access to town-site services is viewed as a benefit to the boating community by increasing the diversity and quantity of destinations. It can be seen as advantageous to the Delta communities in need of greater tourism-based revenue. Law enforcement

participants suggested that town-site docks would likely be attractive to the family-oriented boaters rather than the party-oriented “rowdy” user groups. The courtesy dock access at Walnut Grove was cited as a good example of this type of facility. Local resident participants suggested that adding promenade features along town-site waterfront areas would enhance the facility’s attractiveness.

### **PUBLIC NON-MOTORIZED BOATING ACCESS**

Participants were interested in creating more water access facilities for non-motorized sports, such as shoreline fishing, windsurfing, and paddle sports. As conceptualized at the workshops, these could be minimal improvement facilities, including public access features, restrooms, parking, trash facilities, and picnic areas. One significant pressing concern with regards to these small facilities is a potential lack of security, especially in the parking areas. The following range of boating-access facilities were identified:

- Shoreline fishing access - either fishing platforms or floats from the levees
- River access - beach launch sites, outdoor showers, emergency phones
- Car-top launch sites - car-top launch, secure storage areas

### **PUMP-OUT STATIONS**

Owners of cabin cruisers and houseboats expressed a strong need for more pump-out stations and reduced prices for pump-out services. A little over half of the marinas in the Delta have pump-out facilities. Although there is an existing grant program available from DBW that allows marinas to build new pump-outs, the cost of operating and maintaining them is very high. This apparently has discouraged marina owners from taking advantage of the available grant funds. Limited availability contributes to higher prices for users. Yacht club members indicated that pump-outs cost up to \$18 a day. They cited illegal dumping as a consequence of too few and high-priced pump-out services.

### LAUNCH RAMPS

It is evident from the workshop comments that there is a lack of launch ramps throughout the Delta, especially in the middle areas of the Delta, the Central and West Zones, where the majority of boaters recreate. Launch ramps are not automatically a part of the private marina-offered facilities and services. Fees charged are typically nominal and costs for upkeep significant. As a rule, private operators only provide launch ramps as a courtesy feature.

### FUEL

As with launch ramps, participants expressed the need for more refueling locations throughout the Delta. These locations include the Walnut Grove area (Central Zone), and near the convergence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers (West Zone).

### PUBLIC FACILITIES

Workshop participants pointed out that many of the State and county public facilities throughout the Delta appear to be abandoned or in disrepair. These observations were subsequently confirmed during the consultant's field reconnaissance activities. Proposition 13 in 1978 initiated an ongoing trend of a diminishing revenue base for the local jurisdictions. In response, there has been a steady reduction in funding for services, such as parks, libraries, and museums. Of all park categories, water-oriented parks and related public facilities seem to have been the hardest hit, perhaps because they have been viewed as most expendable. Consequently, perhaps as much as half of the public facilities in the Delta are in disrepair and not maintained at an acceptable level. In interviews with both county and city park and recreation agencies, representatives identified the lack of adequate facility and maintenance funding as the major impediment to bringing public facilities up to par. Representative examples of these public facilities include:

- Clarksburg Fishing Access (Yolo County)
- Miller Park (Sacramento County)
- Garcia Bend Park (Sacramento County)
- Tiscornia Park (Sacramento County)

### FUNDING FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

Safety and law enforcement representatives who attended workshops conveyed that fire and safety resources are spread thin across the five jurisdictional counties. Thus, an increase in funding is important. They are especially constrained by limited numbers of personnel.

### 3.6 IDENTIFIED IMPEDIMENTS AND CONCERNS

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A key question asked at the special-focus and public workshops addressed boaters' opinions and perceptions about existing impediments to and problems associated with recreational boating in the Delta. This section provides a summary of workshop comments regarding perceived constraints and impediments.

#### LACK OF LAND-SIDE STOPPING POINTS

Workshop participants mentioned the lack of stopping points as a source of inconvenience and one of the main limitations to boating. The need for land-side recreation points is particularly important with small boats and family boat outings. This latent demand for landing sites is evident in the many makeshift docks, picnic benches, and hideouts built on islands and shore frontage, observable along the sloughs and channels. Property owners confirmed that boaters do not respect private property areas and tend to use private areas as public areas. They also insist that more public alternatives are needed.

#### AQUATIC VEGETATION - WEEDS

Exotic aquatic vegetation was identified as a significant problem for boating in the Delta. The waterweed *Egeria densa* was cited as particularly problematic. *Egeria* has been a pronounced problem since the early 1990's, spreading over the Central and West Zones, affecting Franks Tract, Piper Slough, and Sand Mound Slough. Aquatic vegetation binds propellers, ties up boats, shuts off engine intakes, accentuates the process of siltation of the waterway, and is very dangerous for swimming. It has been a major concern for the boating community of Bethel Island, which fronts onto Franks Tract. In combination with obstructions in Franks Tract, waterweed has

exacerbated navigational problems to such an extent that there has been a 50% drop in marina businesses in the community. In addition, a major sailing regatta that had occurred there annually was cancelled.

### **OBSTRUCTIONS IN THE WATERWAY**

Water obstructions were repeatedly cited as a significant problem for boaters using Delta waters. Many of the workshop participants focused on the West Zone, expressing the desire to see the Franks Tract area cleared of obstructions. The Tract is presently full of water hazards – remnants of the time when it was a levee-protected island. Since the island became inundated, boaters have used the area much like an inland lake, with the help of a navigational obstruction chart that enable boaters to navigate through the water hazards.

In other parts of the Delta, participants claim that the presence of snags, debris, and floating logs in the river and sloughs is very dangerous to boaters. Participants indicated that there should be a way to remove these hazards, or at least mark them so that they can be seen. One participant noted, “There is one on the Sacramento River between Steamboat Slough and Locke that has been there for three years. It sticks out about one or two feet and could sink any boat that hits it.”

Law enforcement agencies claim that they lack the resources and equipment to remove the types of debris that typically impede boating on the Delta’s waterways. For example, they have the capability to tow away mobile objects such as submerged boats, but lack the means to remove stationary obstacles such as piers, pylons or old docks. Until 20 years ago, the Army Corps of Engineers was the agency responsible for keeping the waterways clear. The Corps no longer provides that service. The responsibility has fallen to the local county sheriffs’ departments, which lack both the manpower and proper equipment to adequately provide obstruction removal services.

### **WATER GATES**

Many workshop participants said they would like to see water gates such as the Delta Cross Channel removed or left open all year round. The Delta Cross Channel, located in Walnut Grove, is

viewed as critical to recreational boaters in the Delta. It is a primary connection route between the Sacramento River and the Mokelumne River system. This linkage provides direct access to some of the most popular areas in the Delta, such as Snodgrass Slough and Delta Meadows. If boaters are unable to take the Cross Channel route to the Mokelumne River, they are forced to take lengthy alternative routes. They must either stay on the Sacramento River until the convergence point near Brannan Island, where conditions are typically windy and turbulent, or negotiate the Georgiana Slough. The latter is somewhat more direct but has a number of reduced speed (5mph) zones. Even when the gates are opened, it can be dangerous for boats to navigate, especially for large boats and during high tide conditions.

Another navigational obstacle cited is the Stone Locks gate in West Sacramento, at the north connection point between the Sacramento River and the Sacramento Deep Water Channel. The Stone Lock has been closed since 1991 to ensure exclusive use of the channel by commercial vessels traveling to and from the Port of Sacramento. Some of the workshop participants suggested opening the gate locks since there are fewer vessels using the channel now than in the past. This site could potentially increase the recreational opportunities between the Sacramento area and the lower Delta.

### **SILTING**

A significant problem identified through the workshop process involves silting and siltation management. Workshop input suggests that silting is a major problem in the Delta, not only from the standpoint of boating-related impacts, but also as it affects flood protection and the safety of properties, the channels, and sloughs. Silt can accumulate from three to eight feet in any given year at marina facilities along the Sacramento River. There are stretches along the Mokelumne River that at one time were 20 feet deep. They are now reduced to a depth of six to eight feet. Some facilities such as Merritt’s Landing have been abandoned due to silting.

Silting not only creates access problems for boats, but also raises the water level in relation to the adjoining levee structures. In turn, this change can

jeopardize the integrity of the levee system because of increased fetch and other erosion forces. Procedures and regulations for the dredging of silt materials are also problematic. Directed by relatively stringent regulations and lengthy permit requirements, implementing silt removal is an involved process that appears to be weighted against marina owners. Marina operators stated that dredging-related regulations should be streamlined to provide marina owners more flexibility in the removal of silt materials.

### **BEACH MAINTENANCE**

Workshop participants cited that there were an insufficient number of Delta beaches. The beaches that do exist are either privately owned or poorly maintained. Although beaches are apparently in high demand, they are very difficult to create and maintain. The Delta does not naturally produce beach-type conditions. Sandy beaches are artificial elements within the depositional and erosive processes that occur in an alluvial plain, such as the Delta. Constructed beaches tend to quickly erode away as a result of the fluctuation of tide, seasonal floodwaters, and wave action from wind and boats. Siltation processes impact beach sites by inundating sandy areas, leaving much finer deposits of silt. Silt material typically does not make good beaches. Most of the natural beaches in the Delta tend to be silted. Finally, public swimming beaches are very often burdened with restrictive operating guidelines related to accessibility standards, lifeguard availability, and required improvements for parking and restrooms.

### **USER GROUP CONFLICTS**

Conflicts with other recreational boaters were repeatedly cited as a significant problem for boating in the Delta. Interestingly, the different boating groups typically mentioned a specific user group (other than themselves) that was the source of conflicts for their particular activity. Assuming that conflicting activities are occurring in the same general location, the degree of incompatibility between the user groups generally corresponds with the extent of difference in the nature of the activities. Thus, greater conflicts arise between active “noisy” water sports, such as PWC use, and more quiet activities such as fishing. Feedback

from the different user groups revealed less obvious conflicts that involve more related activity types, such as water-skiers and wake-boarders. Both of these groups may seek similar conditions for their activity; i.e., they both prefer flat and calm water conditions. Wake-boarders, however, intentionally produce wakes for their activity. Water-skiers strive for calm waters, resulting in inherent conflicts when both groups use the same general location.

Many of the conflicts identified in the workshops were found to be less problematic due to adjustments made deliberately or inadvertently by the different types of users. For example, conflicts are reduced if incompatible uses do not occur in the same vicinity and at the same time. This sorting of different uses can be augmented by user preferences for specific weather, season, or time of day options. Weather, especially wind conditions, defines the use in many cases. In windless conditions when the waters are calm, general sailing type activities, especially windsurfing, are absent. When the strong afternoon winds blow, especially in the main Sacramento and San Joaquin River channel vicinity, other boaters typically give way to sail sport enthusiasts. Weather-based, seasonal preferences help reduce potential conflicts. The general public is most likely to visit the Delta during the peak summer season and not remain for the off-season. Time of day preferences help sort disparate uses. Fishing and hunting generally occur in the early morning hours, while the majority of other water recreational activities typically occur in the late morning to afternoon period. Paddle sport enthusiasts tend to stay away from the water during the prime boating season, while competition water-skiers seek out dedicated or isolated waterways for their training and activities.

Other groups cited as especially problematic include the tournament anglers and the PWC users. Excessive speeds and unpredictable boating behavior characterize both groups. In all cases, alcohol consumption combined with boat speed was mentioned as a contributing factor in boating accidents.

## **WATER QUALITY**

Water quality was identified as an important issue at all of the workshop sessions. It was unanimously cited by all of the user groups. Similar to the statewide survey, opinions about the primary problems with the water varied considerably. Some people stated that the Delta waters are unhealthy and chose to avoid any body contact with the water, especially in the slow-moving sloughs. Fishing group participants discussed the risks associated with toxicity levels in the fish, which is a very serious concern, with both ecosystem and human health implications. A suggested cause of water quality degradation is the agricultural runoff from pesticides, fertilizers, and animal waste. Finally, some workshop participants attributed the perception of general unhealthy water conditions to the high silt and peat substrate of the Delta region.

Illegal dumping activities were mentioned at the workshops as contributing to the perception of poor water quality. Boaters and law enforcement agencies confirmed that illegal dumping has been observed and attributed the problem, in part, to the high cost of waste pump-out and the unavailability of facilities. Dumping was especially harmful in the slow-moving waterways, such as the Delta Meadows. Participants related that secondary infections from previous injuries have resulted from physical contact with the water. These comments were selectively provided by boaters who had spent long periods of time in the Delta waterways, e.g., families living on houseboats. The problem is further compounded by the ambiguity of enforcement jurisdictional authority. The question was asked, “Whose responsibility is it to enforce the control of unlawful dumping?”

Finally, the management of water usage in the Delta and the related pumping of water for agricultural and urban uses were mentioned as potentially significant issues for Delta boating. Many workshop participants expressed the opinion that pumping has already moved the brackish water threshold inland. They conveyed a concern about potentially insufficient water quantities to support boat access and use of the Delta’s waterways. A conclusion drawn from these comments suggest that these issues raised or perceived issues should be tracked.

## **REGULATIONS/ENFORCEMENT**

Regulations and law enforcement issues varied considerably. Generally, workshop participants cautioned against increasing boating regulations in the Delta. A fairly consistent message was that there should be increased enforcement of the regulations already in place, without imposing additional restrictions.

Five mph speed zones were a repeated topic of discussion. Nearly all those involved in motorized boating mentioned difficulty traversing the Delta waterways because of extensive restricted speed zone areas. The primary complaint about the five mph zones is that they accumulatively result in too much time required to travel from one area of the Delta to another. Many participants indicated that an increase in the number of restricted speed zones could adversely impact the popularity of boating in the Delta.

In contrast, paddle sports enthusiasts preferred more safe areas (reduced speed zones) for their non-motorized boating recreation. Participants claimed that five mph speed zones are poorly marked, and that “five mph” does not necessarily mean “no wake”. One recommendation was to change the signs to read “no wake” zone.

A vocal minority of participants felt that enforcement is uneven throughout the Delta waterways because of the number of different enforcement jurisdictions. Participants suggested that a big problem relating to the existing regulations is how they were being interpreted and enforced, not the regulations themselves. They felt regulations were being unequally enforced by the different county jurisdictions.

During the regulations and enforcement-focused workshop, participants stressed that field officers from all jurisdictions should communicate regularly for the purpose of ensuring consistent enforcement practices. These enforcement representatives did confirm that manpower to oversee the Delta is limited. Limited manpower results in reduced enforcement capability. In fact, the number of officers has been reduced to less than half of the number considered adequate in some counties. Officers cited the historic image of the Delta, “an off-the-beaten-track setting,” as another source of enforcement problems. This

image is further reinforced by some particular Delta destinations, such as Lost Isle, an outdoor bar and party island. Officers indicated that intoxicated boaters coming from Lost Isle have been a major source of boating accidents in the Delta.

Workshop participants conveyed that boater education is an important counterpart to the issue of safety enforcement in the Delta. According to some participants, the Delta seems to be attracting more young and inexperienced boaters. Impressing upon these new boaters the rules regarding proper boating conduct is critical. However, the majority of participants reacted negatively to the idea of a boat operator license. Education was promoted in favor of licensing, with some participants suggesting that voluntary education and certification be tied to a reduction in boating insurance costs.

Delta business owners attribute the general decline of business in the area to the lack of positive promotion, general negative news about the Delta, and an increased regulatory climate. As an example, they cited the decision by the State Department of Tourism to stop producing Delta promotional commercials. Workshop participants conveyed that the only publicity the Delta typically receives is negative newscasts about boating accidents and arrests. Other participants cited the state's elevated fuel tax, restrictions regarding two-stroke engines, and MTBE fuel as important factors adversely impacting boaters as a whole in California.

Possibly revealing a deficit of day-use and overnight facilities in the Delta, workshop participants complained that there are constant occurrences of private property infringement and presumably illegal squatting activities occurring in the Delta. Boaters frequently anchor at low-tide beaches on private property, or tie up to private docks. Private property owners claim that signage does not deter boaters. In addition, there is a large presence of makeshift docks and hideaways along many of the shores. This information suggests that there is a demand for shore-edge type access points. A reasonable assumption may be that an increase in legal options for the day-use type facilities could effectively decrease the illegal and impromptu use of private properties.

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### 3.7 RECREATION VISION CONCEPTS AND “DREAM” IDEAS

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#### WATER QUALITY AND HABITAT RESTORATION

Above all else, workshop and survey participants felt it was most important to improve water quality and restore natural values in order to improve the boating environment of the Delta. Boaters are primarily interested in the boating experience and the assortment of water-related activities available in the Delta, such as water sports, swimming, beach sunbathing, fishing, wildlife observing, and harvesting local wild fruits. Consequently, water quality is a fundamental requisite to the majority of activities conducted. In addition, boaters are drawn to the Delta for its unique landscape of waterways and natural environment. Areas with natural riparian vegetation such as tidal marshes, tule islands, and riparian woodlands are the most sought after as destinations and anchorage areas, as well as hand-powered boat routes and fishing spots.

#### CONNECTING WATER AND LAND-SIDE RECREATION

In addition to improving the boating experience, a major dream improvement focused on the recreational connection between the boater waterside experiences and the land-side diversity of resources.

Fulfilling this dream will involve creating a greater abundance of boat-accessible destinations. It will involve providing access to existing unused or underused destinations such as public parks, historic districts, cultural sites, waterfront towns, and other land-side attractions, including wildlife-viewing areas with interpretive services, nature trails, and bike trails. In order to accomplish this linkage with the abundant land-side Delta resources, a more comprehensive process will be required that will involve public involvement. The outcome of this process will be a development and maintenance strategy for enhancing the waterside/land-side interface with regard to recreational opportunities. This strategic plan should include collateral marketing and information components in order to facilitate and ensure its implementation.

**DELTA-WIDE INFORMATION SERVICES**

While information services were not a typical focus of discussion, the topic nonetheless was mentioned as a desired augmentation to the future of the Delta. For example, visitor centers or other interpretive facilities at key locations or portal entryways to the Delta region were repeatedly suggested. Under the “dream” title, a Delta boating, education, and information center was discussed. Perhaps in conjunction with interpretive facilities, such as the proposed Big Break Science Center, a boating center could provide training and education for boaters, a center for boat tours, and information about the Delta’s ecosystem, wildlife, history, and role in California’s water-dependent economy.

**DESIGNATED USE AREAS**

Because of the conflicting uses of the waterways, many workshop participants suggested creating designated use areas. For example, the PWC users recommended creating designated high-speed water vehicle use areas. Water-skiers suggested creating a water-ski park with spectator areas (bleachers) – perhaps in an inundated island. Paddle sport enthusiasts would like to set aside Little Franks Tract as a non-motorized boating zone with support facilities.

**3.8 CONCEPTUAL SKETCHES FOR BOATING RELATED IMPROVEMENTS**

The following schematic designs were developed from concepts generated through the workshop outreach effort and statewide survey input. They were prepared by the consultant to illustrate facilities suggested by the workshop participants. Participants were asked what facilities would make a better boating environment in the Delta and the following sketches are approximate illustrations of the ideas they put forth. These schematic designs range in level of development, proximity to population centers, and accommodations to recreational activity types.

**GATEWAY/TRANSIT NODE**

*Description*

**Figure 3-1, Gateway and Transit Node Concept** addresses the need expressed for a gateway feature to the Delta. This “gateway” feature is envisioned as multifunctional and would serve as a visitor’s center, information center, tourist destination, and transportation hub for the Delta. In the schematic developed, an 11+-acre site would connect guests to the Delta through a multi-modal transportation node, a special events plaza, and an education/interpretive center along with a marina, picnic areas, and a community dock. This site would serve as a “gateway to the Delta” for tourists by the area’s water featuring agricultural history and wildlife in an interpretive center, which could also offer hands-on education of water safety and boating skills. The interpretive center would be housed in a multi-use facility along with a marina, restaurants, shops, and office space. In addition, the special events plaza would showcase the area’s agriculture and community spirit in the form of farmers’ markets, festivals, carnivals, and concerts. In order to accommodate the large number of people passing through the area, this site would host land and water transportation, where people could come in by car, bus, train, or light rail and experience the water by private boats, ferries, or other commercial outfits. This facility should be located within existing population centers, on the outskirts of the Delta, near major land and water thoroughfares. At least three “gateways” should be considered and planned for the Delta.

*Suggested Features*

- Multi-use facility
- Marine-related commercial
- Delta interpretive center
- Restaurants/shops
- Market/special event plaza
- Seasonal produce
- Flea markets
- Special events
- Multi-modal transit node including train or light rail stop, if possible
- Public parking

- Ferry stop
- Fishing pier
- Courtesy dock
- Picnic/day-use facility

## COMMUNITY DOCK

### *Description*

The need for transient docks located in conjunction with land-side facilities, towns, and attractions in the Delta was a theme repeatedly expressed at several of the workshops. **Figure 3-2, Community Dock Concept** illustrates the idea of a linkage between waterways and the adjoining towns and facilities. The community dock concept is envisioned as primarily serving as a functional link between recreational boaters and the existing Delta towns and their associated services. The dock would provide a local destination for boaters looking to dock, fish, shop, get information, meet friends, or just get out of their boat to stretch their legs. An optimum site for the community dock would be adjacent to an existing commercial area that offers multiple services. The illustrated one-acre facility would have ample docking space that would be ADA-compliant. Besides serving day-use courtesy purposes, the dock could also accommodate overnight docking and ferry transit.

### *Suggested Features*

- 250' guest dock
- 1 ADA marina ramp or lift
- 1 shade structure and deck
- 1 welcome sign
- 1 information panel
- 1 interpretive panel
- 3 benches
- 1 unisex restroom
- 12 parking spaces
- 40' fishing pier

## CAMPGROUND AND DAY-USE

### *Description*

Another repeated theme at the workshops was the need for more campground and day-use options located throughout the Delta. This suggested

campground and day-use facility, as illustrated in **Figure 3-3, Campground and Day-Use Concept**, would be a large (25+ acre) multi-purpose recreational area with three camping options, a launch ramp, picnic areas, fishing piers, and a beach. The campground would accommodate recreational vehicles on one side, tents on another, and berths on the water side for overnight boat docking in combination with tent sites. Both the RV and tent campgrounds would have areas for group camps as well as individual campsites. Campsites would be spaced no more than ten per acre, less for RVs, and would be equipped with restrooms, showers, and a sanitation station. A range of amenities and activities could occur here, including boat launching, fishing, picnicking, and beach use. Transient docks and berths would enable day-use boaters' access to the facility.

### *Suggested Features*

- 48 RV campsites
- 48 tent campsites
- 1 boat launch
- 40 trailer parking spaces
- 24 berths
- 20 picnic sites
- 1 beach
- 4 fishing piers
- 20 car parking spaces
- ¼ acre lawn
- 1 playground
- 4 shower/restroom buildings
- 1 entry station

## BEACH/DAY-USE

### *Description*

More beach access was a frequently cited need – especially by small-boat owners. Specialized users such as water-skiers stated a preference for more beach-type sites and facilities. This beach use area, as illustrated in **Figure 3-4, Beach/Day-Use Concept** is intended to meet the needs of those looking for a developed beach site or a good fishing spot. The site could serve land-based recreational enthusiasts as well as boaters. Conceptually shown are a wide beach, a guest dock, and a fishing pier equipped with a fish-

cleaning station. Optimally, the small five-acre facility would be developed where a graded bench in the levee could support a “naturally” configured beach.

***Suggested Features***

- 36 parking spaces
- 54 picnic tables
- 100’ guest dock
- Cantilevered fishing pier
- Fish cleaning facility
- 4 unisex restrooms
- Beach

**DAY-USE AT BARRIER SITE**

***Description***

Discussion at the workshops often addressed CALFED Bay-Delta related projects, and one of the important proposed facilities frequently mentioned is the barrier structure. Sited near the water intake structures, barrier facilities are structures intended to restrict water flows to and from certain parts of the Delta. These structures are problematic for boating because they impede easy access for watercraft and typically involve lock-type features and mechanical devices for moving vessels from one side of the barrier to the other. This site is viewed as an optimum place for recreational facilities in the Delta. Since recreation-related mitigation will be required as a result of their development, boats will be waylaid there for periods of time, and auxiliary support facilities such as parking and restrooms would have to be built and maintained for lock system personnel even without recreation mitigation. **Figure 3-5, Day-Use at Barrier Site Concept**, illustrates an idea for adding a recreational component to barrier sites. Simple additions to the facility could create an attractive boating destination, water-access point, and fishing spot. A facility of this type could be used for launching and docking, fishing, and picnicking. The five-acre site could provide parking for autos, RVs, and boat trailers. There could also be ADA-accessible parking near accessible fishing piers. Docking and launching could take place on the lower side of the barrier while fishing piers could be placed on upper and/or lower sides of the barrier. Restrooms

and fish-cleaning facilities could also be provided at this site.

***Suggested Features***

- 6 fishing piers (1 ADA accessible)
- 2 launch ramps
- 24 trailer spaces (4 ADA accessible)
- 24 car spaces
- 7 picnic tables w/ramadas
- 1 guest dock
- 1 fish cleaning facility
- 2 unisex restrooms

**BOAT-IN CAMPGROUND AND DAY-USE**

***Description***

For a more remote adventure, as illustrated in **Figure 3-6, Boat-In Campground and Day-Use Concept**, a 15-acre boat-in campground and day-use area would serve as a prime boating destination and overnight camp spot. Although still connected to land for maintenance purposes, this facility is accessible to the public by boats only and should be located along traveled waterways. The combined use of camping and day-use would generate enough usage to justify such a facility. For day-users, it provides a convenient place to get off the boat, use the restroom, and let the kids run around. For overnights, it offers an alternative to non-permitted buoys or illegal development and camping on private property. Boaters have the option of docking their boats in the slips or at camp portages with adjacent tent sites. They also have the option of sleeping on their boats or at the tent sites. In any case, the luxury of developed and maintained restrooms/showers and grass-covered space in the heart of the Delta would be a big draw for boaters.

***Suggested Features***

- 10 boat camp portages
- 28 day-use docking/overnight slips
- 48 tent campsites
- Picnic tables
- 2 restroom/shower buildings
- Turf

- Camp host site

### BOAT-IN BEACH

#### *Description*

The boat-in beach will fill the demand for more beaches in the Delta, especially for boaters and water-skiers. **Figure 3-7, Boat-in Beach Concept**, illustrates a concept for this facility. A boat-in beach can be built with minimal infrastructure components and, as the illustration shows, maintained with the use of vault toilet restrooms, which do not use potable water and only need to be serviced every 10,000 uses. The restrooms would need to be sited within 50’ of a service road for maintenance. The three-acre site could also contain boat docking and a picnic area with naturally occurring Bermuda grass, picnic tables, and shade ramadas.

#### *Suggested Features*

- 150’ guest dock
- 4 unisex restrooms
- 8 ramadas and picnic tables
- Beach
- Turf

### NON-MOTORIZED-BOATING CAMPGROUND AND ACCESS

#### *Description*

**Figure 3-8, Non-motorized-Boating Campground Concept**, shows a concept for a low-profile camping site for specialized Delta recreational enthusiasts. Without the sometimes conflicting features required for motorized boat uses, this ten-acre non-motorized boating facility would be designed primarily for windsurfers and secondarily for other water-oriented campers such as fishing parties. Although it could be sited in many different parts of the Delta, the concept shown was envisioned for windy locations such as along the most western reach of the Sacramento River. On the beach side there would be an open turf area for rigging, a launch, and a spectator stand as well as a wind shelter and fishing piers. Along the road there would be room for a pull off to drop gear before parking, as well as space for ADA parking. The camp-side would have campground amenities such as showers, a

playground area, fish-cleaning facilities, and an RV dumping station. Similar to the other conceptualized campground type facilities, all campsites would be laid out to allow for an open area between rows of campsites. The open area, or commons, could be used for sports, group events, or quiet activities.

#### *Suggested Features*

##### River side:

- Beach launch
- Spectator stand for 50 people
- 2 unisex restrooms
- 12 picnic tables
- 4 ADA parking spaces
- 3 fishing piers (1 ADA)

##### Levee side:

- 12 day-use and 12 overflow parking spaces
- 48 camp sites including 3 group areas
- 2 combination shower/restroom buildings
- Fish-cleaning facility
- Camp host facility

### RIVER ACCESS

#### *Description*

**Figure 3-9, River Access Concept**, illustrates a day-use type access point primarily intended for wind sport enthusiasts. Similar to the previous schematic design, the river access layout would be oriented to windsurfers and located in windy waterway locations. A crucial element to this type of facility would be providing enough space for windsurfers to set up their gear. A large open area of sand or turf is shown near the beach launching area and there is a parking and gear drop-off area. This site would have to be close to the launch area to make the loading/unloading process more manageable. Along with picnic areas, the two-acre facility would contain restrooms, showers, and a spectator area.

#### *Suggested Features*

- Beach launch
- Spectator stand for 50 people
- 24 parking spaces

- 12 picnic tables
- 2 unisex restrooms
- 2 outdoor showers

### HAND-POWERED BOAT ACCESS SITE

#### *Description*

As illustrated in **Figure 3-10, Hand-Powered Boat Access Site Concept**, this two-acre facility is intended to accommodate hand-powered boats such as canoes, kayaks, and aluminum fishing boats. The facility could be located along no-wake sloughs and naturally vegetative areas where paddling and fishing are possible. Similar to the boat-in campground concept, this facility could be built with minimal infrastructure requirements. If located in a no-wake zone, the addition of guest docking could create an attractive destination rest stop for boaters without compromising conditions for the non-motorized boat users.

#### *Suggested Features*

- Paddle boat launch
- Gravel parking area for 12 vehicles
- 1 unisex restroom
- 4 picnic tables
- 25' guest dock

### FISHING ACCESS

#### *Description*

**Figure 3-11, Fishing Access**, shows a conceptual image for a shore-use fishing/day-use site. This fishing access concept offers an alternative to shore fishing off the levee riprap edge. It is a minimal facility, two acres in size, and intended for a slightly widened levee area. It is assumed that with ample parking and designated fishing areas, as well as integrated ADA features, such a strategically located facility would be popular with shore fishermen. The addition of restrooms and ramadas with picnic tables would enhance comfort.

#### *Suggested Features*

- 1 ADA fishing pier
- 5 ramadas and picnic tables

- 1 unisex restroom

### BUOY FIELD

#### *Description*

**Figure 3-12, Buoy Field Concept**, depicts a concept for anchoring in the Delta. In areas where non-permitted buoys currently exist, a publicly operated buoy field facility could serve as a useful amenity to help restore and maintain the scenic quality of the waterway and to prevent accidents that may arise as a result of the makeshift nature of the improvised existing buoy fields. The floating buoys would likely need to be detachable during the wintertime and then reattached in the summer. To keep boats secured on some of the rapid-flowing or narrow channels of the Delta, boats would be tied to two buoys, one at each end, in the direction of water flow. As suggested in the diagram, in addition to the buoy field, this proposed facility would offer vault toilets on a floating platform with boat tie-ups. This three-acre buoy field layout would be ideal in some of the current anchorage areas, including the scenic sloughs and inundated islands.

#### *Suggested Features*

- 40 buoys (50' on center)
- 1 floating restroom w/ 100' dock

### FLOATING RESTROOMS

#### *Description*

In areas where no other support facilities exist, such as isolated sloughs or unpopulated waterways, the provision of restrooms, as illustrated in **Figure 3-13, Floating Restrooms**, would address what is a frequently cited deficiency in the Delta. A potential added benefit of restrooms would be the reduction of illegal dumping of wastes in the Delta waters. The placement of floating restrooms should take into consideration both motorized and non-motorized travel routes in the Delta.

The floating restroom illustrated in this study is a collaborative product between Transpac Marinas, which designs the floating platform, and Romtec, who manufactures the SST or “sweet-smelling toilet”.

*Suggested Features*

- 1 floating unisex restroom
- 1 floating dock

**3.9 SUMMARY**

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Information gathered through this outreach component of the study provides many additional insights that were impossible to obtain through the scripted survey instruments, which are the subject of **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 5**. Although some of the information recorded above may seem tangential to the primary theme of boating-related recreational needs, the comments and observations acquired through this process help complete the picture of the water recreational experience from the perspective of the principal recreational stakeholders. Also, when combined with the other owner and operator-derived information, a more complete understanding is achieved of the fundamental questions asked of those target audiences. Finally, the dream ideas developed through this process provide a foundation for future recreation master planning efforts for the Delta.

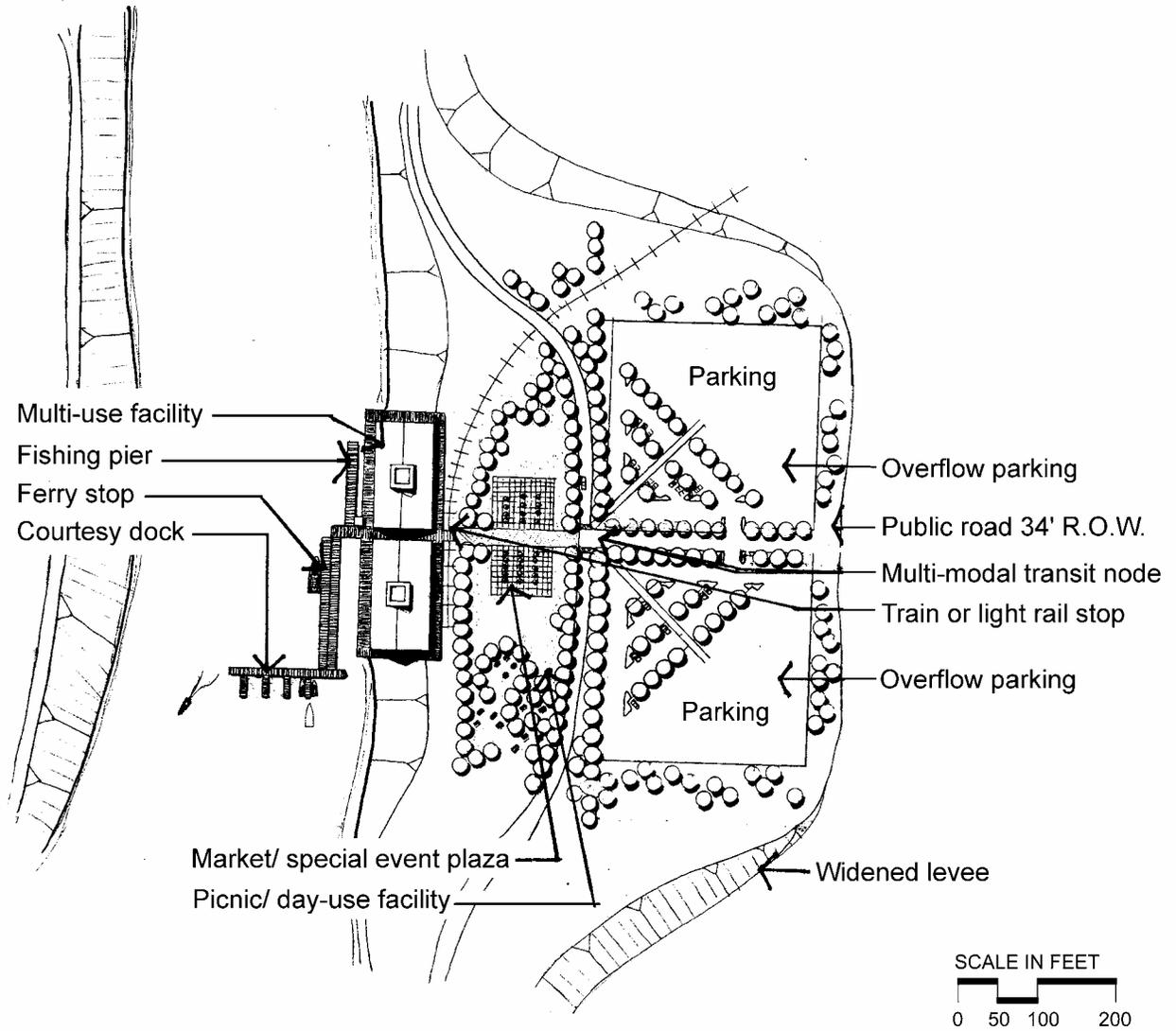


Figure 3-1 Gateway and Transit Node Concept

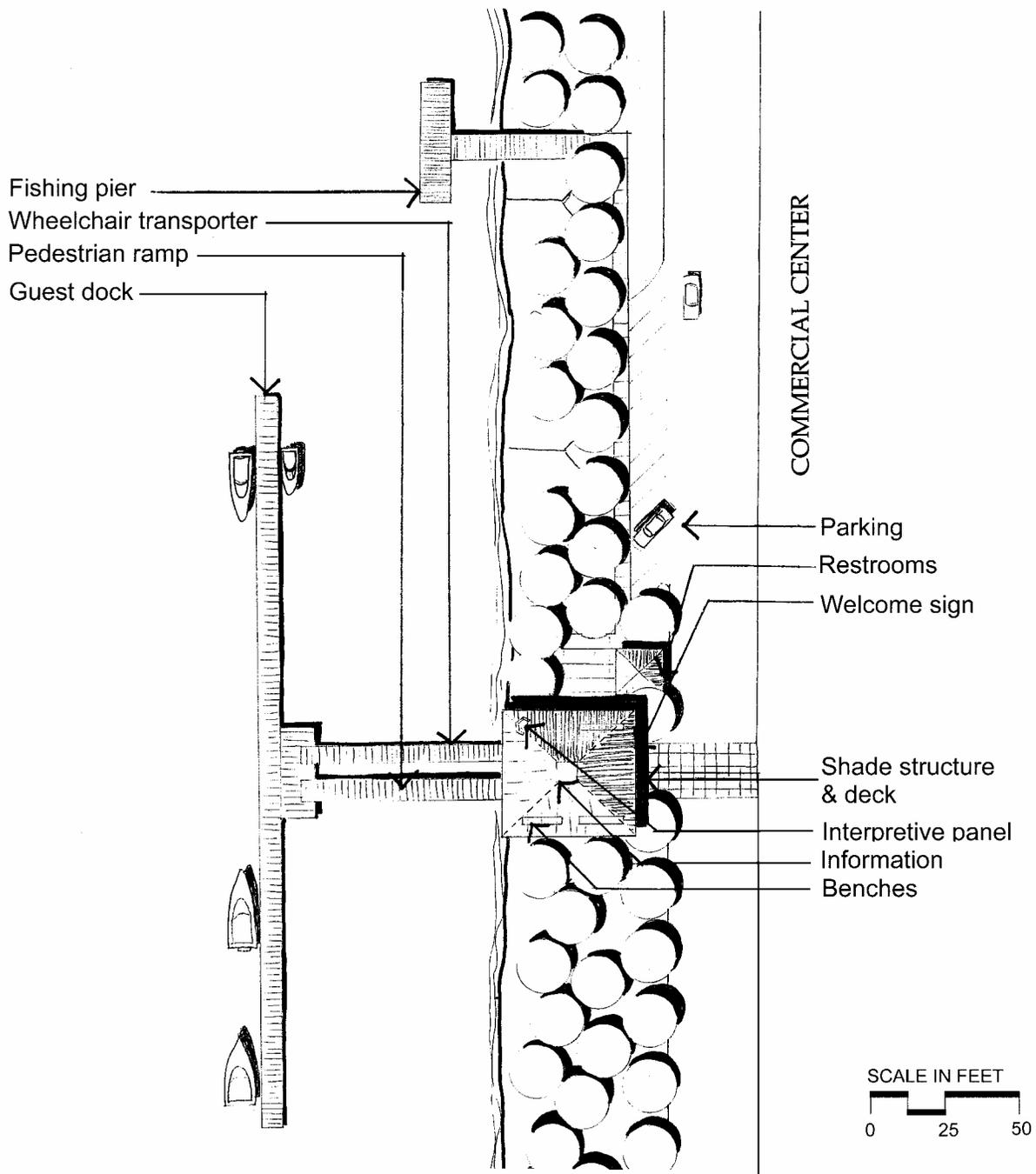


Figure 3-2 Community Dock Concept

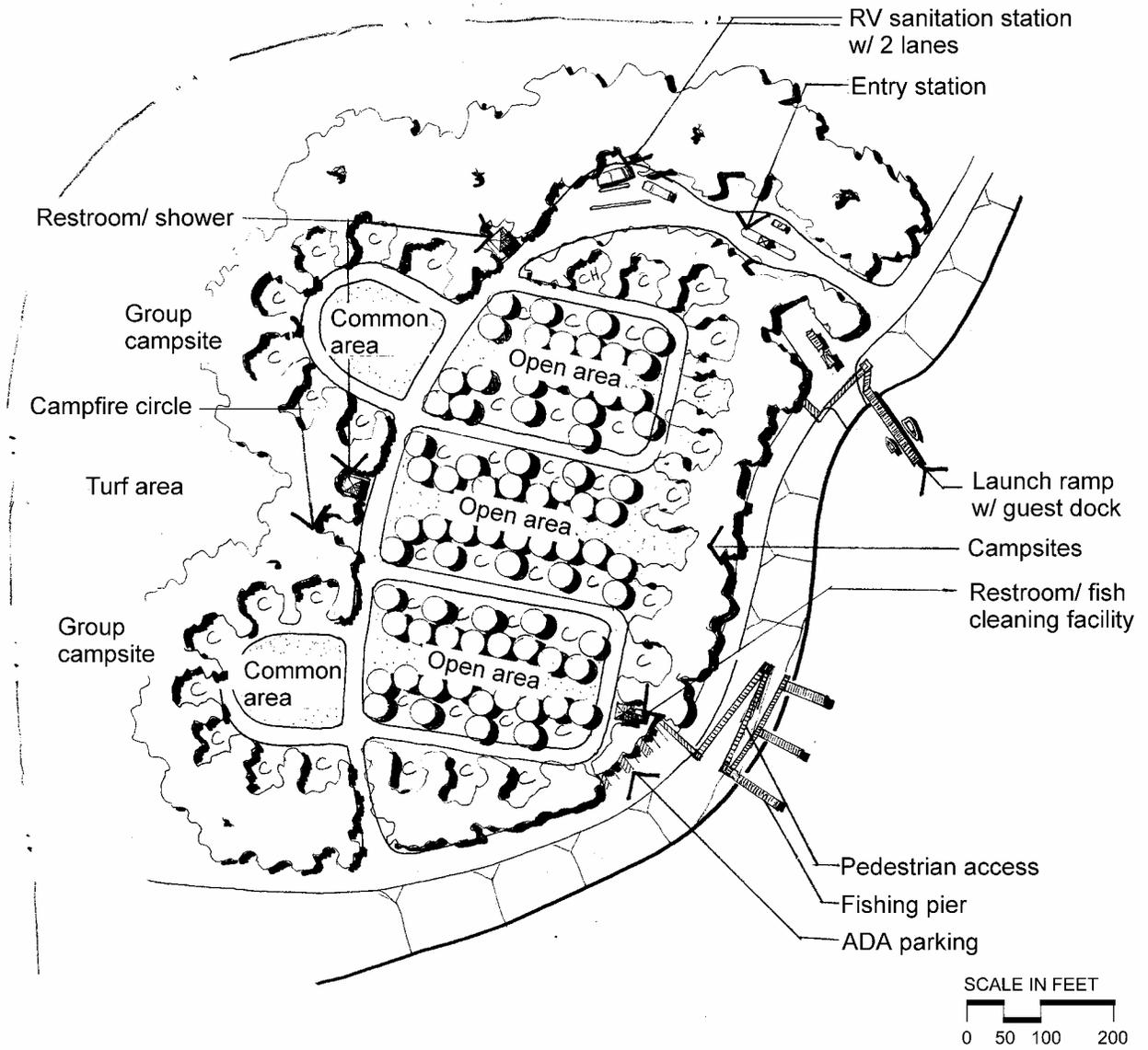


Figure 3-3 Campground and Day-Use Concept

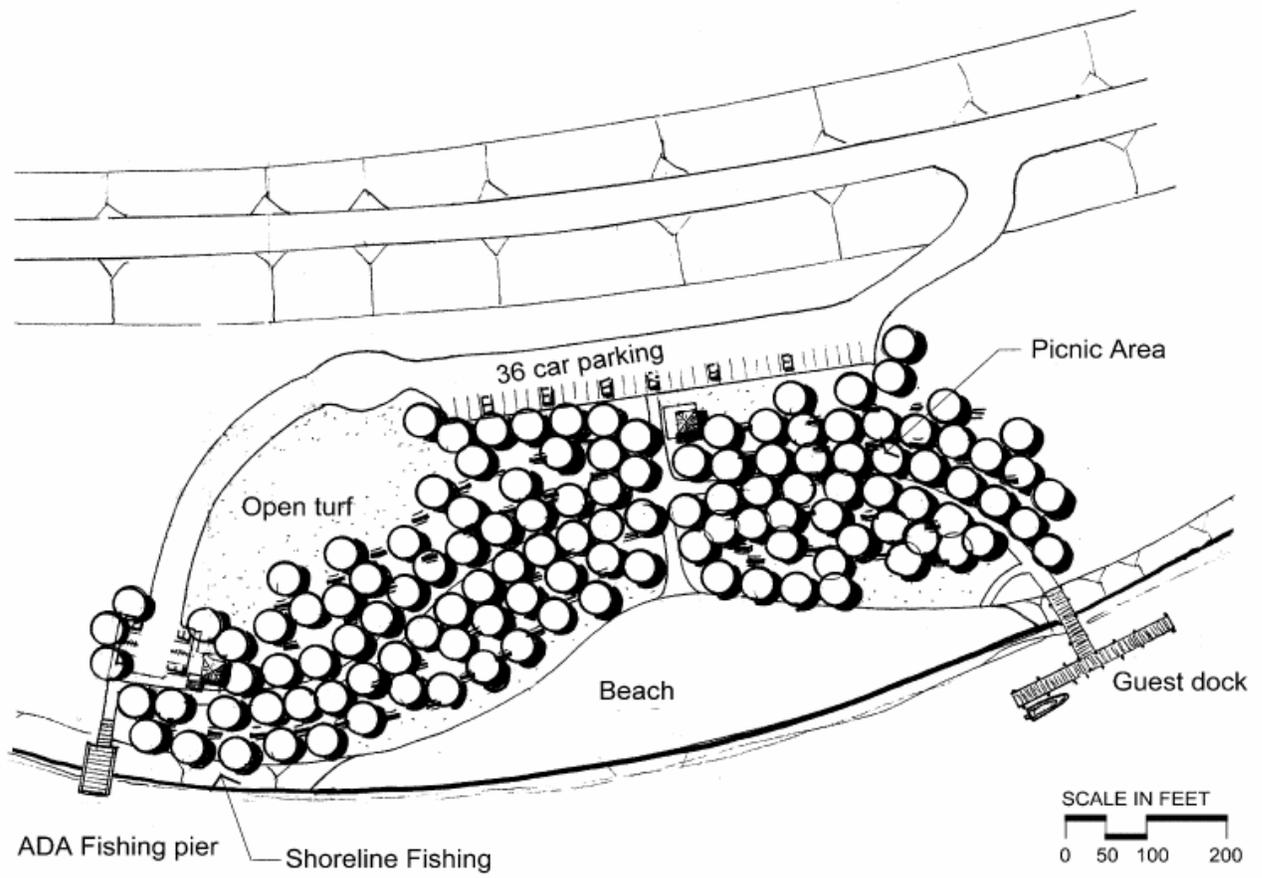


Figure 3-4 Beach/Day-Use Concept

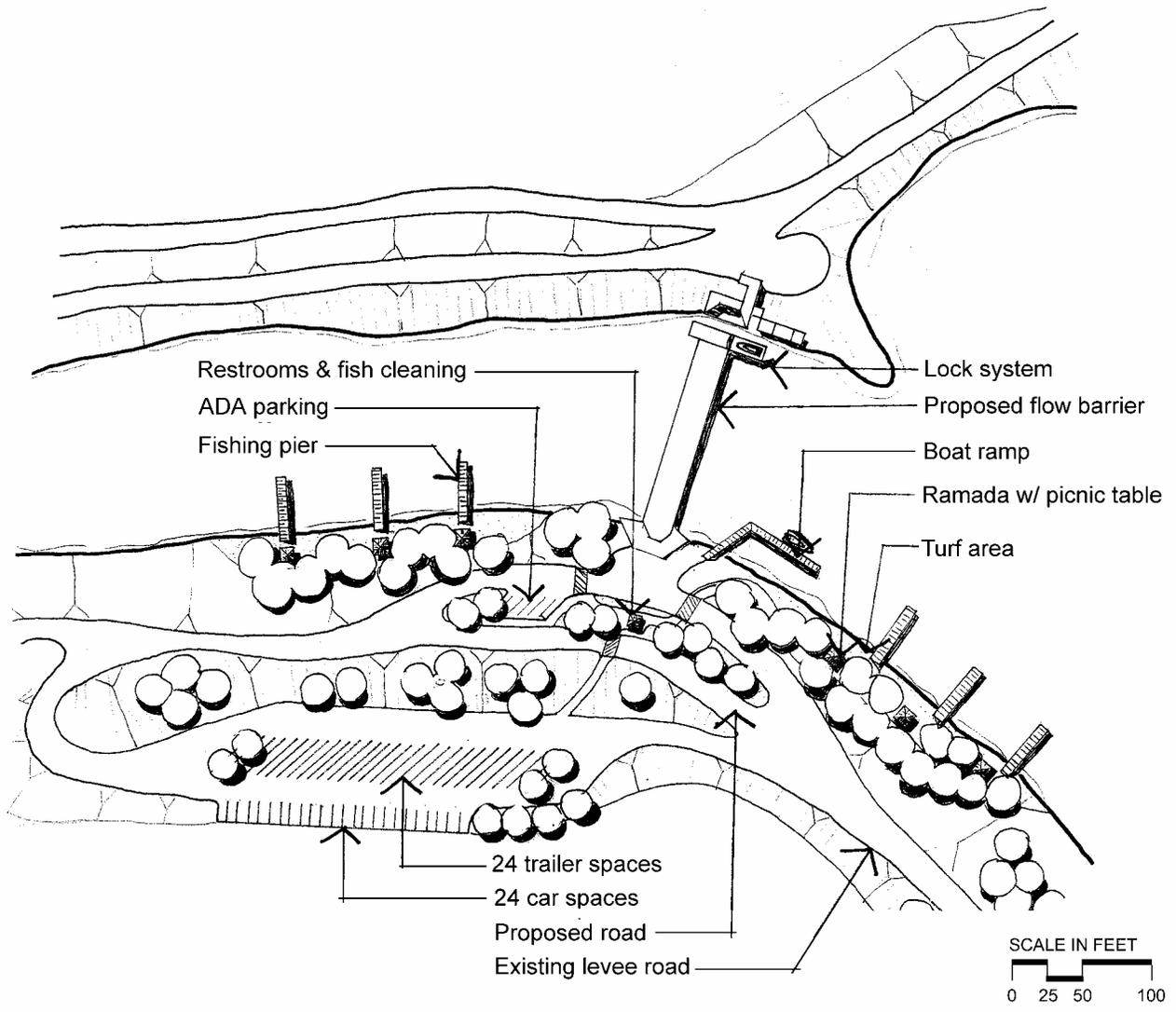


Figure 3-5 Day-Use at Barrier Site

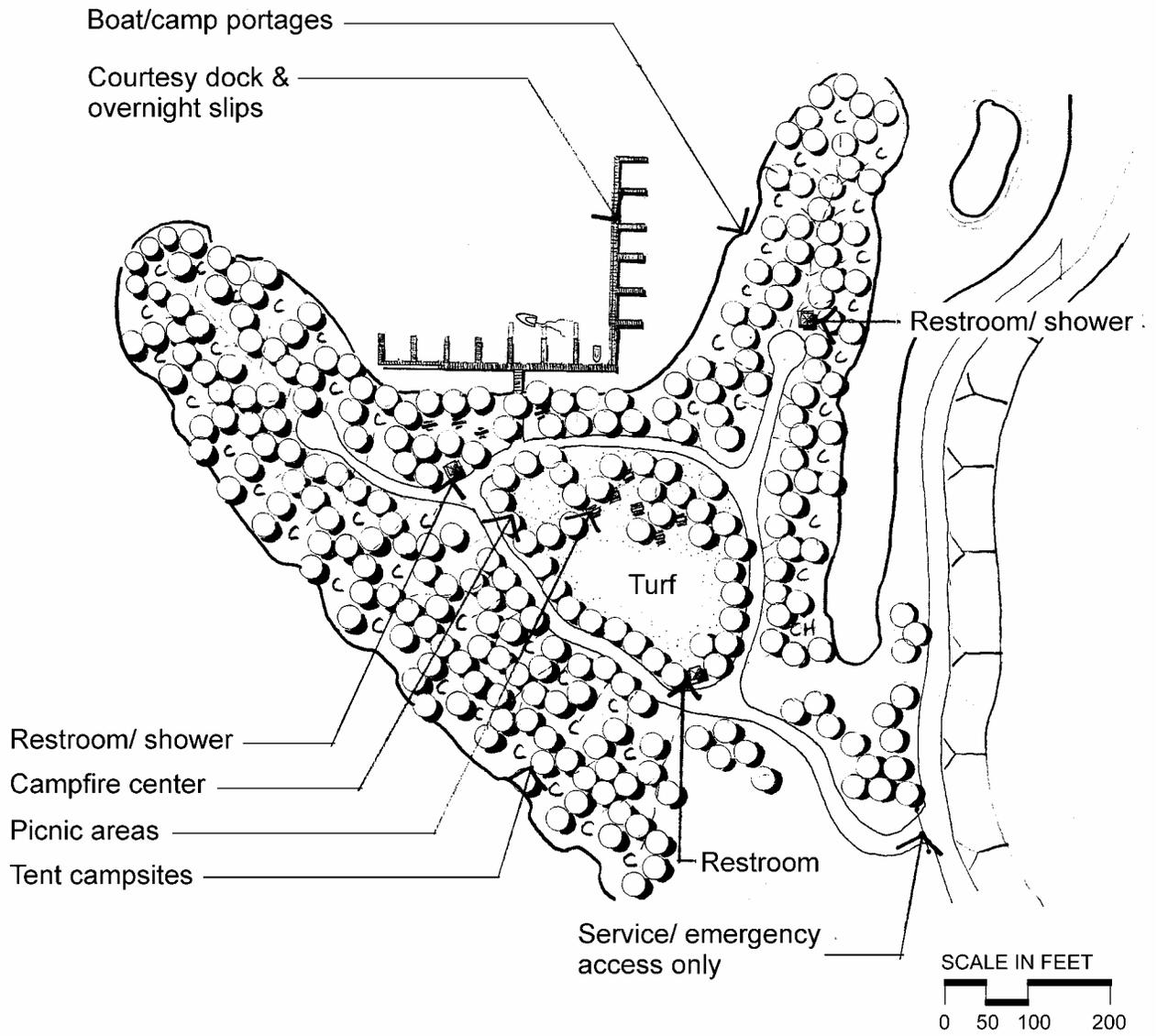


Figure 3-6 Boat-In Campground and Day-Use Concept

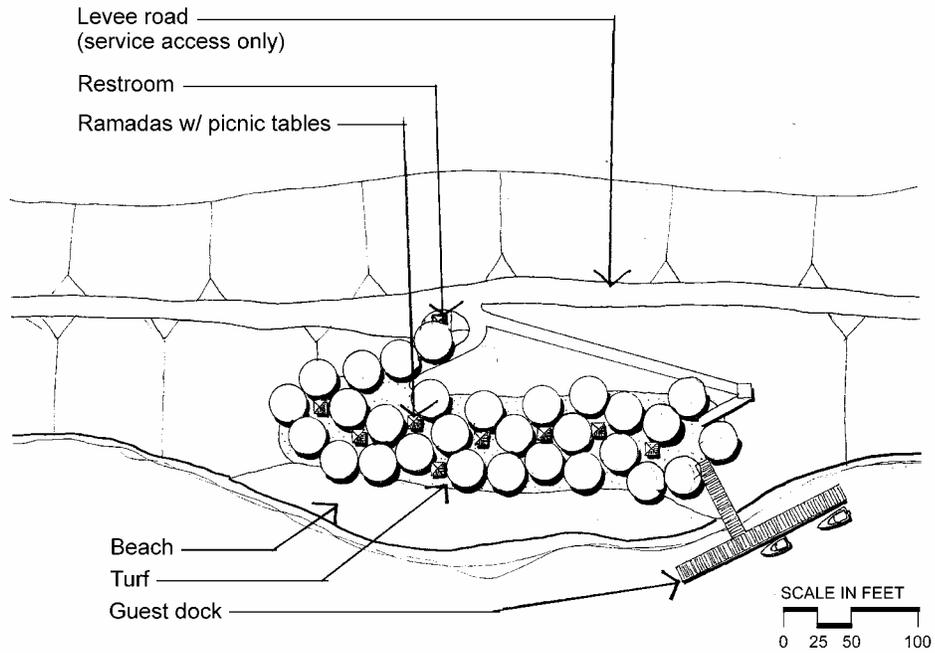


Figure 3-7 Boat-In Beach Concept

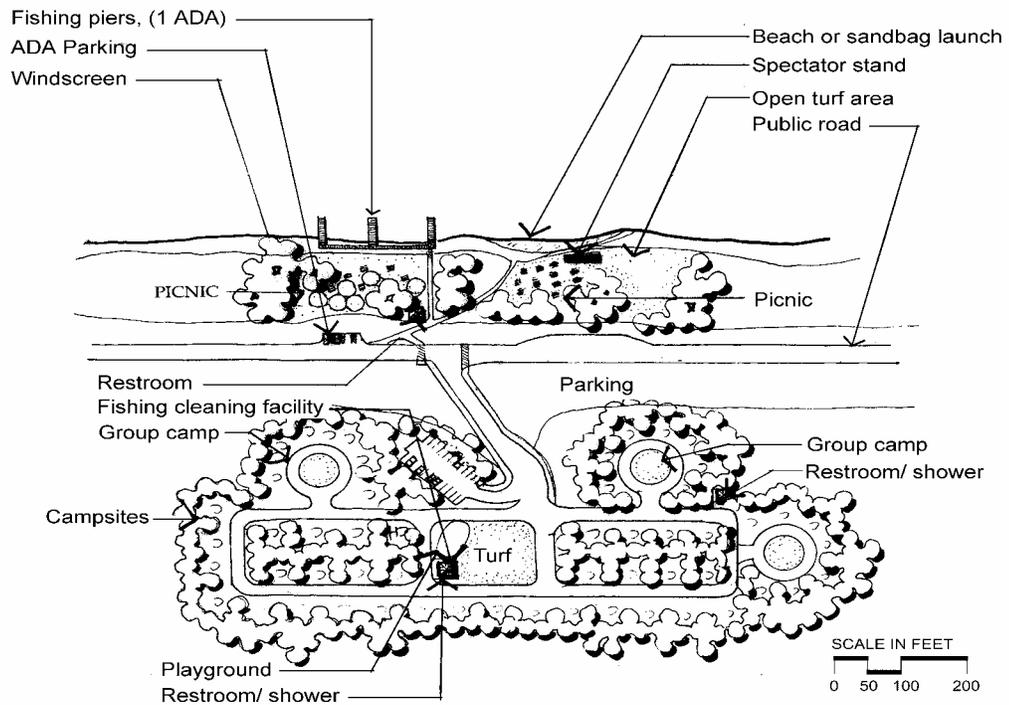


Figure 3-8 Non-Motorized Boating Campground Concept

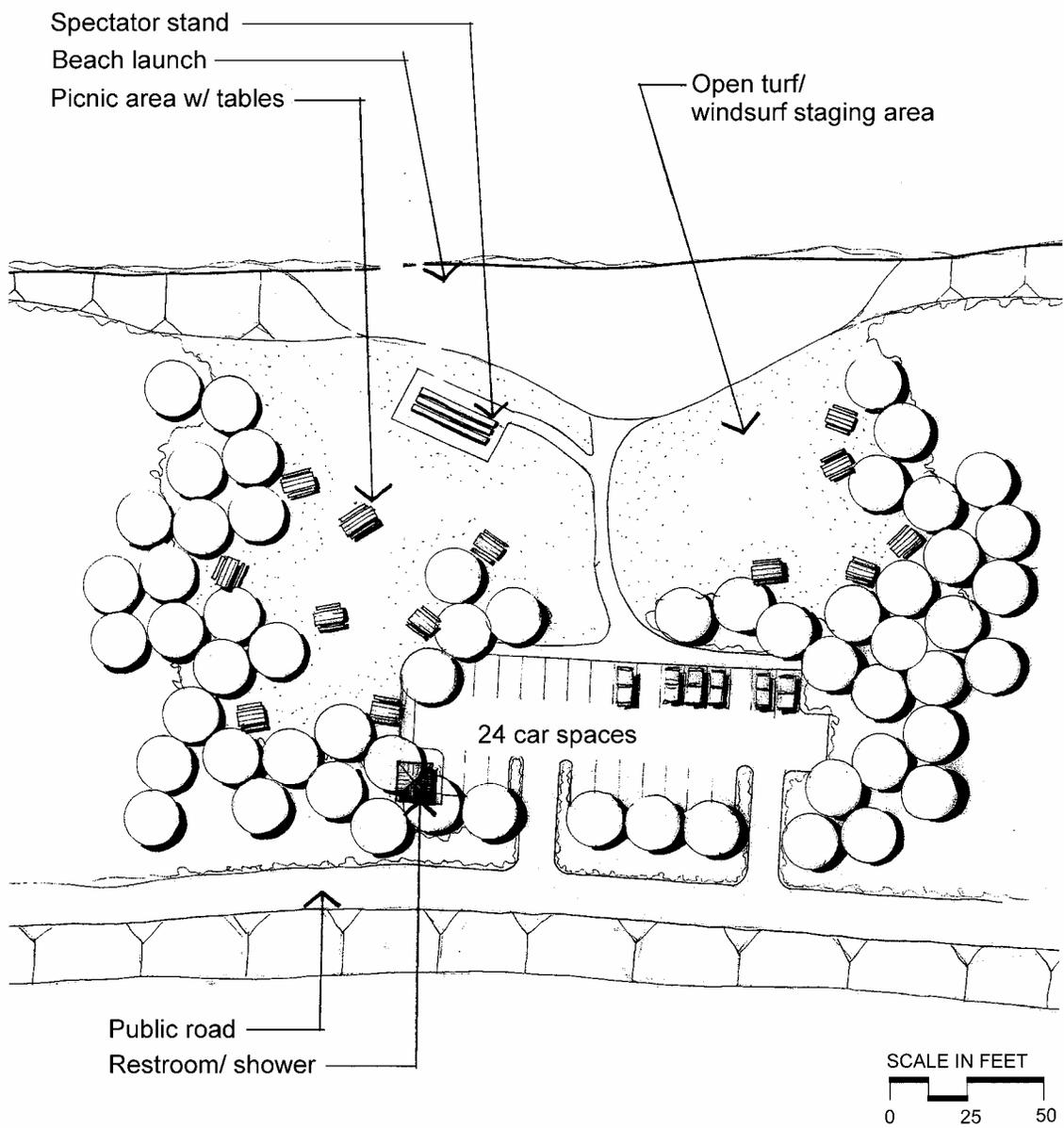


Figure 3-9 River Access Concept

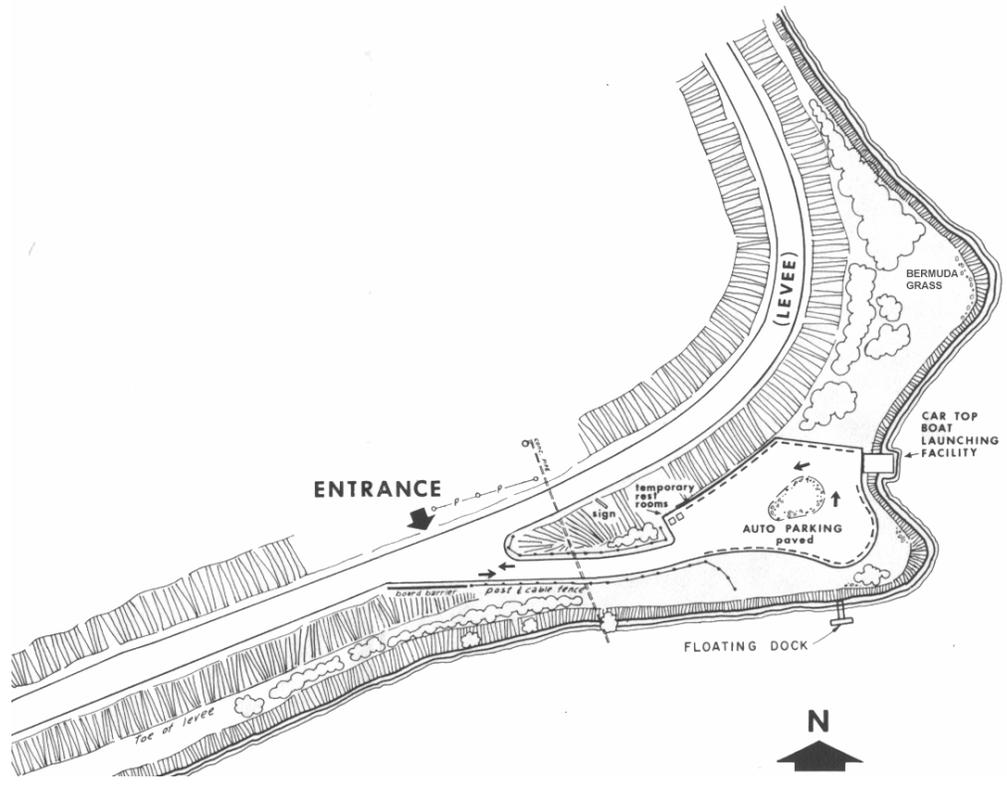


Figure 3-10 Hand-Powered Boat Access Concept

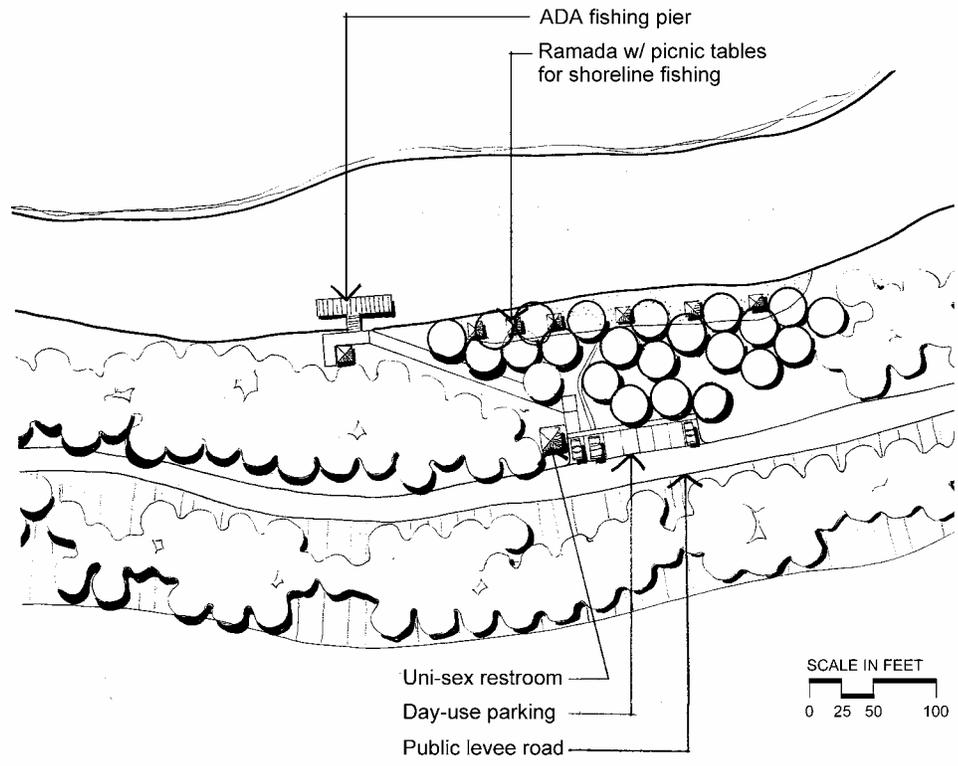


Figure 3-11 Fishing Access Concept

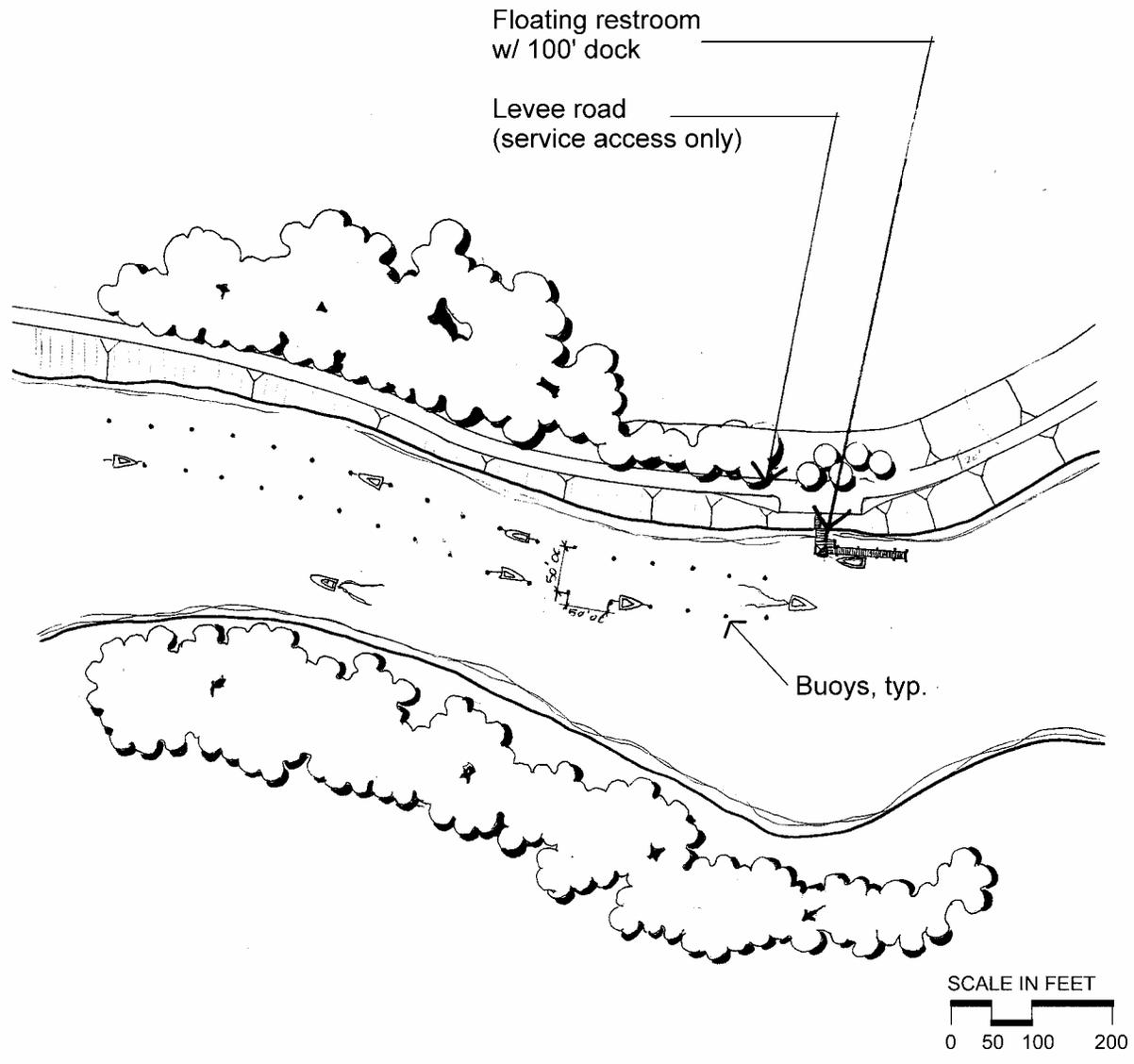
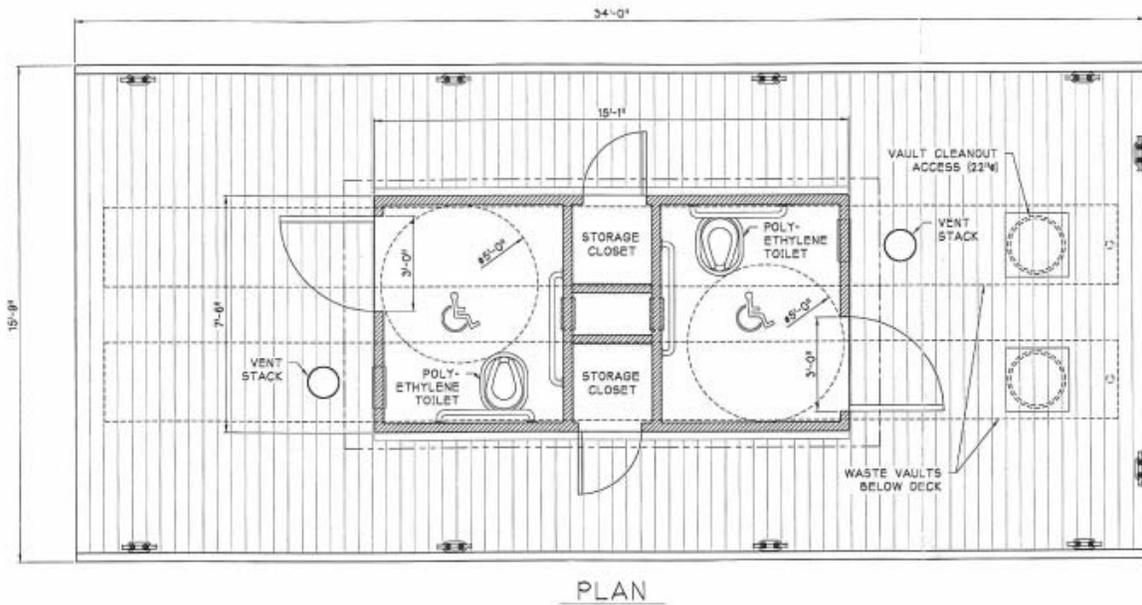
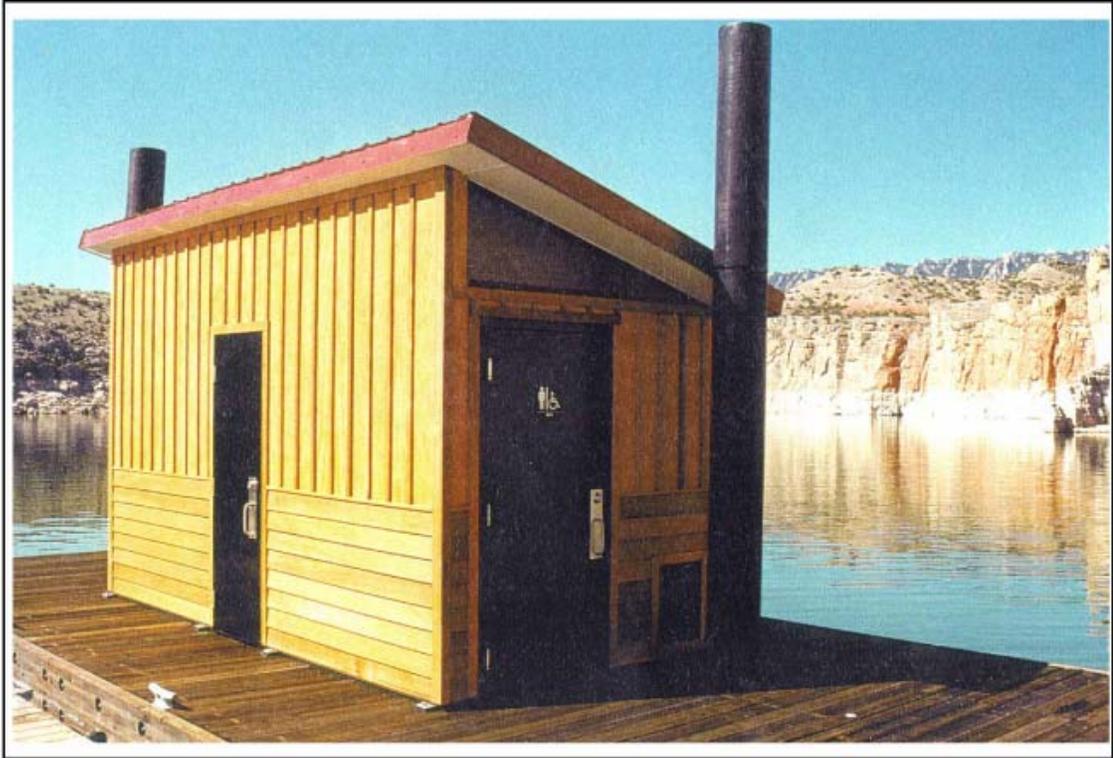


Figure 3-12 Buoy Field Concept



### Floating Restrooms

Figure 3-13

