

**FAIRFIELD HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION ANNOUNCES PLAN
TO REPAIR AND REPLACE SOUTHPORT HARBOR'S AGED LOWER WHARF**

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The Fairfield Harbor Management Commission (FHMC) is announcing it has filed an application with the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for permission to repair and replace the aging, storm damaged piers and bulkhead wall at the popular Lower Wharf area at the mouth of scenic Southport Harbor.

“Harbor Management Commission members grew particularly concerned about the stability and safety of the old wood piers and masonry bulkhead walls over the last few years but a big storm on December 23, 2022 dealt a decisive blow when the gangplank allowing access from land to the fishing pier was ripped from the structure. The gangplank walkway was subsequently removed and the fishing pier is now closed to public access,” said Kim Taylor, chair of the commission.

The fishing pier will remain closed until the town gets permission from state authorities to make the repairs and funding for all costs is secured. The extensive work, including replacing the pilings supporting the decaying fishing platform, will not be completed at the busy mouth of the harbor before Spring of 2024 at the very earliest. Due to recently announced limitations on funding from the Connecticut Port Authority Small Harbor Improvement Projects Program (SHIPP), the timetable for repairing and re-opening the pier is uncertain, she added.

Continually battered by storms, wind and waves since the first wharf was built in the late 18th century to support a commercial shipyard, successor structures have always required repeated repair because of the elements. The Town acquired the property from a private owner in 1999. Managed now by the FHMC, the waterfront property is a public space for walking, viewing, fishing, picnics and passive recreation.

“The area offers expansive, beautiful views of Southport Harbor and the Long Island Sound in all directions and is a popular spot for professional and amateur photographers and painters. Access to the area by the public is one of the joys of living in Fairfield. It is important that we keep it safe and sound,” commented First Selectwoman Brenda Kupchick.

For years, members of the clergy offered blessings while standing on the fishing pier for the annual Blessing of the Fleet Ceremony as boats and crew paraded by. The 2023 edition of the colorful ceremony is set for June 17 at noon after a street parade from Southport Center starting at 11 am. This year, however, clergy will need to position themselves on the shoreline, not the badly damaged pier. In addition to wind and wave damage, the piles supporting the fishing platform have been undermined and weakened over time by severe damage from marine borer worms that burrow into the pier’s pilings, according to an engineering report.

The DEEP is now reviewing FHMC’s application to obtain a Certificate of Permission for replacement and repair of the pier structure; replacement of the seawall cap, repair of sink holes around the sea wall and repair of the southern end of the seawall.

The FHMC is working with town officials to seek a grant which hopefully could cover a majority of the cost. The Stratford, Ct. based firm of RACE Coastal Engineering has been retained to develop a final schedule of costs for the project and to manage the repair and replacement work. A preliminary cost estimate of \$800,000 was provided by RACE.

For a helpful, illustrated presentation summarizing “Southport Harbor’s Past, Present and Future” plus other relevant harbor information, people are asked to consult the Harbor Management Commission News section of the town’s website:

12/8/2022 - [December 2022 updated presentation on Southport Harbor's Past, Present and Future](#)

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