



RBOC
Protecting your boating interests.

925 L Street • Suite 220
Sacramento CA 95814
916.441.4166
www.rbo.org

Anne Sachs
President

Linda Bendsen
Vice President - North

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Bob White
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Dave Breninger
Past President

Legislative Advocates
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Executive Vice President

Jerry Desmond, Jr.
Director of
Government Relations

July 20, 2010

Docket Management Facility M-30
US Department of Transportation
West Building Ground Floor
Room W12 - 140
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington DC 20590-0001

David H. Sulouff
Chief Bridge Section
Eleventh Coast Guard District
Bldg. 50-2, C.G. Island
Alameda, CA 94501-5100

RE: Docket Number USCG-2009-0308
RIN 1625 - AA09
Drawbridge Operation Regulation
Old River (Hwy 4) between Victoria Island & Byron Tract

Recreational Boaters of California [RBOC] shares and reiterates the concerns being expressed by the Pacific Inter-Club Yacht Association [PICYA] that the proposed drawbridge regulation would adversely restrict the ability of recreational boaters to navigate in this area.

RBOC is a nonprofit boater advocacy organization that works to protect and enhance the interests of the state's recreational boaters before the legislative and executive branches of state and local government. RBOC is in its 42nd year as a statewide organization promoting the enjoyment, protection, and responsible use of our waterways.

Restrictions on the operation of the bridges, such as hours of operation and advance operation notification requirements would limit vessel traffic except for the smallest of vessels.

Nonetheless, RBOC recognizes the current economical needs to control spending, when feasible. However, recreational boaters have a long established right of vessel passage under the public use doctrine to transit waterways unimpeded.

To change abruptly from its present operation to four (4) hours advance notification at all times places a significant burden and restriction on boating in this area. Further, the protracted requirement of 4 hours notice would present a safety hazard to those stuck awaiting the bridge opening; not to mention the waste of fuel (a natural resource) and extensor of travel time by 4 hours. This would also adversely impact the ability of emergency responders and the Sheriffs marine patrols; in addition to the possibility to compromising Homeland Security measures.

A review of the surveys of openings preformed by Caltrans, the bridge owner who is proposing these restrictions may be considered self-serving. The survey is deficient as both time periods cover the high use and lower use times are combined. It would have been more useful to separate the calls from May to October and then from November through April.

In addition, the survey period was taken when fuel prices and the economic downturn kept many boaters off the waterways. Current statistics show boating activity is showing an increase from 2007 through 2009.

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RECREATIONAL BOATERS OF CALIFORNIA

U.S. Department of Transportation

Docket Number USCG-2009-0308

July 20, 2010

Page Two

RBOC recognizes the owners desire to maximize staffing with the proposed changes. However, if the bridge is unmanned, except upon call, emergency responders, search and rescue, law enforcement and emergency levee repairs would be incapacitated. And, if the call goes to the Rio Vista Bridge, it only takes an hour to go from Rio Vista to the Old River Bridge. Would a bridge tender leave Rio Vista to go to Old River? If so, what happens at Rio Vista which already has its problems with traffic backups?

RBOC would ask to review the survey performed by Caltrans and if they in fact indicate reduced usage throughout the year and exceptions can be made for safety and emergency transit we would possibly propose some more reasonable and less restrictive alternatives than those proposed at present.

However, as RBOC sees more and more requests to limit/restrict vessel navigation through bridges, we are becoming increasingly concerned by this trend. If we agree to some modification now; as the economy improves, how do we go about re-instating the present bridge operation?

RBOC stands ready to meet to discuss options and work through opportunities beneficial to recreational boaters and the concerns of the bridge owner, Caltrans. We would hope that the meeting also includes representatives of the primary businesses stakeholders and the Contra Costa and San Joaquin Sheriff's departments

Sincerely,



Anne Sacks,
President

C: Mr. Reginald Smith, Commodore
Pacific Inter-Club Yacht Association