



May 9, 2022

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# SOUTHPORT HARBOR 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared By:  
**FAIRFIELD HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION**  
Fairfield, Connecticut

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LATE-DAY OCTOBER VIEW: SOUTHPORT HARBOR

ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL IMAGE PROVIDED COURTESY OF FORMER HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSIONER HUGH SMITH

## Highlights of 2021

The Fairfield Harbor Management Commission (FHMC), in coordination with the Harbor Master and other Town, state, and federal agencies, pursued its mission to: 1) maintain and promote safe and enjoyable use of Southport Harbor for boating and other beneficial activities; and 2) protect the Harbor's exceptional natural and cultural resources. All decisions and programs of the FHMC are guided by the Town's Southport Harbor Management Plan.

- **Boating Safety:** The FHMC, Harbor Master, Fairfield Police Department Marine Unit, Fire Department, and Pequot Yacht Club (PYC) worked together to promote and maintain boating safety. The familiar presence of the Marine Unit throughout the boating season contributed to everyone's "smooth sailing." No major storms affected Harbor operations in 2021.

The Harbor Master met with PYC staff to review everyone's responsibilities for keeping our

shared waters safe for resident and visiting boaters, junior sailors, and high school sailing teams training in the Harbor.

In June, Fairfield Police, Fire, and EMS units and the PYC conducted their annual emergency response drill. Included were simulated search and rescue and "man overboard" exercises.



2021 HARBOR SAFETY DRILL PARTICIPANTS  
(HUGH SMITH PHOTOGRAPHER)

On-call 24 hours/day, the Marine Unit's SAFE boat is a vital asset for emergency response in the entire western Long Island Sound region, along with the *David Russell*, the Fairfield Fire Department's emergency response boat named after former Chief Russell.

We gratefully acknowledge the exceptional professionalism of the Marine Unit officers and Fairfield Firefighters, and the support and assistance of Police Chief Robert Kalamaras and Fire Chief Denis McCarthy.

### Welcome Harbor Master LeClerc

In October, following the FHMC's diligent selection process and subsequent recommendation, Governor Lamont appointed long-time Fairfielder and community leader Bryan LeClerc as State of CT Harbor Master for Southport and Fairfield. A state official, the Harbor Master has important responsibilities for safe and efficient operation of the Harbor; is responsible for stationing all vessels in the Harbor; and is an ex-officio member of the FHMC.

Harbor Master LeClerc follows Capt. Ed Billings who, after two years of service as Southport Harbor Master, returned to his family home in Stonington, Maine and is now serving as that community's Harbor Master. His service to Southport Harbor is much appreciated.



SOUTHPORT AND FAIRFIELD HARBOR MASTER  
BRYAN LECLERC  
(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

### ***Safety reminders from the Harbor Master:***

- *Southport Harbor, from the south end of the jetty north to the Tide Mill Dam, is a "Slow—No Wake" area. No vessel may exceed 6 mph or produce more than a minimal wake. You are responsible for any damage caused by*

*your wake. When in the Harbor, occasionally look astern to check your wake.*

- *Children under 13 years of age must wear a personal flotation device (PFD) at all times when on deck or in the open cockpit of any vessel underway.*
- *You are required by law to have your CT safe boating certificate on board at all times while operating your vessel.*
- *Check that your safety equipment is onboard and operable. Please continue to be safe, courteous, and sober and have a great boating season.*



WINTER HARBOR (FEB. 2021)  
INCLUDING AREA OF ENCROACHING SAND  
IN THE FEDERAL CHANNEL  
(G. STEADMAN PHOTO; S. FERGUSON PILOT)

- **Sand Management and Federal Dredging Project:** The FHMC continued collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and CT DEEP to develop a dredging plan to restore the Harbor entrance channel to its full, Congressionally authorized width of 100 feet using the Corps' own hopper dredge. The Corps' dredge is specially designed to hydraulically dredge sandy material from navigation channels. It then carries the sand offshore and disperses it in suitable locations. Our dredging plan will include removal of a significant portion of the large sand mound that continues to accrete in and alongside the channel and jetty. In coordination with the CT Bureau of Aquaculture, dredged sand from the Southport channel is planned for dispersal in a designated nearshore Long Island Sound location where it will serve to improve bottom habitat for oysters.

To continue to advance this project, the FHMC conducted research in the State Library and National Archives to document the fascinating history of the Southport Harbor Federal Navigation Project, one of the earliest navigation projects authorized by the U.S. Congress in United States history. We hope you enjoy our “Historic Navigation Project” presentation at:

### Historic Navigation Project

- **Boating Services:** Pursuant to the long-standing agreement between the Town and PYC, the PYC continued to assist the FHMC and Harbor Master with managing the Harbor in the public interest. PYC provided moorings and launch service for visiting boaters; allowed the public to use its dock to purchase fuel and ice; and provided a vessel-waste pump-out facility for public use, thereby helping to protect water quality in the Harbor and Long Island Sound.

Following the FHMC’s guidelines, PYC assists the FHMC and Harbor Master with required inspection, repair, and replacement of mooring tackle. (See below.) No “breakaways” or mooring tackle failures were reported in 2021. Many thanks to PYC Manager Jeff Engborg and his staff for their good work, and to Justin Cathcart, the Town’s Marina Coordinator in the Department of Public Works (DPW), for his assistance. Other towns pursuing effective management of their harbors can learn much from the long-standing harbor management “partnership” among the FHMC, Harbor Master, and PYC.

- **Boat Moorings:** As required by state law and to maintain public safety, protect natural and historic resources, and provide for optimum use of the Harbor, the Harbor Master must approve annually the location and use of all boat mooring locations. This is done in accordance with the FHMC’s Mooring Rules and Procedures (see below) and mooring location plan. In 2021, the Harbor Master issued 132 mooring permits. Length of moored vessels ranged from 16 to 49 feet.

The Harbor Master also maintains the mooring waiting list which is open to all on equal terms and included 77 names at the close of the boating season. The waiting list and list of

mooring permit holders are filed at the DPW office in Independence Hall and posted online.

The FHMC’s Mooring Committee met regularly throughout the year to assist the Harbor Master with administration of mooring permits and the waiting list and otherwise help implement the mooring and anchoring provisions established in the Harbor Management Plan.

The Online Mooring administration system, in its second year of use, simplifies the annual permit renewal, waiting list application, and fee payment processes and provides the FHMC and Harbor Master with detailed records regarding mooring permits and mooring tackle maintenance. Public access to the online system is at:

### Online Mooring

In 2021, the FHMC: 1) completed and approved, following a Public Hearing, a comprehensive update to the Mooring Rules and Procedures; 2) prepared an updated Schedule of Mooring Fees and Charges, and 3) prepared and presented to the RTM proposed amendments to the Harbor Management Chapter of the Town Code as necessary to align the Code with the updated Rules and Procedures. The FHMC’s proposed Town Code amendments then were adopted by the RTM.

As required by state law and the Town Code, all mooring fees and charges are deposited in the Town Harbor Management Account and used only to improve the Harbor for the public and help cover FHMC and Harbor Master expenses.



VIEW SOUTH FROM THE NORTH ANCHORAGE  
(JEFF ENGBORG PHOTO)

- **Mooring Maintenance:** The mooring tackle inspection program helps ensure that all vessels are moored safely. Following the boating season, all anchors in the North Anchorage were inspected and repaired as needed, and all buoys and pendants removed for inspection and replacement as needed. With help from the Town survey crew, some mooring locations were adjusted to ensure no encroachment in the federal channel. Under Sec. 24-12C of the Town Code, an annual maintenance charge is collected from all permit holders who use Town-owned mooring tackle. This covers the FHMC's costs to haul, set, inspect, and replace the tackle. In 2021, charges ranged from \$160 to \$255, depending on vessel size.

- **Application Review:** Pursuant to the CT General Statutes and Fairfield Code, the FHMC reviews all proposals affecting the Harbor, such as plans for docks, dredging, and bulkheads, and provides recommendations to the CT DEEP, Corps of Engineers, and Town agencies. The purpose is to determine the consistency of each proposal with the Harbor Management Plan. In 2021, one new waterfront development project, potentially affecting pedestrian passage along the shoreline, was reviewed by the FHMC.

In addition, the FHMC continued to review the major water diversion proposal (subject to DEEP approval) by the Aquarion Water Company that would withdraw, for consumptive use in southwestern Fairfield County, an additional 7 million gallons/day from the Hemlocks Reservoir upstream in the Mill River watershed. To the extent this proposed project may affect water quality and aquatic resources in the Mill River and Southport Harbor, it is subject to review by the FHMC. The FHMC provided detailed recommendations to DEEP for the purpose of protecting and enhancing environmental quality in the watershed and Harbor; participated in the DEEP Public Hearing process concerning the proposal; and was pleased that the final approval issued by DEEP addressed concerns expressed by the FHMC, and other Town agencies, and environmental groups.

- **Lower Wharf—Town Boat Yard Improvement Plan:** The FHMC's project to dredge the Town Boat Yard marina basin remained on-hold in 2021 for reasons still beyond the FHMC's control. For the fourth straight year, no dredging projects were conducted elsewhere in CT to provide the required "cap" for our dredged material at the designated Long Island Sound disposal site. Project funds provided by the CT Port Authority in the amount of a \$266,000 grant remain in place. Following significant review of the external constraints affecting dredging, the FHMC decided, with concurrence from the Port Authority, to modify the planned project to focus on necessary improvements to the Lower Wharf itself in 2022, including replacement of the public piers.

We look forward to continuing to work with the DPW, including Engineering Manager Bill Hurley; Sr. Civil Engineer Megha Jain; Town surveyors John Chizmadia and Scott Leamon; General Manager of Streets and Highways George Kaczegowicz; and DPW Work Crew members on the Lower Wharf-Town Boat Yard improvement project and other projects, including the Corps of Engineers' dredging project.



PUBLIC PIER AT THE LOWER WHARF  
(G. STEADMAN PHOTO)

- **Special Events:** After a one-year interruption due to COVID concerns, the annual Blessing of the Fleet and Southport Street Parade returned to the Harbor on June 12. Many thanks to the Fairfield Fire Dept., Fairfield Police Dept., Sasquanaug Association for Southport Improvement, Southport Conservancy, and the many other volunteers for making this such a memorable occasion for the entire community.

● **Harbor Management Plan:** The FHMC's Plan Update Committee met regularly throughout the year to review Harbor conditions and otherwise work to update where necessary the Harbor Management Plan. As part of this work, the FHMC prepared and announced an online questionnaire to gather input from the Fairfield community, including ideas and suggestions concerning harbor management priorities and any concerns about issues or problems that should be addressed. The FHMC then reviewed and discussed the many thoughtful responses and prepared a summary presentation of the responses for public review. Our survey presentation may be viewed here:

### Survey Results

In addition, the FHMC continued to add to its public presentation *Southport Harbor: Past, Present and Future*.

This presentation includes images of Southport Harbor and descriptions of the Harbor's history, resources, and exceptional natural and cultural values. Also included is information concerning the Harbor Management Plan and the FHMC's responsibilities and ongoing initiatives to manage use and conservation of the Harbor in the public interest. Please check it out at:

### Southport Harbor: Past, Present and Future

Updates to the Harbor Management Plan, including the above-noted Sand Management Plan now being developed in concert with the Corps of Engineers, will be presented for public review in 2022.

### **Looking Ahead in the Year 2022**

Southport Harbor is one of Fairfield's most important natural resources — a center of boating activity in western Long Island Sound and one of the most scenic and historic locations on the Connecticut coast. The Harbor played a prominent role in the development of Fairfield and continues to have an important influence on the Town's quality of life.

More than 200 sail and power boats are docked, moored, or dry-stored in the Harbor. Many

visiting vessels enter the Harbor on weekends and holidays during the boating season and use boating facilities and services available pursuant to the Harbor Management Plan. Other visitors, attracted by the unique historic and scenic setting, enjoy views of the Harbor from Perry Green, the Town Boat Yard, and Lower Wharf.

The Harbor supports sail training programs for children and high school students and a popular community sailing program and provides significant opportunities for recreational fishing. Of note with respect to the Harbor's standing as an important center of boating activity, the PYC will host the 2022 J109 North American Sailing Championship October 11-15, 2022.

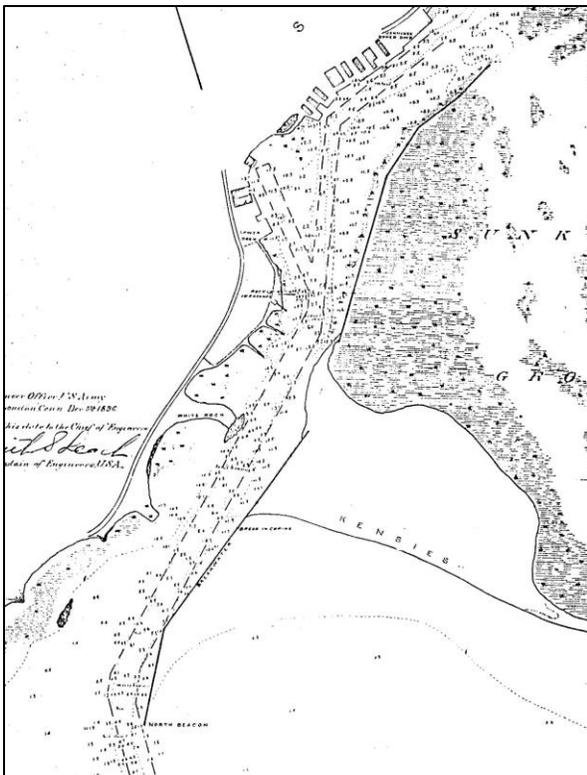


HARBOR VIEW SOUTH FROM WHITE ROCK  
(G. STEADMAN PHOTO)

Among its activities for 2022, the FHMC will:

- *Work closely with the Harbor Master, Police and Fire departments, and PYC to maintain Harbor safety;*
- *Work with the Corps of Engineers and CT DEEP to complete the plans for sand management and maintenance dredging of the Harbor entrance channel, and obtain the necessary state permits;*
- *Pursue priority elements of the Lower Wharf-Town Boat Yard improvement project, including replacement of the Lower Wharf public piers;*
- *Administer the Town's Harbor Management Account for Harbor improvements;*
- *Review proposals affecting the Harbor for consistency with the Harbor Management Plan;*

- Complete the update to the Harbor Management Plan (2022 Plan Update), including a long-range Sand Management Plan;
- Work with students and others to add narration to the public presentation “Southport Harbor: Past, Present and Future”;
- Provide assistance to the U.S. Geological Survey for deployment and operation of water quality monitoring instruments in the Harbor providing online public access to real-time environmental data;
- Manage all mooring locations to maintain public safety and fair and efficient use of the Harbor; and
- Continue best efforts to not only inform and hear from the Harbor community, but also to encourage everyone who enjoys the Harbor to do their best to be good environmental stewards and to act in a manner that will help sustain the Harbor for the benefit of future generations.



1896 HARBOR SURVEY BY THE U.S. ARMY  
CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
(SOURCE: CORPS OF ENGINEERS' ARCHIVES)

## HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

The FHMC has the principal responsibility for managing Southport Harbor and implementing the Town's Harbor Management Plan prepared by the FHMC, adopted by the Representative Town Meeting, and approved by the State of CT. The Plan establishes goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations for managing Southport Harbor in the public interest. In effect, the Plan sets the Town's vision for beneficial use and conservation of the Harbor.

The FHMC meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 4:30 p.m. in John J. Sullivan Independence Hall. All persons with an interest in Southport Harbor are invited to attend and express their comments or suggestions.

### Harbor Management Commission:

Kim Taylor (Chair)  
Jacob M. Herschler (Vice Chair)  
Samuel W. Cargill (Secretary)  
Donald R. Hyman  
Douglas Metchick  
Bill Perugini  
Eric G. Sundman  
Jeffrey S. Warren (Alternate)  
Bryan LeClerc, Harbor Master (Ex-officio)  
Betty Gabriel, Administrator  
Geoff Steadman, Planning Consultant

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*In 2021, Mark Foster, Harry French, Ted Schwartzman, and Libby Tritschler retired from the FHMC after years of dedicated service to our Town. Their exceptional contributions are duly recognized and much appreciated.*

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### ANNOUNCEMENT!

**JUNE 11, 2022: Southport Street Parade to the Lower Wharf begins at 11:00 a.m.  
Blessing of the Fleet starts at noon.  
EVERYONE IS INVITED!**

TEXT AND FORMAT BY G. STEADMAN  
FOR THE HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION