

News Release



For Immediate Release
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Report Analyzing Gaviota Boat Hoist to be Released Friday

Public Safety Stressed for Future Operations,

Public Meeting Set to Explain Report

California State Parks will be releasing a report on Friday June 17, 2005 that assesses the condition and operation of the boat hoist at Gaviota State Park. The assessment, conducted by Northeast Engineers & Consultants, Inc. (NE&C) and funded by a grant from the California Department of Boating and Waterways, also provides a list of recommendations for strengthening the hoist and making its operation safer and more secure.

“The key issue coming out of this report is the need for greater public safety,” said Richard Rojas, State Parks’ Superintendent for the Channel Coast District. “We must address those safety requirements, but we will likewise continue to work closely with our boat hoist volunteers to insure that this popular hoist continues to operate for the vast majority of hoist users.”

California State Parks sought the analysis by NE&C, a large engineering firm headquartered in Rhode Island with a west coast office in Ventura, to determine the causes

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and possible solutions for a series of breakdowns and accidents that have troubled the popular facility for several years.

The boat hoist at Gaviota State Park, 33 miles west of Santa Barbara, is the only public boat launching facility between San Luis Obispo and Goleta. As a result, it receives heavy use, with an average of 800 boaters using the hoist annually.

Following its 4-month study, NE&C concluded that several factors have combined to explain the hoist's checkered history. These include: the pier's location that exposes it to powerful waves and swells; the hoist equipment that NE&C believes is unsuited for these conditions; heavy use by boaters, many of whom are unfamiliar with proper operation of the hoist; and, insufficient supervision by State Parks staff.

To address these problems, NE&C is recommending several improvements to the hoist facility and its operation. These include:

- 1) replacing the current hoist with one better suited to the conditions at the site;
- 2) retaining the current limit on boat weight at 2 tons;
- 3) reconfiguring the present electrical system to increase safety and reduce maintenance;
- 4) improving signage, procedures and safety regulations;
- 5) installing a card reader and closed circuit surveillance system to protect the facility from unauthorized use and vandalism; and,
- 6) monitoring all hoist activities, using State Park employees and volunteers, until the majority of users are sufficiently trained in the use of the facility.

The Department of Boating and Waterways (DBAW), which has provided most of the funds for repairs and improvements to the hoist in recent years, considers the Gaviota boat

hoist to be extremely important for recreational boaters. DBAW has said it will work with California State Parks to implement the mechanical improvements recommended in the NE&C report.

Public Meeting Planned, Report Available for Review

Richard Rojas, District Superintendent for California State Parks' Channel Coast District, will host a mini-open house on Friday, June 17, at 3 p.m., at the Refugio State Beach Education Center to discuss the NE&C Report and his strategy for implementing the report's recommendations. For those interested in the report's findings and recommendations and unable to attend the Open House discussion on the 17th, the report will be available at www.parks.ca.gov/xxxx, and at the Channel Coast District Office, 911 San Pedro Street in Ventura, or at the Sector Office at Refugio State Beach. The public is also invited to direct questions about the report or the Gaviota boat hoist to Al Fimlaid, Lifeguard Supervisor for Gaviota State Park at (805) 968-3834.

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