



Splash down: Harper Pier disappearing quickly

By Ed Friedrich

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HARPER — Within a week, there'll be no trace of the dock that attracted Mosquito Fleet steamers, car ferries and fishermen for more than a century.

Workers from Seattle's Pacific Pile & Marine last week sawed Harper Pier's deck and railing into large pieces, chained them to a crane and hoisted them onto a barge. On Thursday, they logged the old wooden pilings. Two men in an aluminum boat set chokers, and the supports were plucked one, two or three at a time from Puget Sound.

"It's a sad day," said Walter Reeves, of Port Orchard, who stopped along Southworth Drive to watch the demolition. Reeves, 55, fished at the pier with his dad 40 years ago, and family members have been enjoying the dock and beach since.

The pier was deemed unsafe and closed Nov. 1 by the Port of Bremerton, which leases it from the state Department of Natural Resources. The port got \$400,000 from DNR to remove 138 creosoted piles. The Seattle company's winning bid was \$139,000. Remaining funds are going toward designing and permitting a replacement pier.

The port doesn't have the money to build a new pier, which is estimated to cost \$1.5 million. It has applied for a \$500,000 Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account grant from the state. Awards will be announced in June.

According to 35 percent design drawings presented two weeks ago, the new structure would feature a 320-foot-long catwalk leading to a 15-foot-wide by 60-foot-long pier. A gangway would double back and drop down to a 10-foot-wide by 20-foot-long float where boats could tie up.

The old pilings were in the ground only a few feet. A vibratory hammer loosened them from the mud and the crane easily lifted them out, said Lisa Kauffman, project manager with DNR. They and the attached mussels and barnacles will be hauled to a waste treatment facility. Sea stars were peeled off and tossed back in the water. A boom ringed the area to lasso any errant creosote or debris. As the tide went out in the early afternoon, the boom nearly rested on the rocky beach, which is scattered with brick remnants from a long-gone factory down the street.

Later, divers will fetch pilings lying on the seafloor.

The work is ahead of schedule and expected to be completed no later than Wednesday, said Kauffman, who was on the barge Thursday. That will be well ahead of the beginning of salmon migration at the end of the month.

“Everything is definitely going according to plan,” she said.

The Harper dock was built in the late 1800s to serve the small steamboats of Puget Sound. It was rebuilt in 1919 for car ferries, which used it until being shifted to nearby Southworth in the early 1960s.



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