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## Star News

### McCall approves 90-slip marina expansion

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**BY DREW DODSON**

The Star-News

### Council splits 3-2 amid environmental questions

An expansion of Mile High Marina that will build a new public boardwalk on Payette Lake was approved last week by the McCall City Council.

The expansion, proposed by Mile High Marina owner Sam Worley of McCall, will add up to 90 new boat slips to the 165-slip marina at 1300 E. Lake St.

An existing log breakwater will be replaced with a new breakwater system attached to 1,100 feet of floating public boardwalk surrounding the marina as part of the project.

McCall attorney Steve Millemann, who represented Worley at last week's hearing, said there is currently no timeline for construction to begin.

McCall Mayor Bob Giles and council members Mike Maciaszek and Lyle Nelson voted in favor of the expansion, but acknowledged fears raised about water quality in Payette Lake.

“We’re already in a crisis, but I don’t think we can manage that through this process,” Nelson said. “To me, this is a step in alleviating it, not adding to it.”

Council members Colby Nielsen and Julie Thrower disagreed and voted against the application, citing the cumulative effects of development on water quality.

“It can’t go on unabated forever,” Nielsen said. “Whether it’s the construction, whether it’s the additional boats on the lake... it all has a cumulative impact.”

“This one project is not going to solve it, but it could potentially add one more small piece to the problem,” he said.

## **Environmental questions**

In February, the council delayed a vote on the expansion application amid requests for more information on the potential environmental effects of building the expansion.

The marina provided additional data and studies, as well as two new surveys of 140 existing boat slip owners at the marina and the first 90 people on the waiting list for boat slips.

The surveys showed that only one of the first 90 people on the marina’s waiting list does not currently use Payette Lake for boating.

A total of eight people on the list do not currently own boats, while 21 people on the list own wake boats.

Usage habits of the first 90 people on the waiting list suggest that about 1,300 daily launches per year would be eliminated with 90 new boat slips, according to the surveys.

However, Thrower said the surveys underestimate the impact of the expansion because they do not account for new day use boaters who begin using the lake due to reduced congestion at the boat ramp.

## **Water quality data lacking**

Thrower and Nielsen credited Millemann for the thoroughness of the additional information, but bemoaned an overall lack of water quality data that could help inform a decision.

“We know there’s going to be some impact,” Nielsen said. “We don’t know what that is.”

The council’s approval allows the city to use the floating public boardwalk that will be built around the marina for future lake water quality monitoring programs.

Previous meetings on the expansion proposal were dominated by questions about how it might affect water quality in the lake, which is McCall's source of drinking water.

At its closest point, the marina is about 350 feet away from a city water intake pipe off Legacy Beach that pumps water from about 85 feet beneath the surface of the lake.

An engineering analysis of potential sedimentation generated by the construction of the expansion indicated the project would not affect the City of McCall's water system.

Water quality tests at the city's water treatment plant in Spring Mountain Ranch have not detected fuel pollution in the lake's water since testing began in 2011, according to city reports presented by Millemann.

However, city drinking water is pumped from about 80 feet beneath the lake's surface off Legacy Beach, not in the top 15 feet of water where most pollutants would be, Nielsen said.

Water quality data for the top 15 feet of the lake is needed to accurately gauge whether boats are polluting the lake with chemicals from fuel and exhaust.

"That's where all the emissions are going to hang out or get mixed up," he said.

The expansion application was recommended for approval in a staff report by City Planner Brian Parker and by the McCall Area Planning and Zoning Commission.

The application was also supported by the McCall Parks and Recreation Department, which worked with Worley on plans for the new public floating boardwalk.

The public boardwalk breakwater system the expansion calls for would start on the north side of the marina, extend 617 feet into the lake, and then run 510 feet south to the marina's southern boundary.

Two 30-foot by 30-foot public viewpoints would be included on the part of the dock system furthest from the shore. The boardwalk would otherwise be 10 feet wide. It would not be lighted and would close at dusk.

The marina's proposal also needed approval from the Idaho Department of Lands, which has jurisdiction over lands submerged by water. That approval was granted last year.

## **The Process**

The proposed expansion of Mile High Marina requires city council approval for a conditional use permit.

Conditional use permit applications are subject to a 12-point evaluation by the P&Z to assess compatibility with surrounding properties.

All 12 criteria must be met for the permit to be approved. The criteria require the proposal to not cause “substantially harmful environmental consequences,” among other things.

The marina’s expansion application was unanimously recommended for approval by the McCall Area Planning and Zoning Commission.

At a future meeting, the city council will adopt findings of fact and conclusions of law in support of the expansion and formalize the approval.