

A Comprehensive Plan for Docks along the Napa River comprising the “Napa River Water-Trail”

Dock Coalition History and Statement of Citizen Aims and Goals October 2005

Introduction

In 2003, in its mission to “responsibly protect, preserve, develop and celebrate the Napa River and its watershed” and in an effort to realize the full potential of the river as a valuable community asset, Friends of the Napa River gathered together interested persons and organizations for a series of boating river excursions to discuss a comprehensive plans for boating facilities along our river. These broad based groups included entities such as the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Merchants, the Riverfront Business Association; environmental organizations; local governmental agencies and citizens from the public at large. Gradually, out of their common interests in the river, there emerged a “Dock Coalition,” having as its purpose a strong desire for the public at large to have an active role in studying and planning a comprehensive plan for docks, their types, locations, numbers, purposes, and accessibility. It was clear that the citizens of our community wished to have significant input into that process and they felt that the Dock Coalition provided them with the opportunity to do so.

As a result of these enthusiastic exchanges, the first official organizational meeting of this newly formed Dock Coalition was held in June 2004. Subsequently, members of the Coalition met frequently and repeatedly for discussions, for committee study sessions, for conferences with state agencies such as the State of California Department of Boating and Waterways, and for exchanges with various City agencies and the Napa River Flood Protection Project. Work sessions included fleshing out principles by which docks might enhance the responsible use of the river as it interfaces with shoreline properties, defining a “*Napa River Water Trail*”, soliciting expert opinions on new advances in docking engineering, investigating sources of funding, clarifying ground rules of dock maintenance and responsibility, and clarifying principles that would protect special interests such as fishing. The process was constantly one of formulating, revising, and repeatedly honing ideas into sharp, clear focus through the contrast of opposing positions. Out of these numerous, lengthy discussion sessions coalesced the core of recommendations expressing the public’s desire to be responsively involved in the protection and use of the river with its adjacent land, through a comprehensive plan for docks.

Throughout this process, participants in the Coalition have appreciated and been mindful of the natural constraints of the very extensive and complex Napa River Flood Protection Project, ones with which the engineering, planning, and management agencies have been required to comply. From the outset, our Dock Coalition understood our obligation to work cooperatively, without being frivolous or disruptive, offering serious recommendations capable of being absorbed into existing plans. At the same time, we wanted to offer a vision, a public vision, coupled with suggestions and comments sent early enough in the planning and construction stages to avoid their being too late to be incorporated into the Flood Project. After much research and public comment,

we submit this document with the hope that it will prove useful to our officials who have labored long and diligently in the design and implementation of this ground breaking Flood Project and its acclaimed “Living River Principles.”

Boating River Trail

A Vision for the “Napa River Water-Trail”

Most of us think of trails as places devoted to enjoyment of the land such as hiking, walking or biking, but an exciting new concept is evolving in Napa... *“The Napa River Water-Trail.”*

This trail is envisioned as a loosely linked series of docks and/or launch sites, extending along a designated but limited length of the river, affording environmentally compatible public access for a wide range of experiences such as water, land, recreational, educational, and commercial activities. A brief listing of river trail water activities might include boating, bird watching, fishing, competitive sports such as sculling, and exploring both water and land areas accessible only by kayaks and canoes.

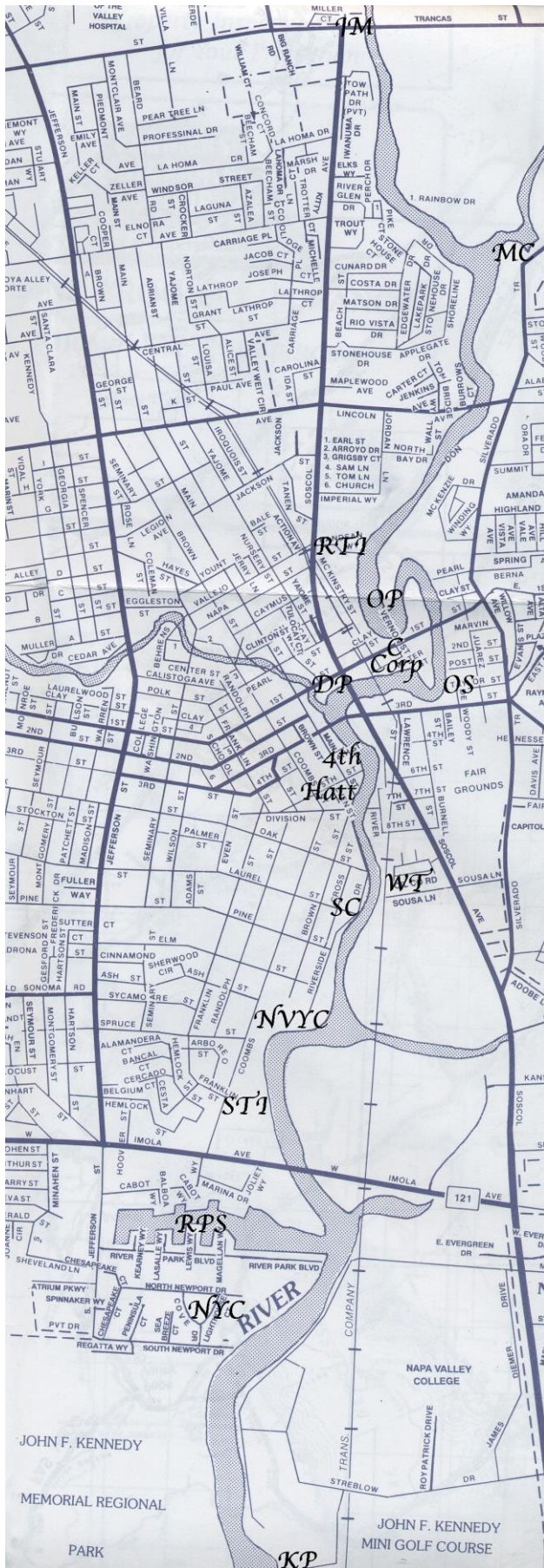
The proximity of docks to downtown lends itself very naturally to frequenting shops, attending various markets, eating at local restaurants, enjoying theater and the performing arts, visiting our historic centers and sampling the delights of Copia. Recreational programs could feature docent tours and excursions for students, seniors and/or persons with disabilities, model boat regattas, rowing, and very small boat sailing.

The economic aspects of planning for docks require emphasis. Although public access for purposes of recreation is a prime consideration, the economic value of a docking system that accommodates businesses linked to visitor traffic on the river should not be neglected. Whenever possible and within the protective bounds of both Principles of the Living River and good taste, planning should attempt to facilitate use of the docks and the river in a manner that is helpful to our city and to the Napa business community.

At selective points, the Napa River Water Trail might provide for fishing and access to land for hiking and picnics, while educational opportunities could be built around the Sea Scouts, youth small boat programs, rowing instructions, learning river safety, vessel safety, and enjoying the Napa River in an environmentally responsible manner.

It is important that the sites chosen as Napa River Water Trail docking sites be close enough together and prominently designated as “River Trail” docks to convey a sense of trail-like continuity.

To support this concept of the Napa River Water Trail, explicit, clear, and attractive signage should be made easily available in permanent locations on docks along with appropriate written materials such as maps of that locality, a list of recreational and educational opportunities accessible at that site, directions to shore destinations, and availability of local transportation.



River Map

Abbreviations

- JM - Johnny Miller Park (now called Trancas Crossing Park)
- MC - Milliken Creek
- RTI - River Terrace Inn
- OP - Oxbow Preserve
- C - Copia
- OS - Oxbow School
- Corp - Water St. Corp. Yard
- DP - Dry Bypass south
- 4th - Fourth Street
- Hatt - Hatt Building
- WT - Wine Train
- SC - Sea Scouts
- NVYC --Napa Valley Yacht Club
- STI - Sawyer/Tannery/Imola
- RPS - River Park Subdivision
- NYC - Napa Yacht Club
- KP - Kennedy Park

River Usage: “Traffic Areas” And Development of Public Boating Facilities

Even though the river is a continuum, with its use by watercraft of differing size and characteristics dependant on principles of safety as well as physical aspects of the waterway itself, it can be thought of functionally as three partially overlapping areas.

The principles which shall determine boating use of the river are boating safety, depth of the river, width of the river, other impediments to boating such as bridges, and those limitations attached to the use of private property when applicable. Tide permitting, large watercraft will be able to go as far upstream as the 4th Street dock where shallow water and the 3rd Street Bridge prevent further passage. Tide permitting, other, smaller watercraft will be able to go as far upstream as river depth safely permits. Canoes, kayaks, and similar light handcraft are much less restricted in their use of the river.

- 1) **SMALL BOAT AREA:** This portion of the river is loosely defined as beginning at Trancas Street and extending downstream to the 4th Street dock. The natural conditions of the river such as its depth, width, oxbow, tidal influence, and its bridges will necessarily limit the use of this portion of the river, the small boat area, to small, light-weight hand craft and to other than large water craft when conditions of river depth and bridge height permit. However, small watercraft such as canoes, kayaks, and small sailing craft are not restricted to this area of the river.
- 2) **WATER TAXI AND TRANSFER AREA:** This reach of the river extends from the Third Street bridge south to the Napa Valley Yacht Club at 100 Riverside Drive. Its design should include public boating, water taxi service, and boat transportation to downtown transfer facilities, short-term dockage for powerboats, sailboats, canoes, kayaks, and other small boats. The design for this area should include accommodation for water taxies, other transfer vessels, sail boats, and larger powerboats entering the area for short visits to discharge or pickup passengers, or to visit downtown other than overnight. A portion o the city's “Main Street Dock” could be designated for “pickup and discharge of passengers only,” i.e. a “no berthing area.” Where applicable, these docks should emphasize access to downtown Napa and the signage referred to above as part of the River Trail.
- 3) **NAPA RIVER RECEPTION AREA:** This portion of the river extends from the Napa Valley Yacht Club downstream. In addition to use by light hand and sailing craft such as canoes, kayaks, small sail boats, and other than large boats, these docking areas should be constructed for use by large power and sailing boats intending overnight or extended dockage.

The following principles shall apply to all areas:

- 1) All areas shall be available at all times to whatever types of watercraft can safely navigate them.
- 2) The entire River north of Coast Guard Navigation Aid No. 26 (approximately 1,000 feet south of the entrance to the Napa Yacht Club residential development) is both a “no wake” and a “5 MPH speed limit” zone.

- 3) When designing and developing public boating facilities in the Small Boat Area, use priority shall be given both to hand boat launch and dockage and to river access for canoes, kayaks and small fishing and other rowboats.
- 4) Design of docks intended for public use should provide for features such as accessibility, dock freeboard levels matching the size of the water craft, and dock size, suitable for use by different kinds of craft operating in that specific portion of the river.
- 5) Docking facilities are discussed in more detail under Riverside Land Usage below; however, requirements and conditions should take into account the following:
 - a. Public access; with particular consideration of public vs. private interests
 - b. Location of flood walls
 - c. Access for disabled persons
 - d. Fishing rights
 - e. Adequate lighting
 - f. Rest facilities when feasible
 - g. Problems associated with public access through private property
 - h. Dock design from points of view of
 - i. Safety
 - ii. Accessibility
 - iii. Removal during periods of high water flow
 - iv. Impacts on silting and bank erosion
 - v. Impacts to habitat quality
 - vi. Maintenance (both dock and river channel)
 - vii. Impediments to water flow during periods of high water flow
 - viii. Providing facilities for craft of difference size and purpose such as overnight berthing in those portions of the river that will naturally accommodate these kinds of boats

Conceptualizing the river in terms of three areas is intended to encourage the use of portions of the river by similar users while still preserving enjoyment of the river within a framework of safety. However, the area concept is not intended to restrict use by different kinds of boats except as dictated by physical characteristics of the river and surrounding structures.

In order to achieve these goals, dockage facilities on the river should be designed to accommodate watercraft of differing size in those sections of the river naturally adapted to them.

Riverside Land Usage Boat Docks & Launching Sites on the Napa River

Locations North – South	West / East	Launch / Dock	Exists / New	Current Size	Submitted Dock Size	Max Draft	Max Height		Comments (See more details on following pages.)
1. Johnny Miller Park	W	L	N			3	10		North trailhead
2. Trancas Street Bridge	W	L	N			3	10		Access from street
Boundary of Flood Control Project – Trancas Street Bridge									
3. Milliken Creek	E	L	N			3	10		Midway point access
4. Lincoln Street Bridge	W	L	N			3	10		Access from street
5. River Terrace Inn	W	D	N		40	3	10		Small, light craft
6. Oxbow Preserve	E	L	N			3	10		Sandbar river access
7. Bypass North	W	L	N			3	10		Ramp on concrete lip
8. Copia / River Spa	W	D	N		80	3	10		Small, light craft
9. Oxbow School	E	L	N			3	10		Small boating access
10. Water Street	W	D	N		120	3	10		Private/public facility?
11. Bypass South	W	L	N						Unlikely
Boundary of navigable / dredged River – Third Street Bridge									
12. Fourth Street	W	D	E	120	300	>3	60		Central City access
13. Hatt Building	W	D	N		300	>3	60		Public/private
14. Napa Valley Wine Train	E	D	N		>300	>3	60		Limited public use?
15. Sea Scouts	W	D	E	120	160	>3	60		Sea Scout use only
16. NV Yacht Club Ramp	W	L	E			>3	60		Rebuild launch ramp
17. NV Yacht Club Docks	W	D	E	190	1030	>3	60		Finger docks
18. Sawyer/Tannery	W	D	N		120	>3	60		Limited public use?
19. Imola/Garay	W	DL	N		120	>3	60		Major public use
Boundary for boats >60' – Maxwell Bridge (Imola Street)									
20. River Park Subdivision	W	D	E			>3	>60		Private HOA
21. Napa Yacht Club	W	D	E			>3	>60		Private HOA
22. Kennedy Park	E	DL	E	100	100	>3	>60		Move dock south
Boundary City of Napa – Napa County									
23. Napa Pipe Property	E	DL	N			>3	>60		Major wetland access
24. Stanly Ranch	W	L				>3	>60		Access by DFG
25. Cuttings Wharf	W	DL	E	200	200	>3	>60		Public dock & ramp
26. Napa Valley Marina	W	DL	E			>3	>60		Private business
27. American Canyon	E	L	N			>3	>60		Access being planned

Table 1 – Existing (E) / Potential (N) Dock / Launch Sites

General Comments on Table 1:

- This table provides a list of existing (E) and proposed or desirable (N) boating facilities establishing the “*Napa River Water Trail*” which is intended to complement the “Napa River Parkway Plan,” currently being designed by the City of Napa. **Docks** may be permanent or removable for flood protection, depending on specific circumstances and need. **Launching** sites provide access for hand boats, in most cases without a ramp and not for trailers. Although the original chart was constructed by Friends of the Napa River, the locations and size of docks in the current chart now reflect proposals and ideas gathered from various groups and individuals. Because the chart is intended primarily to facilitate discussion and planning, it and the data enclosed is subject to environmental (i.e. CEQA), hydrologic, aesthetic, and engineering considerations not included in this report.
- In analyzing dock sites, the Dock Coalition concentrated on general features that were felt to be important for general planning: General public accessibility, facilities connected with the docks in Downtown Area, size of boats deemed suitable by Napa's tourist industry, proximity to Flood Project features, and proximity to Downtown Napa. Of the 27 sites listed, only 8 were initially selected for boating facility development although others were retained for later consideration.
- These dock and launch locations, listed in the table above, are discussed individually so that proper planning for the adjacent flood walls and access can be undertaken while the planning and construction process is still in a stage that will permit consideration of the Coalition's recommendations.

Detail Comments on Table 1:

- 1) **Johnny Miller Park**
 - a) Access point at trail head north
 - b) Light hand craft launching site only, without dock
- 2) **Trancas Street Overpass**
 - a) Light hand craft launching site only, without dock
 - b) In stretches of the river border by sharp, steep banks, some consideration should be given to identifying emergency exit point.
- 3) **Milliken Creek**
 - a) Midway access point
 - b) Light hand craft launching site only, without dock
- 4) **Lincoln Street Overpass**

Light hand craft launching site only, without dock
- 5) **River Terrace Inn**
 - a) Dock type - Floating, roll down, cantilevered, and removable dock
 - b) For small light craft only

- 6) **Oxbow Preserve**
Light hand craft launching site only, without dock
- 7) **Bypass North**
 - a) Light handcraft-launching site only, without dock.
 - b) Access from the Bypass area at McKinstry Street
- 8) **Copia / River Spa**
 - a) Dock type - Floating, roll down, cantilevered, and removable dock
 - b) For small light craft only
- 9) **Oxbow School**
 - a) Dock type - Floating, roll down, cantilevered, and removable dock
 - b) For small light craft only
- 10) **Water Street**
 - a) Available to hand boats and small leisure boats
 - b) Potential for water police facilities/ launching
 - c) Facilities for fishing
 - d) Restroom facilities
 - e) Small- medium size leisure power boats wishing to patronize mid-downtown Napa area
 - f) Dock type- consider a floating dock, dock elevation by winching and dock removal during high water flow
 - g) Access for disabled persons
- 11) **Bypass South**
 - a) Launch site only (based on design features of the Bypass Channel)
 - b) Available for small leisure boats and hand boats
 - c) Available for fishing (fishing maybe suitable only at southern end of Bypass Channel)
 - d) Provisions for water hobbies such as model boating
 - e) Access for Disabled
 - f) Suitable dock freeboard for kayaks and shells
- 12) **Forth Street**
 - a) Available to small and large leisure boats as well as large commercial boats
 - b) Docking facilities including augmented lighting framed city directory
 - c) Fishing amenities
 - d) Access for disabled persons
 - e) Dock type - City plans that dock will be permanent and dock gangway will be secured to dock during flood events
 - f) Increased length from 120 ft. to 226 ft. as per engineer Rauw's design
- 13) **Hatt Mill**
Located at a portion of the river in which the channel narrows substantially during low tide. It can accommodate small and moderate sized sailing and powerboats for one or more days.
 - a) Access to Hatt Mill Complex. Consider problems of public access through private property

- b) Suitable off site parking has not been determined but short term street parking should be considered (This item requires further clarification as to location)
- c) Public restrooms
- d) Special access and safety guards to accommodate disabled persons where possible
- e) Dock length of three hundred (300) feet has been requested. Consideration should be given to the effect both the dock length and dock configuration as they might impinge upon the river and affect ease of water flow, silting, and bank erosion. These issues require hydrologic projections which the Coalition does not have, upon which it cannot now comment, but feel that they deserve serious consideration to make them consistent with the goals of the Living River Guidelines.
- f) Dock type - Consider winched dock elevation for periods of high water flow
- g) The availability of this dock for public use has unresolved problems but this aspect should be explored and clarified.

14) Napa Valley Wine Train

The Napa Valley Wine Train has investigated and had plans drawn for a dock at its main commissary site. However, concerns have been raised about the ability of the river to accommodate safely passenger boats at this site. The Dock Coalition was unable to formulate an opinion regarding this project but felt that any future approval should be contingent upon a showing of safety, plans for the dock during periods of high water flow, a statement governing public use of the dock, evidence of no harm to wildlife, and a demonstration that all living river principles will be preserved, including the absence of river channel impairment, absence of adverse effects from increased sediment formation, and absence of river bank deterioration at the dock site.

15) Sea Scouts

Private dock for Sea Scout use.

16) River Side Street Ramp (at Napa Valley Yacht Club)

- a) Boat ramp just to north-west of Napa Valley Yacht Club clubhouse
- b) Launching facilities for hand boats, shells, kayaks, available for public use

17) Napa Valley Yacht Club

- a) Private dock for Yacht Club members
- b) Small to Large Leisure Powerboats along with small hand boats, shells, canoes
- c) Potential for a rowing club
- d) Dock length of 1030 feet has been requested and might well be accommodated at this site. But it should be demonstrated that neither the dock length nor dock configuration would impede high water flows or adversely affect the river regarding silting, bank erosion, or other features of the Living River Guidelines. These issues require hydrologic projections which the Coalition did not have and upon which it cannot now comment.
- e) Public Restrooms (potential)
- f) Public Benches (potential)

18) Sawyer/Tannery Properties

- a) Use: Located in the widest, deepest part of the Napa River, closest to Downtown Napa that will be capable of accommodating large commercial boats. Since public access from the street and ingress through private property will be necessary, arrangements must take

into consideration measures and hours designed to protect the private property. This location can accommodate facilities to large commercial and private leisure boats visiting for one or more days including:

- b) Services: Water, Electrical. These are listed only from the point of view of noting to the City their desirability under feasible circumstances. It appears that facilities such as sewage disposal and fuel availability cannot be provided without jeopardizing ^{qualities} of the living river.
- c) Safety & Enforcement capabilities appropriate to proposed planning
- d) Public parking (potential; joint public-private use agreements are important –future topic of discussion)
- e) Public Restrooms (potential)
- f) Amenities for fishing
- g) Special access and safety guards to accommodate disabled persons where possible.
- h) See table above: The Sawyer/Tannery site is suitable for dock size of 120 to 240 feet, given that the hydrologics do not adversely affect the river and bank.

19) Imola/Garay

- a) Use: Large boat, small boat, sailing craft, and boat launch. This portion of the river has access from Coombs street and, even though current plans consider it as a detention basin, it might provide parking space for boats and trailers utilizing a boat launch through an area suitable to accommodate cars and boat trailers. The channel is deep enough to accommodate larger sailing and motorized craft visiting for one or more days. Access to downtown Napa could be provided through land transportation, water taxi, or by foot. A public boat launch ramp at this site is especially important.
- b) Services: Water, Electrical locations: mentioned to bring to the City’s attention their desirability and potential usefulness for public use. Feasibility remains uncertain at this time.
- c) Sewage disposal and fueling services can be considered as an “on land” facility but only if doing so is deemed to constitute no threat to the qualities of the living river
- d) Small craft launching facility if compatible with hydrologic and environmental consideration for the living river.
- e) Safety & Enforcement capabilities appropriate to proposed planning
- f) Public Parking (potential)
- g) Public Restrooms (potential)
- h) Amenities for fishing
- i) Dock type- consider dock elevation by winch or cantilevered for periods of high water flow
- j) Special access and safety guards to accommodate disabled persons where possible
- k) See FONR dock summary chart. The Sawyer/Tannery site is suitable for dock size of 120 to 240 feet, given that the hydrologics do not adversely affect the river and bank.

20) River Park Subdivision

Private property with docking facilities for residents and their guests.

21) Napa Yacht Club Subdivision

Private property with docking facilities for residents and their guests

- 22) Kennedy Park**
Existing ramp should be considered to be relocated to south side of ramp in order to reduce silt deposition.
- 23) Napa Pipe Property**
No plans presently exist for this site but its location highlights the need for combined use by water craft of varying size: The deep water joined with landed on- site features which may include electricity, plumbing for sewage, and possibly capabilities for dispensing fuel make it potentially very desirable for overnight berthing. Connections with downtown Napa could be provided in a number of ways including water taxi. At the same time, its proximity to wetlands makes it exceptionally useful for persons in small handcraft wishing to explore those areas. Dock design should take into account these varying uses and the types of craft engaged in them. Public boat launching capability at this site should be a high priority goal, especially if problems of silting at Kennedy Park dock prove recalcitrant.
- 24) Stanly Ranch (near HWY 29 Bridge)**
Potential launch site at trail head for F&G Preserve
- 25) Cuttings Warf**
Existing restored ramp and docks
- 26) Napa Valley Marina**
Existing commercial site with public access, facilities, guest dock.
- 27) American Canyon**
- a) This portion of the Dock Coalition comprehensive plan was added after an appearance from a representative of the City of American Canyon who pointed out the suitability of including the community of American Canyon in river planning in view its location at the river entrance to the Napa Valley. Those attending the meeting agreed wholeheartedly.
 - b) Even though the City of American Canyon is in the earliest phases of planning for usage of the Napa River, its Council feels strongly that the river will be an integral part of its community activities and therefore has expressed a firm desire to be a part of planning for docks on the Napa River. Presently, public access to the river is preliminarily contemplated to be through the perimeter service road around the closed Landfill Site in American Canyon, construction possible by spring of 2006.
 - c) Due to shallowness of water in this area, boating and launch activity may be restricted to small light craft such as kayaks, canoes, and windsurfers.
 - d) In light of the early stage of planning for the American Canyon site, the Dock Coalition formed no specific conclusions or recommendations other than the fact that dock and/or launch capabilities at this location should be a part of planning and should be encouraged.

Summary

- 1) Where shoreline and river water characteristics permit, planning for docks should include consideration of newer construction materials and design such as dock winching lifts (so as to avoid the necessity of removing docks in times of high water flow), cantilevered docks, roll away docks, shore anchored docks for light craft, conventional pier attached floating dock, and debris barriers.
- 2) The dock system should be designed to be as free and open as possible for enjoyment by the greatest number of participant as is consistent with safety, proper use of public property, and protection of the river. Docking, launch, and on shore provisions for watercraft of all sizes should encourage this premise.
- 3) Watercraft using the Napa River should be regulated in a fashion that is safe and accommodates the various types of usage and boats.
- 4) From the outset, The Dock Coalition has recognized and continues to acknowledge the need for all planning, including our own suggestions, to closely integrate the thoughts and plans of the citizens of the community with those under development by The City of Napa, The Corps of Engineers, and The Flood Protection Project. This is an indispensable partnership that must be preserved.
- 5) At the same time, the Dock Coalition has always maintained that citizen input into river access and plans for docks was mandatory early in planning and construction so as to avoid all parties being locked into rigid policies, too inflexible to accommodate citizen participation in the process.
- 6) The Dock Coalition is not yet clear on the issue of potential impediment to water flow imposed by placement of docks since we have received conflicting information about this issue, a matter that remains to be resolved.
- 7) Even though the 4th street dock is not now slated for overnight mooring, consideration should be given to facilities that will accommodate easy access to downtown Napa on an overnight basis. These plans might include downstream overnight mooring with water taxi service into the downtown area.
- 8) At all times, the rights of the public in the use and enjoyment of the river should be protected but with a high regard for the private ownership of property, attached liability, ongoing maintenance, responsible use, and high safety standards.
- 9) The concept of a river water-trail is one that should be supported and promoted through planned proximity of docks, high quality signage, abundant on site information about the City's attractions
- 10) We continue to endorse the paramount importance of the "Living River Principles" that we strongly contend is essential to the long-term success of the entire Flood Protection Project as well as public enjoyment of the river.

CONCLUSION

The members of the Dock Coalition feel that, through public discourse and input, this document gives voice to the public's vision of its needs and goals. Of paramount concern is our commitment to preserve, enhance, and promote intelligent, responsible public access to and use of both the river itself and to the adjoining land. The work, planning, and ideas incorporated in this document are intended to assist both the Flood Protection Project and The City of Napa by imparting further insight into the Public's goals and ambitions for docks on the Napa River.¹

¹ Note: Recent comments received from the City Redevelopment Agency and the Flood Control Project are not reflected in this initial Coalition document.