



Working together with our community

Council-In-Committee Meeting – October 15, 2025

Subject: Dredging Update – Port Dover & Port Rowan Harbour Marinas
Report Number: CDS-25-074
Division: Community and Development Services
Department: Parks, Recreation, and Culture
Ward: Multiple Wards
Purpose: For Decision

Recommendation(s):

That staff report Dredging Update – Port Dover & Port Rowan Harbour Marinas, CDS-25-074 be received for information; and

Further That staff be directed to explore options for dredging to restore services to an acceptable level, and report back with detailed costing to recommend a budget amendment or establish a more accurate budget in a future Draft 10-Year Levy Capital Plan.

Executive Summary:

Dredging is a typical maintenance activity in marinas to maintain navigable depths of waterways. Port Dover Harbour Marina has an accumulation of sand in the entrance mouth, affecting access for sail boats and larger vessels such as the Coast Guard. If left as-is, access will continue to be restricted and unsafe for larger vessels. Port Rowan has an accumulation of silt within the entire harbour area, affecting access from the public launch as well as the licensed boathouse areas. This report provides a discussion of dredging options that would allow both areas to have improved water depths to improve safety and access for users of the areas.

The Approved Capital Budget includes projects to dredge both marinas based on estimates from previous work:

- Port Dover \$120,000
- Port Rowan \$410,000

Following Riggs Engineering's initial review, approved budgets are likely insufficient. Staff recommend further costing and evaluation of dredging requirements to determine an accurate budget.

Discussions:

In 2024, Council reviewed several business case options for the municipal marinas as outlined in this report: [Marina Ownership and Governance Options](#). Council decided in October of 2024 to maintain ownership of both marinas, with modifications to the user fees, service levels, and capital forecast requirements.

Marinas typically require a dredging maintenance program to ensure sufficient water depths. Port Dover and Port Rowan require dredging as discussed during the 2025 budget process. To begin work, the County engaged Riggs Engineering to prepare permits for dredging; two reports of their findings are attached. Both reports indicate that there are likely insufficient funds to proceed.

For safety and environmental protection, several acts, regulations, and regulatory agencies are involved in monitoring dredging including Conservation Authorities, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Ministry of Natural Resources. Relevant acts include the Environmental Protection Act, On-Site and Excess Soil Management regulations, and Endangered Species Act. The permitting process engages the relevant authorities to ensure compliance with all applicable acts and regulations.

Port Dover Harbour Marina

Port Dover's entryway is filling in with material from the west; it was last dredged in 2013. To provide access for typical vessels, 2.5m depth is required. Currently the entry channel ranges from 0.5m to 1.8m. The attached report outlines the detailed areas that would require dredging at a total volume of 7,100 cubic meters. For disposal, the marina property does not have an open area that could accommodate this much sediment; all material would need to be taken off-site for disposal. Some of the sediment could be moved using a process called 'prop washing' (blowing the sediment underwater using a propeller) to move it outside the marina mouth. Not all areas can be prop washed; some sediment requires removal due to levels of contamination as outlined in the report.

Port Rowan Harbour Marina

Port Rowan is typically used for recreational fishing boats; 0.6-0.9m depth is acceptable. Current depths range from -0.2m to 1.0m; the surrounding bay is also shallow. There is no benefit for the harbour area to be deeper than the bay. The Port Rowan Harbor was last dredged in 2012. Riggs Engineering recommends a 250m long x 12m wide dredged area for both channels. Further work is required to determine how to safely dredge the boat houses.

Riggs Engineering noted that due to the complexities of the Port Rowan site, a detailed disposal estimate was not yet included in their analysis. Further work is required to evaluate disposal sites due to contaminants. The report outlines options including construction of a containment area on-site to allow for future dredging materials to be beneficially used. If pursued, this could allow for the expansion of parkland along Sea Queen Road; otherwise, the sediment would be trucked to an approved disposal location.

Next Steps

Current High-level Budget Estimates are included in the table below:

	Dredge Estimate	Soil Disposal Estimate	Total Estimate	Approved Budget	Shortfall
Port Dover	\$711,000 (\$100 m ³)	~\$500,000	~\$1,211,000	\$120,000	~\$1,091,000
Port Rowan	\$720,500 (\$130/m ³)	>\$500,000	>\$1,220,500	\$410,000	>\$810,500

Staff recognize the importance of both marinas to the community, and the need to have both areas navigable as soon as possible. However, the projected dredging costs for the channels are far higher than expected. Staff recommend developing detailed costing and scope of work for the following options:

1. Port Dover:
 - a. Prop wash part of the uncontaminated shallow entry area and avoid disposal costs for contaminated sediment, *or*
 - b. Mechanical dredge sediment, including dredging, dewatering, transportation, and off-site disposal.
2. Port Rowan:
 - a. Further evaluate options with detailed costing including dredging, dewatering, a containment area, transportation, and off-site disposal (including the main channels and boat house areas).

Finance Comments:

The Approved Capital Budget includes allocations for dredging both the PDHM and PRHM as outlined below, funded from the Marinas reserve.

Project	Engineering / Design	Construction	Total Budget
7632305 PDHM Dredging Entrance	\$20,000	\$100,000	\$120,000
7632304 PRHM Channel Maintenance	\$30,000	\$380,000	\$410,000

As noted in the report, some of the approved engineering / design budget for these projects has been used to engage Riggs Engineering, which has led to this subsequent report that has helped determine the construction budgets are likely insufficient in the range of approximately \$1,100,000 for PDHM and \$810,000 for PRHM.

Staff's recommendation at this time is to use more of the approved budget to consult with experts on alternatives like prop washing, on-site containment areas, etc., and develop more detailed costing. No budget amendment is being requested at this time, however, depending on the timing of the completion of this work, staff would either return to Council with a report recommending a budget amendment, or cancel the existing projects and re-budget them in a future Draft 10-Year Levy Capital Plan.

Impact on Sustainability of Marinas

The significant unplanned increase in costs, as well as the potential for higher-than-anticipated future dredging requirements, will have an unfavourable impact on the long-term sustainability of each marina. As mentioned previously, staff have been working on developing a business sustainability plan for each marina that seeks to minimize or eliminate the financial impact to the taxpayers of Norfolk County while retaining ownership of the marinas. Consistent with this approach, during 2025 Levy Budget deliberations, Council directed staff to remove the Levy support by diverting the net operating surplus generated by the marinas to the Marinas Reserve to support future capital requirements. Additionally, staff continue to rationalize marinas capital and operating requirements, which include anticipated debt servicing costs, which will have a material impact on projected future amounts available to fund capital projects at the marinas.

Staff will recommend a funding source for any future budget amendments or projects at that time. The audited balance in the Marinas Reserve at 2024 year-end was approx. \$3,920,000 and may be able to accommodate the projected increased costs for these dredging projects in the short-term. However, significant capital funding pressures are still forecast for future years based on the most recent requirements identified by staff, and if these projects draw down the balance now, fewer funds may be available in the future, and those future projects may require the use of debt to complete. Unfortunately, as capital spending grows and reliance on debt also increases, the cost of marina operations becomes more expensive and harder to maintain as a self-funded operation. The impacts of these trends will need to be continually analyzed for strategies on how to generate enough revenue to fund these costs.

One of these strategies that Council previously endorsed was directing the net operating surplus generated by the marinas back into marinas spending, but surpluses are primarily driven by user fee revenues, which can vary year-to-year and are not guaranteed. While internal funding requirements are taken into consideration when recommending user fee rates, marina fees are largely driven by market factors which limit the level of cost recovery that can be achieved before resulting in diminishing returns. These variables contribute to an environment where long-term sustainability is difficult to project with any certainty, especially when faced with significant unplanned expenditures and a limit on the prices customers are willing to pay.

Upcoming User Fee Recommendations

Report CS-25-137 Proposed 2026 User Fees and Service Charges is included on the October 16th, 2025 Budget Committee agenda, and will include recommended changes to Marinas user fees, consistent with the user fee comparator analysis completed as part of the ongoing Marinas Business Sustainability Plan Review Update. As the analysis and recommendations within this report were complete prior to staff becoming aware of the revised estimates for dredging, the fee recommendations have not considered or incorporated the increased costs and their potential impact on long-term marina sustainability. Ultimately, this could place additional unplanned pressure on the Marinas Reserve that would have to be re-examined again in the future.

Interdepartmental Implications:

N/A

Consultation(s):

This report was posted publicly as part of Council’s commitment to transparent local governance. The Marina ownership and governance model review was subject to thorough public consultation in 2024.

Strategic Plan Linkage:

Sustaining Norfolk - Creating a sustainable community and a positive legacy

Attachment(s):

Port Dover Summary Letter – Rigg’s Engineering
Port Rowan Summary Letter – Rigg’s Engineering

Approval:

Approved By:
Al Meneses, Chief Administrative Officer

Reviewed By:
Bill Cridland, General Manager, Community and Development Services

Prepared By:
Brian Geerts, Director, Parks, Recreation, & Culture