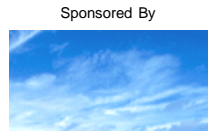



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# PIER PRESSURE: Heavy trucks banned at Wychmere

By **Jamie Balliett**  
**Harwich Oracle**  
 Posted Dec 08, 2009 @ 12:12 PM

**HARWICH** — Eric Hess owns the Tenacious II, a commercial fishing boat that has called Wychmere Harbor home for 24 years.

Through thick and thin, Hess has relied on Wychmere's commercial pier for his livelihood, using a truck to load and unload his gear. But that access is limited now, following an engineering report that found the pier is in a serious state of disrepair and needs to be replaced.

Selectmen on Monday voted to ban fuel trucks and any other vehicle that weighs in excess of three-quarters of a ton from the structure. They also asked a working group to come up with recommendations to extend the life of the

pier while funds can be sought for its replacement.

The structure will cost around \$1.3 million to replace.

"I understand what's at stake here, more than just the safety of the pier," said Hess.

The pier, in place for 29 years, is 120 feet long and 20 feet wide. It is showing significant signs of wear and tear. Although not fully visible to the eye, the concrete decking has absorbed enough salt water to compromise the material.

The author of the harbor report, engineer John Bolonga from Coastal Engineering, said the pier has "cancer of the concrete."

Up to 40 boats regularly use the commercial structure. Fuel trucks travel down the pier to make deliveries. Cranes crawl down its length to lift boats in and out of the water. Emergency vehicles use it when necessary.

The new pier may take two or more years to fund. Harwich Planning Board is seeking funds from the state but no money may be available until 2012.

In the interim, the pier loads need to be reduced and selectmen Monday night even considered the idea of erecting a barricade at the start of the pier to keep heavy vehicles away.

But Harbormaster Tom Leach said stopping all traffic would threaten the already heavily regulated fishermen.

And, he said, "We need much more than the pier rebuilt." He explained that necessary work includes improvements to the parking lot, drainage and other areas.

"We really need this pier. I wouldn't like to see it go in the direction of a tourist attraction," he said.

Selectman Angelo La Mantia emphasized that with no funds in hand to replace the structure, the current one will



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need to be taken care of to make it lasts as long as possible.

"I think it's important to keep this pier going for as long as we can," said La Mantia.

Ben Martens, a policy analyst at the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fisherman Association, asked the board for its support to find a better solution than a barricade.

"If there's any way you can work out an in-between, it would really benefit [the fishermen] and benefit the town in the long run," he added.

A suggestion was offered: a gate with a swipe card to allow limited vehicle access.


Selectman Robin Wilkins felt that erecting jersey barriers would be premature.

"I think what we've heard here tonight is this is their worksite, not our work site," he said.

"I think perhaps some folks from the highway department and Tom (Leach) and some of the fisherman need to review this and come back to us with a proposal," he said.

Leach agreed to put signs up within a few days and the Hook association offered to convene a group to propose measures that could further extend the life of the structure.

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