

Local fishermen fed up over being high and dry

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SANTA CRUZ — The mouth of the Small Craft Harbor has always clogged up with sand this time of year, so why is a local fisherman so angry now?

Because, says John Schreiber, "the Port District is spending \$375,000 to repave the Crow's Nest parking lot and \$325,000 to buy a boat storage yard instead of opening the harbor mouth."

Schreiber, who owns the Loretta M, is the new president of the Santa Cruz Fisherman's Marketing Association.

Wednesday afternoon, he and another fisherman, Tim Lybrand, surveyed the harbor mouth. Lybrand, dressed in a wet suit, walked across to demonstrate just how much shoaling has taken place.

It just so happened that at 4 p.m. Wednesday was the lowest tide of the year.

Then, Schreiber and Lybrand went to the upper harbor, where Lybrand walked hip deep in the silt.

Those are the real problems facing the port district, they say. Not new parking lots, a storage yard and certainly not a new fishing dock. They ask: who's going to want to berth a fishing boat at a dock in a harbor that's closed three to five months out of the year?

Schreiber says he's had the Loretta M at the harbor for 11 years and had a smaller boat there for seven years before that.

Why has he put up with it so long? "First of all it's my home and I shouldn't have to move," he says.

Secondly, the nearest harbor — Moss Landing — is full.

The Port District has tried a variety of methods to unclog the harbor mouth. Dredging has been the most successful and is scheduled to be done again at the end of February.

Currently the federal government pays the tab — more than a half million dollars a year, but it's a year by year fight to get the funding, says Harbormaster Steve Scheiblaue.

The Port District, Scheiblaue says, currently is working with U.S. Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Monterey, to try to get Congressional funding for a long-range solution to the shoaling problem.

To say the Port District is wasting dredging money on such things as building a fishing dock is unfair.

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Scheiblaue maintains. That project, for example, is being built with 70 percent federal funding

Other projects, he says, are designed to broaden the economic base of the harbor so the Port District will have the money if it someday must either share in or assume the cost of dredging.

Without a broad economic base, slip rentals would double, and Scheiblaue says he doubts if boat owners would like that any better than the shoaling at the harbor mouth.

The problem at the upper harbor, Scheiblaue explains, is caused by siltation coming from construction up in the Arana Gulch area.

"Two years ago we had to dredge and that cost \$130,000," he says.

Scheiblaue sympathizes with boat owners and fishermen.

And, he sympathizes now especially with the good winter weather.

"Last year the shoaling was just as bad but the weather was so rainy nobody cared. Now the weather is good and everybody wants to take their boat out."