

# Tsunami damage puts harbor businesses in limbo

Harbor - 2000

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Todd Fraser waits for customers behind the counter of Bayview Marine on Wednesday at the Santa Cruz harbor.

KEVIN JOHNSON/  
SENTINEL



Port closed to vessels through Sunday; some docks reopen

By **JONDI GUMZ**

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SANTA CRUZ — While a flotilla of federal, state and local officials work to clean up the Santa Cruz harbor from Friday's tsunami, businesses catering to fishermen, sailors and tourists are in limbo waiting for the harbor

to reopen.

Port officials reopened the southwest harbor, most of the southeast harbor and half of the north harbor Wednesday, allowing hundreds of boat owners to inspect and repair their vessels.

The rest of the north harbor

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# HARBOR

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and M dock remain closed.

The harbor has been closed to vessels for six days since surges broke docks, sank boats and left a mess of debris.

Port Director Lisa Ekers issued a statement at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday saying the closure will extend through Sunday and longer if needed.

"Unidentified underwater hazards remain," the statement said. "It is an objective to resume commercial operations as soon as possible."

Harbor staff and consultants are assessing damages to harbor property, a number that could exceed \$25 million, more than three times the port district's budget. They plan to post information on property loss claims for uninsured vessels on the harbor website once it's available.

Each day the harbor is closed, it loses an estimated \$206,000 in economic impact on the area.

Ekers is hoping for federal assistance; the decision that is made by the president after a recommendation by the Federal Emergency Management Agency based on extent of the damages, impacts on infrastructure, insurance coverage and availability of other resources. Statewide, the damage estimate is \$50 million, with Crescent City suffering tens of millions of dollars in damage to its harbor as well.

Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel, is expected to visit the harbor Friday.

Of the 13 privately owned boats that sank, eight have been recovered with the help of Parker Diving Service. An estimated 100 more are afloat but damaged with a total estimate of private boat damage standing at more than \$4 million.

The Coast Guard is overseeing the oil and debris removal operation. Wednesday's efforts shifted from boat recovery to harbor safety and navigability.

A National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration vessel arrived Wednesday to use sonar to search under water for pieces of piers, according to U.S. Coast Guard petty officer Kevin Metcalf. The vessel is expected to stay for two more days.

State Fish and Game aircraft are conducting aerial surveys to locate damaged vessels and pollution problems. The Coast Guard reported no wildlife impacts at this time.

Television news vans have been camping out in the parking lot of the Crow's Nest restaurant, which has been serving two meals a day to rescue crews.

"It's been 50 people a day," said Crow's Nest manager Charles Meir. "It's a good thing to do."

He's happy to be open after being closed Friday.

"Luckily for us we have a pretty steady flow of people," Meir said.

That's not the case for most of the harbor businesses.

"We're sort of marooned," said Tom McKervey, manager at Aquarius Boat Works, which repairs boats and engines and sells boating supplies and fishing gear.

He's spent 30 years working at the harbor here and in Moss Landing, and this is the first time in his memory the harbor has closed.

"Everything is at a standstill except for people pulling boats out," said Todd Fraser, in his 11th year as owner at Bayside Marine, which sells fishing gear.

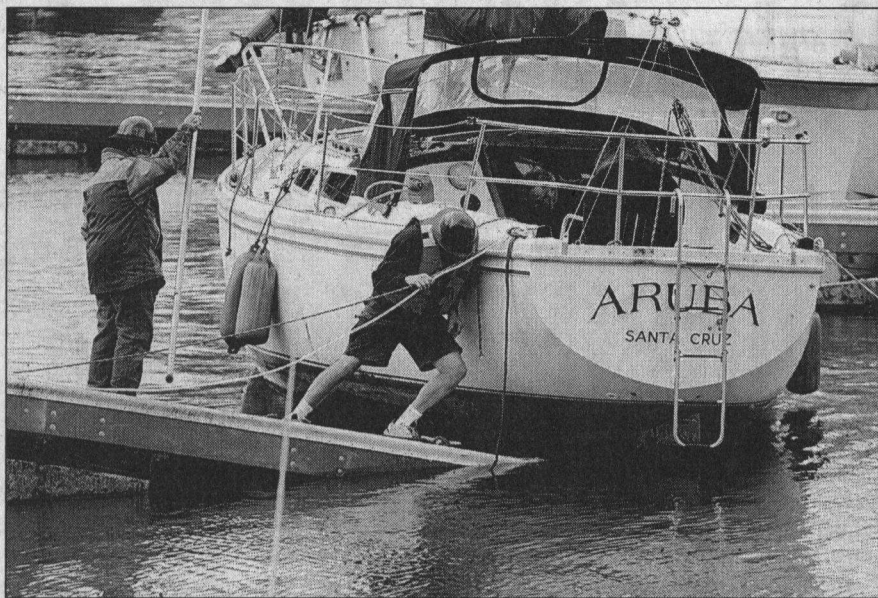
He is worried about the recreational salmon season opening April 2.

"That is the busiest and most lucrative time of year," he said. "If the launch ramp can't open April 2, that could ruin my business."

His own boat is among those stranded in the harbor. He was in line to get his boat hauled out for prep work. Now owners of leaking boats get priority.

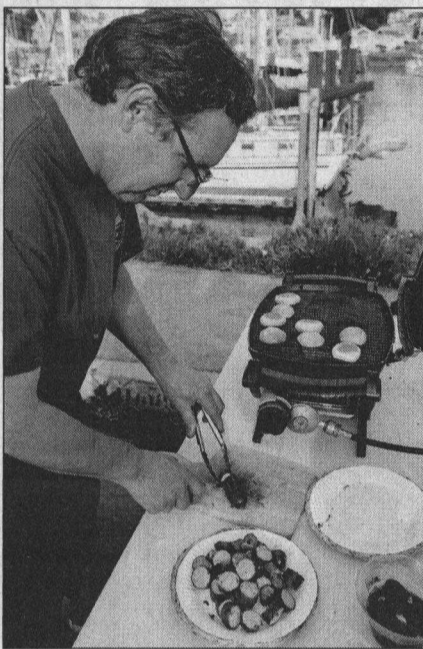
"The harbor people are in scramble mode, getting stuff out of the water," he said.

At Monterey Bay Marine, which repairs boats and engines, owner Dave Babica is bracing for whenever the



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Work crews struggle to move a sailboat off one of the sunken docks in the upper Santa Cruz harbor Wednesday.



KEVIN JOHNSON/SENTINEL

Denis Bassano grills sausage at the Santa Cruz harbor on late Wednesday afternoon. Bassano says that during the summer, about 60 people show up for the barbecue.

launch ramp reopens and customers can bring their boats out of the water. He bought the business in October after working there six years.

"Between the dredge and the sonar technology, it shouldn't be hard to make sure the channel is clear," he said, predicting, "We're going to be incredibly busy."

Ken Stagnaro of Stagnaro Fishing and Whale Watching was one of a small number of boat owners who high-tailed it to sea to escape the tsunami. He did the same thing last year after an earthquake in Chile triggered a tsunami that ultimately was smaller than expected.

"Our whole business is that one boat," he said, referring to the Velocity, a 60-foot vessel that weighs 40 tons. "It's one of 15 boats I know that beat out the surge."

He was following the advice of old-timers who said, "When you have a tsunami, you take it out to sea."

When he came back in at 5 p.m., he saw chunks of dock banging into boats.

"That was the stress part," he said. "I had my deckhand sleep on the boat all night."

He had to cancel three charter trips Saturday, 35 bookings for whale-watching, 21 for fishing and a burial at sea.

The last was the hardest to cancel, he said, because people plan well in advance and come from all over.

Stagnaro is not worried about the safety of the channel.

"They're combing it over pretty good," he said. "The floating debris is all out in the ocean."

With harbor excursions on hold, so are paychecks.

"We canceled all our charters," said Jessie Queniart, manager at Chardonnay II Sailing Charters, which takes up to 49 people for sunset sails on its 70-foot yacht. "Unless a charter goes out, employees don't get paid."

The timing hurts, since the busy season starts with daylight saving time,

## DOCK ACCESS

### OPEN DOCKS

**SOUTHWEST HARBOR:** AA, A, B, C, D, E, F and FF

**SOUTHEAST HARBOR:** L, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T

**NORTH HARBOR:** V, W, X, J, G-2, G-3

Power and water have been restored and live-aboards may return, but hazards remain and power outages may exist in some areas.

### CLOSED DOCKS

**SOUTHEAST HARBOR:** M

**NORTH HARBOR:** H, I, U, G-1 (south end)  
Access may be granted during daylight hours.

Boat owners who need access to their vessel or want to report safety issues can call the harbor office 475-6161 or the information station staffed by the Coast Guard Auxiliary between 8 a.m. and noon in front of the harbor office, 135 Fifth Ave.

The Coast Guard is posting updates at <https://www.piersystem.com/go/doc/3919/1041311>

which was last weekend.

When customers call the Kayak Connection, all Katrina Wagner can say is that the harbor is closed until further notice or suggest they try the Moss Landing location.

"That's still running," said Wagner. "That harbor is westerly facing. It wasn't hit as bad."

The company keeps its kayaks on the U dock, which broke off and floated away.

"We can't move the kayaks and we can't touch them," said Wagner. "It's a \$25,000 fine if you go on a dock that's closed."

Wagner, who has worked at the kayak business for three years, said March is when whale-watching trips go out, and spring break, which always boosts business, is next week.

Larry Beaman, a Farmers insurance agent in Scotts Valley, was busy Friday morning contacting policy owners. He had insured 20 boats at the harbor.

Six were complete losses; two were sunk and the others were damaged.

A used boat worth \$30,000 can be insured for about \$400 a year, Beaman said.

Priscilla Marks, an agent with Moore and Miller Insurance Agency in Soquel, had a client lose a boat.

"In all the years I've written policies, going on 30 years, I've never had a boat that sunk," she said.

Wednesday night's "beer can races" organized by volunteers were canceled, as are the Santa Cruz Yacht Club races this weekend, according to commodore Greg Hawes.

"Two of our members are live-aboards and had to evacuate," Hawes said. "What's really important is that no one got hurt."

Yacht Club members gathered Wednesday night for the BBQ that usually accompanies the Wednesday night sailing races and to share their tsunami stories.