



UNIVERSITY *of* NEW HAMPSHIRE

UNH Pier Facility Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) (updated September 2008)

1. What roles will the pier play in the mission of the University of New Hampshire and, in particular, the marine programs at the University?

Over the past decade, marine-related education and research at UNH have developed to the point that they are now a major center of excellence for the university. Many of these new activities have been in areas of marine aquaculture and fisheries management, coastal ocean mapping and marine ecosystem health; areas which have stimulated partnerships with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The University's pier in New Castle will support these university programs and our partnership with NOAA, and address critical vessel support needs that cannot be met on the Durham campus or by the existing Coastal Marine Laboratory.

2. What specific activities are planned for New Castle?

The pier provides dock space and support for university vessels (18' – 50' in length), possible winter and storm berthing and provisioning support for UNH/Cornell Shoals Marine Lab vessels, and critical in-water space for larvae collectors and nursery culture cages that support activities in the laboratory and at field sites in the Gulf of Maine. It will also serve as the home port for a new NOAA coastal mapping vessel and is able to accommodate infrequent berthing for visiting NOAA vessels. The pier support facility includes office space for pier operations and coastal ocean mapping and charting initiatives, a dive locker, a workshop, and both tempered and unheated storage.

3. What are UNH plans for additional development in New Castle?

UNH has no plans for development beyond the pier facility and some modest improvements to the existing Coastal Marine Laboratory. In fact, given the restrictions associated with the on-site historic structures, there is no real estate available for expansion even should UNH so desire.

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4. *To what extent will the public have access to the University property?*

With the exception of the on-site historic structures, which are inherently unsafe, and the pier, which will have controlled access for security and safety reasons, University-owned land on the New Castle property will be open and generally accessible to the public. Particular areas of interest include the cove where kayaks and other small vessels may be launched and the ocean-front portion of the property to which improved access will be provided as part of the pier support facility project.

5. *What about the existing UNH Coastal Marine Lab?*

Located on the northeast side of Fort Constitution, UNH leases the *1903 Mines Building* from N.H. Parks and Recreation for its Coastal Marine Lab. With the exception of a larger dive locker, the proposed pier support facility will not duplicate any of the existing CML facilities or operations. As such, it is expected that the existing Coastal Marine Lab will continue to operate out of the Mines Building for the foreseeable future.

6. *Why is it important for the University to locate the pier facility in New Castle rather than elsewhere on the New Hampshire seacoast or the Piscataqua River? Did UNH consider other alternatives?*

UNH did look at various other locations for the pier facility and concluded that the New Castle location is the only realistically viable site available. The site in New Castle is in fact uniquely and ideally suited for the pier facility. It provides easy access to the Gulf of Maine, has sufficiently deep water for berthing of NOAA's SWATH vessel, is protected from the brunt of ocean storms by the Fort Point peninsula, and has the full-strength seawater critically needed for the under-pier research activities.

7. *Could the new pier have been any shorter?*

No. UNH had originally sought to permit a pier with length matching that of the earlier Coast Guard pier (i.e. 500' beyond the approach trestle). However, for budgetary reasons and in response to public concerns, the University scaled the pier back to 325'. This shorter pier represents the minimum that will satisfy the University's programmatic needs. Specific considerations include available length and depth of both fixed pier and floating dock berthing, and available under-pier space for larvae collectors and nursery culture cages.

8. *Did the pier affect the mooring field in Hart's Cove?*

Other than some being temporarily relocated during construction of the pier, private moorings have not been affected.

9. *What about the eelgrass beds located close to the pier?*

UNH is critically concerned about potential ecological impacts of its activities. As such, day to day pier and vessel operations are closely monitored to ensure that the existing eelgrass beds are not damaged. Furthermore, pier construction activities were significantly restricted in order to protect the beds.

10. The UNH parcel is close to the New Castle Historic District. Hart's Cove is a quiet anchorage. Is the UNH pier facility and related activity compatible with this setting?

Hart's Cove has been the site of marine-related activity for centuries. For example, in our study of the area we have located ballast stone in the cove known to have come from early English sailing ships that used the cove for anchorage. Furthermore, military wharves and piers have been located in the cove since the early 1800's.

Recognizing the historic and residential character of the neighborhood, our pier support facility is not one large building, but rather a series of small single-story buildings tucked against and into an existing hillside. The exterior architecture is compatible with the typical building materials and style of New Castle. Furthermore, to ensure an appropriate aesthetic, the pier facility design documents were subject to review by the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources.

11. Will the pier facility be a "24/7" operation? Will there be constant noise and excess light from the facility?

Research activity at the Coastal Marine Lab is technically a "24/7" operation; however, it is much more a 7 day per week operation than it is a 24-hour staffed operation. The new pier facility will be similar, with the majority of activity occurring during normal work hours, unlike military or Coast Guard operations, which occur around the clock. Furthermore, ship-board public address systems typically have their outside speakers turned off when in port.

As for site and pier lighting, the old pier had high pressure sodium floodlights that were oriented such that they directed considerable glare toward Harts Cove. For both the new pier and the site, UNH has installed higher quality light fixtures with improved cut-off features that direct light downward to the areas in need of lighting, with minimal spill-over. As such, "light pollution" has been significantly reduced as compared to when the Coast Guard was using the pier.

UNH and NOAA are committed to being good neighbors and to conducting our operations in the least obtrusive manner possible.

12. How will UNH activity affect traffic in New Castle?

VHB, the University's environmental consultant, prepared a traffic study that demonstrates UNH activity will have negligible impact.

13. Is the University subject to local zoning and building ordinances and site plan regulations?

The University used New Castle town ordinances and regulations as guidelines in our planning and design efforts. However, it is true that the University, by law, is not subject to local zoning and building ordinances and site plan regulations. We are, however, subject to review and approval at both the state and federal levels on a number of issues, including environmental assessment, wetlands review, historic structures, etc. Also, at the local level, there was a public hearing held before the New Castle Board, at which UNH presented its final plans for pier facility, entertained questions and received public comment. In fact, the designs of the pier and associated support facility were significantly shaped by public input.