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Mooring buoys in Mystery Bay require County and State permits

Port Townsend, WA—Jefferson County’s Department of Community Development is in the midst of verifying that the recreational mooring buoys in Mystery Bay have either a valid Shoreline Substantial Development Permit (SDP) or SDP exemption approval (XMP) as required by the Jefferson County Code. Current statistics show that 64 buoys were counted in the bay last month.

“We are working to bring the mooring buoys in Mystery Bay into compliance this summer,” said Al Scalf, director of DCD. “To that end, we’ve sent letters to the current permitted buoy owners asking them to update their mooring buoy information. We are also requesting other buoy owners without County permits to come to our office or call us about their mooring buoy status.”

Why are mooring buoy permits needed in Jefferson County? Permits and permit exemption approvals identify proper buoy design, location and installation in order to: prevent degradation of aquatic habitat and aquaculture resources, avoid navigation hazards and obstructions, avoid vessel swing path conflicts and encroachment on private property, and ensure any buoy rentals or leases are code compliant.

Jefferson County Code says that no more than two boats are allowed to moor on any single buoy and *all buoys must be clearly marked with the owner’s name, address and phone number*. Private recreational mooring buoys on State-owned aquatic lands are not authorized for residential (live aboard) or commercial purposes.

In addition to Jefferson County permits or exemption approval, mooring buoys must be registered or licensed through Washington State’s Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and may require a Hydraulic Permit Approval from the State Department of Fish & Wildlife. Of the 64 buoys counted in Mystery Bay last month, only seven are legally permitted buoys with both Jefferson County and DNR.

Informational brochures are available from DCD and DNR regarding buoy permitting requirements. Also, a Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application (JARPA) form is available to help coordinate multiple permit application requests to the different jurisdictional agencies. Go to the County’s Web site at www.co.jefferson.wa.us or DNR’s Web site at www.dnr.wa.gov to download applications.

If you have any questions about acquiring a County mooring buoy permit, or JARPA, please contact DCD at 379.4450. If you have questions about County mooring buoy compliance, please contact Molly Pearson, Code Enforcement Officer in DCD at 379.4458 or via e-mail at mpearson@co.jefferson.wa.us.

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