

# Surge Narrows Marine Infrastructure Revitalization Project



## Subject Area

The subject area is located at Surge Narrows located on the northwest side of Read Island – on the southeast side of Hoskyn Channel within the Strathcona Regional District’s Electoral Area C and approximately 24km northeast of Campbell River. The subject area is comprised of a historic tenure area and consists of an old boardwalk, Surge Store building, and floating dock that has been relatively inactive since the Surge Store closed in 2007.

## History of Surge Narrows Store (Tipton’s Store)

It was said that the Tipton’s had left the civilized world at Mrs. Tipton’s insistence to get Mr. Tipton off the Scotch whiskey that was about to do him in. Nell and Robert Tipton became storekeepers by happenstance. Their neighbors often borrowed staples from them, as happened one day when Constable Dawson paid them a visit in 1927. “Do they every repay you?” asked Dawson. “Sometime, but not always” replied the Tiptons. “Why don’t you open a store?” he asked. The Tiptons were surprised by the suggestion and refused at first, until Dawson explained how easy it was. He promptly filled out a five-dollar license, and they were in business. The Tiptons started out small, converting the unfinished bathroom in their house into a store. The business grew rapidly, so they moved into a cabin on skids on the beach below the house. In about 1935 they replaced this with a large store on pilings that remains on-site today. Throughout this time the store remained the social and commercial hub for Read Island and outlying areas. The store sold an amazing variety of items such as groceries, hardware, clothing, shoes, gumboots, paint and building materials. A population of similar size eighty years ago had two or three stores and two schools, but Doug and Theresa Beyerstein had to close the old Surge Narrows Store in 2007.

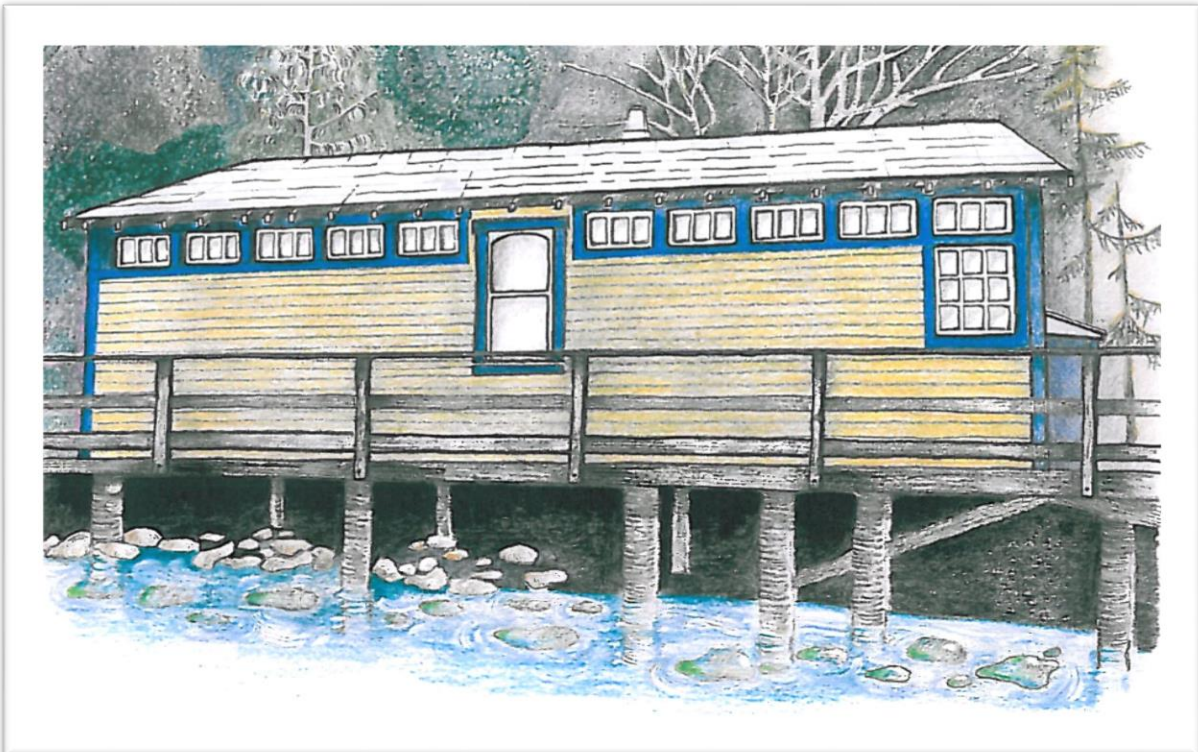


## Current Use

The Surge Narrow Store site and the SRD's adjacent government wharf is the centre of activity for Surge Narrows and the outlying community. The Surge Store site and its associated boardwalk, ramp and floating dock system has historically been the hub of the community and provided residents of outlying areas many amenities. Since the close of the Surge Narrows Store in 2007, the connected floating dock, ramp, and boardwalk have been left in a state of disrepair and require removal and replacement.

Immediately adjacent to the Surge Narrows Store site sits the Surge Narrows government wharf, which includes a multi-use dock essential for access to Read Island, commercial and industrial crews, school traffic, postal service, boat repairs, tug/barge deliveries of large materials and seaplane dock. Residents of Read and adjacent islands currently use this government wharf to gain access to the Surge Narrows School and Post Office. The Post Office is currently located in a metal shed on the main float of the government wharf. Mail is received by seaplane at the seaplane wharf located on the government wharf. The site is used for loading and offloading of goods and supplies. A 4,500 kg derrick used to offload supplies is located on the southwest corner of the wharf head.

The Surge Narrows site serves the 70 upland Read Island residents in addition to approximately 1,000 residents from the outlying Electoral Area C community and 500 non-resident recreational users yearly. Read Island continues to be the hub of the Surge Narrows community given the services it provides. The current government wharf houses the post office, which provides postal service delivered by floatplane to 75 properties in the area. Read Island is also home for the Surge Narrows school, which serves 9 schoolchildren, 6 preschool children and one teacher, most of which arrive by boat from Quadra Island, Sonora and Maurelle Islands. The Island also includes a community centre which is located just a short walk up from the dock as well as the community-built school gym that is part of the school. The post office, school and community buildings are critical to Read Island and the greater Surge Narrows community. Almost all community events, such as lunches, training, meetings, ad hoc get togethers, Christmas concerts, art fairs, children's play dates, etc. are held at Surge Narrows, due to its central location and accessibility in all weather, by all residents.



## Project Scope

Revitalize the tenure area and reconstruct the wharf, wooden boardwalk and historic store.

- Re-mediate the tenure area including the removal of derelict floats, buildings, and assorted mixed waste.
- Install 307m<sup>2</sup> square feet of new concrete docks, aluminum quad accessible gangway, and timbered standing wharf (includes meeting platform).
  - The new floats will provide a much needed 100m of additional moorage.
  - The standing wharf, gangway, and docks system will be quad accessible.
  - The new floats, gangway, and standing wharf will provide moorage and emergency access to the upland for first responders, residents and members of the public.
  - Approximately 15m of the new floats will be designated seaplane accessible for emergency and non-emergency services.
- Reconstruct approximately 213m<sup>2</sup> of boardwalk, elevated deck and standing wharf that provides access to the Government Wharf to the north and the upland from the proposed concrete docks.
- Reconstruct the Historic Surge Narrows Store Building (111m<sup>2</sup>) to function as a new community meeting place, trading facility and storage area. The building will be accessible to residents and public of all abilities.
  - The building will provide service amenities such as washroom facilities which area currently not provided.
  - The building will provide much needed dry storage space for items brought the community by boat.
  - A cell phone booster will provide much needed cellular service to the site.

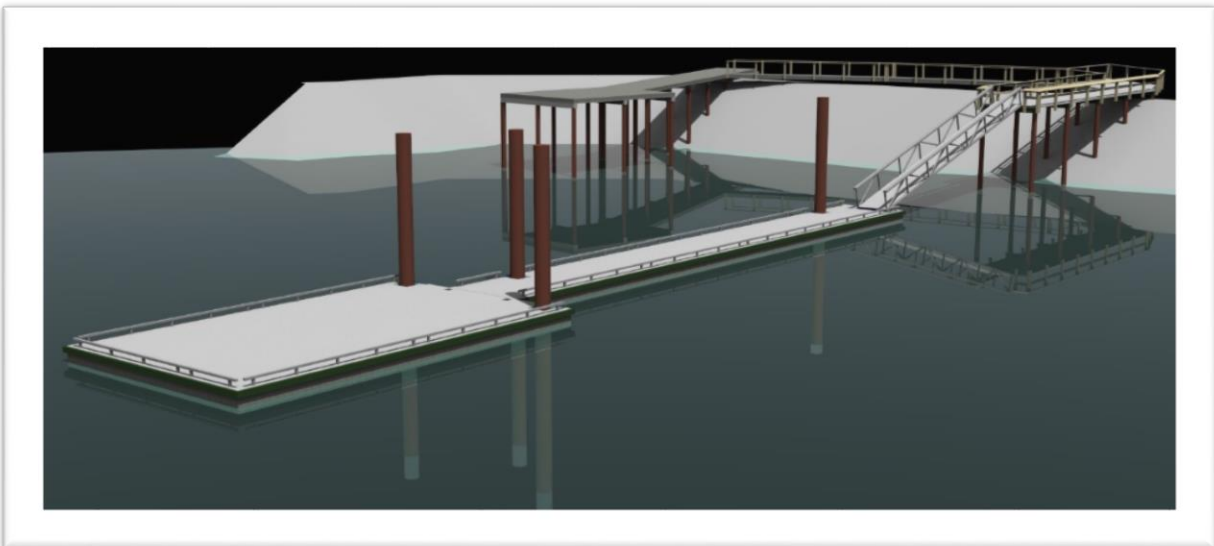


## Improved and/or More Reliable Marine Infrastructure

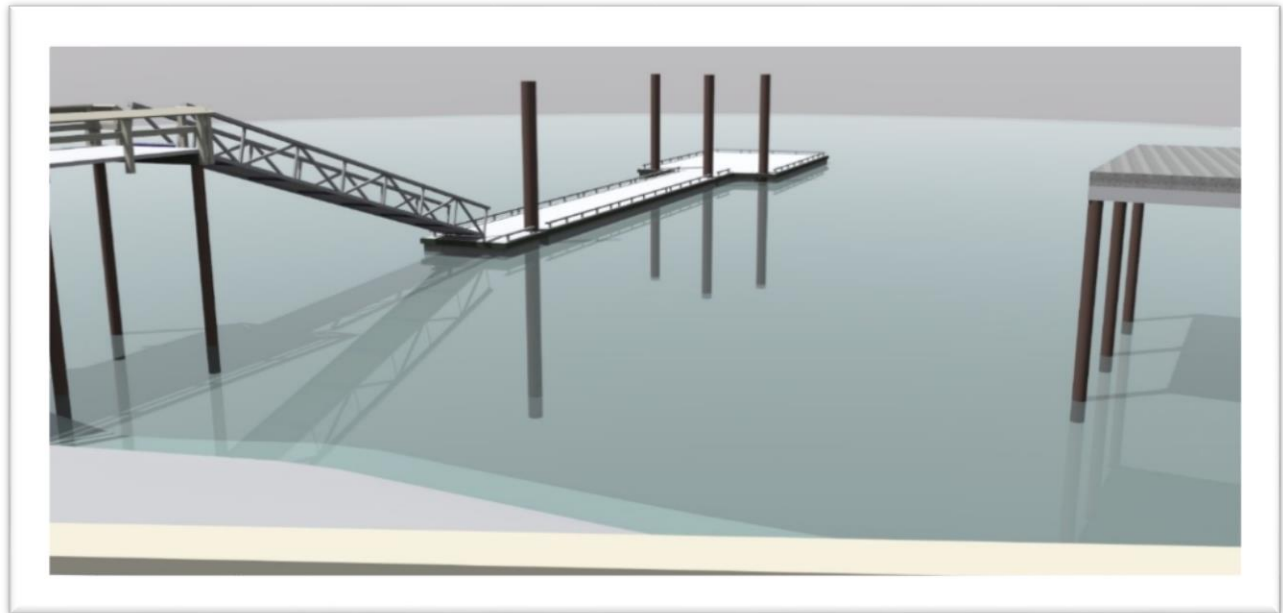
Surge Narrows (on the west coast of Read Island) and Evans Bay (on the east coast of Read Island), serves the estimated 70 permanent residents of Read Island. The Regional Marine Transportation Hub map included with this submission, indicate the strategic location of Surge Narrows wharf to local Read Island residents and other residents from near-located islands; and easy boat accesses from Surge Narrows to Hoskyn Channel dock (on the east coast of Quadra Island), road access across Quadra, ending with a short ferry/boat distance to Campbell River. The City of Campbell River provides a large variety of emergency, medical, commercial and cultural amenities.

All of the property owners of the 143 private properties on Read Island, must use marine vessels to get to and from the Island. Between 1000 - 1500 people a year visit the Post Office (with full time Post Mistress) on the wharf. The Post Office has 80 mailboxes and 75 boxes are presently in use by local Read Island residents and residents from other islands in the area. An accessible dock would provide safer and better access for the children coming to school as over half the students at the Surge School currently come by boat.

The demands placed on Surge Narrows, functioning as a community hub is increasing. In addition to the Post Office and the school, other nearby buildings also contribute to having visitors come to Surge Narrows. Almost all community events, such as lunches, training, meetings, ad hoc get togethers, Christmas concerts, art fairs, children's play dates, etc. are held at Surge Narrows, because it can be accessed in any weather, by anyone interested in attending the events. The Surge Narrows wharf serves an estimated 1,000 people per year and typically operates over capacity year-round. Boats are often docked 3 to 6 boats deep because of lack of moorage space. Limited facilities make it difficult for the Surge Narrows community to have reliable, accessible marine infrastructure.



Due to growing populations relying on the Surge Narrows hub, the existing marine infrastructure at Read Island is insufficient for the current population that relies on it. Grant funds are desperately needed to improve the Surge Narrows marine infrastructure. Without grant funding it will be difficult (if not impossible) to expand the marine infrastructure so that the demands can be met. Obtaining grant funding to support the revitalization of the Surge Narrows Store wharf would allow the Surge Island Community access to the community hub Read Island has become. The reconstruction of the dock would provide additional moorage to upland Read Island residents. An accessible dock would provide safer and better access for the children coming to school as over half the students at the Surge School currently come by boat. The reconstructed facility would aid island commuters, post office users, service repairmen, resource workers and provide a safe harbour for local mariners.



### **Improved Community Infrastructure**

In addition to additional dock space, the community is in need of improved community infrastructure, safer buildings and improved communication. The Surge Store building is proposed to be used as a community hub Read Island residents and mariners from outer islands. The building would accommodate a trading centre as the resilience of the community relies on the trade many staple items including, homegrown organic vegetables, homemade bread, baking and eggs, as well as other products such as homemade greeting cards, local art by a number of local artists and local crafts, all of which currently lack a local venue for trading. The community has also expressed interest in using the building for luncheons and dinners to provide an establishment for local connection and socializing.

Reliable, on demand, power and lighting in community buildings and on the docks would enhance safety and allow better use of the facilities. Solar, micro hydro and geothermal sources would decrease carbon emissions, remove objectionable noise pollution, and reduce service cost long term, as well as potentially provide a demonstration site. Upgraded walking trails, public environmental and historical education capability, power, heating and sanitary upgrades to community buildings would support permanent residents. With better services, both Read Island locals and outer island residents would benefit from increased safety, reduction in the need to travel outside the community, and enable shared resources.

## Improved Emergency Support

The current lack of reliable communication including cell phone service throughout the area has many ramifications. Improved communication infrastructure is critical in communications to potentially affected parties. Island residents have many concerns from risk of fire/wildfire, natural disasters, stranded mariners and medical emergencies. Because of remoteness and difficult communication, local islanders already use their own private resources to respond to medical emergencies, marine rescues, first- response wildfire fighting, sanitation and litter cleanup. Due to limited resources, residents are burdened with the pre-emption, by visitors, of the moorage, parking and ferry facilities that islanders rely on in their daily lives. This often necessitates night time boat travel on the open ocean or the missing of weather windows (both safety concerns), expensive layovers in town, or choices made not to go to town even when the need is becoming pressing.

At present, the number of outlying residents boating in the area is increasing. The weather, tides, and currents have resulted in local residents having to carry out rescues and support on many occasions. The lack of communication infrastructure and the aging local population makes this more difficult with each passing year. A fatal situation occurred at the Surge Narrows dock approximately one year ago. Support from emergency responders might have arrived sooner had there been cell phone coverage. The current lack of reliable communication infrastructure makes residents and visitors alike vulnerable in day to day and emergency situations.

Improved communication infrastructure is critical in communications to potentially affected parties. Improved communication infrastructure would allow residents and outside service agencies to respond to emergencies both faster and better. Outside assistance could be contacted more readily and information on the emergency details prior to arrival. In light of this, the revitalization project includes the purchase and installation of a cell phone booster for improved communication.

## Evacuation

During evacuation route planning it is also prudent to review alternate routes such as logging roads, privately owned roads as well as other modes of transportation, such as rail or marine. The maritime links connect this region to the Comox Valley Regional District, the Sunshine Coast Regional District and Strathcona Regional District. Read Island has an ongoing logistical, historical, and cultural connections with the Tla'amin, Lund, Klahoose, and Cortes Island communities and is geographically close to the northern portion of the Strathcona Regional District, making for potentially safer travel on smaller private water crafts who have to evacuate these areas due to a wildland interface fire. Evacuation planning involves studying available transport modes with more detailed understanding of availability and limitations of personal and commercial. A new and enhanced wharf at the Surge Narrows Store will increase its ability to function as an evacuation destination for residents in the aforementioned areas whose only mechanism to evacuate are their personal marine crafts.