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NEWS RELEASE

Yacht Club Commodores: Channel Dredging Needed Now!!!

While they may be fierce competitors during their various inter-club fishing contests, when it comes to public safety this boating season, the members of the Smithtown Bay and Stony Brook Yacht Clubs are clearly on the same page.

In a June 2nd letter to Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, County Legislators and various Smithtown and Brookhaven Town officials, the two Club Commodores requested the expeditious dredging of the channel leading out to Smithtown Bay. The area in question is limited to where Stony Brook and Porpoise Channels merge and the navigation buoys turn in a northwesterly direction leading into the Bay and out to the sound.

“At dead low-tide”, said Mike Kozyrski, (Smithtown Bay Y.C. Commodore), there is oftentimes less than a foot of water in the channel leading out into the L.I. Sound. Should a boater experience a serious medical emergency out on the water, the Bay Constable or other emergency personnel may be unable to transit the channel in order to assist them. In our opinion, this is a personal tragedy simply waiting to happen.”

Denis Lynch, (Stony Brook Y.C. Commodore), concurred in this assessment noting that if local personnel are unable to reach the boater, they would have to wait for assistance from Port Jefferson or the USCG station at Eaton's Neck. *"By the time they arrive", he noted, "it may be too late"*.

Kevin Rooney, Dredging Project Coordinator for the Smithtown Bay Yacht Club said that the low-tide/low-water situation had now reached a critical stage due to the continued shifting of sand and bottom material into the channel. *"It is not an overstatement to say that the very lives of our Members, their families and all other boaters are potentially in serious jeopardy due to inaction by various government agencies to prioritize and complete the necessary dredging of the Smithtown Bay Channel. The situation is dire...and it is totally unacceptable"*, he said.

The Commodores of both Clubs contend that this critical channel should be placed on a regular maintenance dredging schedule in order to allow unrestricted access to the L.I. Sound for boaters and emergency personnel.

"This is not about boater convenience", Kozyrski and Lynch stated. "This is simply about the health and safety of all boaters from our two Towns; something clearly needs to be done and we hope that our county and town officials feel the same sense of urgency that we do for the safety of our club members, friends and neighbors."

Both Commodores noted that they will commence a comprehensive and strenuous grassroots lobbying campaign in the weeks ahead to expedite any scheduled channel dredging.

For inquiries or further information, please contact Kevin Rooney at (631) 360-0200 or via e-mail at krooney@ohili.org.