

## Jo-Ann Taylor

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**From:** stripercapt@aol.com  
**Sent:** Friday, September 10, 2010 5:17 AM  
**To:** taylor@mvcommission.org  
**Subject:** fishing pier

This is in response to David Nash's "many reasons for the fish pier where it's planned" letter to the editor. I will do my best to respond point by point.

I am by no means an expert on fishing or marine biology, but I am an avid fisherman who turned his love into a profession. I run a charter boat and also assist in running the Skipper out of Oak Bluffs harbor. I have been fishing these waters since I could hold a rod, and yes, I learned to catch Bonito off of the SSA dock in Oak Bluffs back in the late 60's and 70's. As in his column, there are great tales of fishing off the dock, some of them mine, until it was prohibited by the SSA, not due to homeland security, but to the fact that people waiting for the boat were getting hooked while we were casting, and the SSA workers had to constantly clean up after us fisherman.

The last thing the SSA wanted was for their customers to have to wait for the boat with the smell of bait, blood etc roasting in the sun.

Since reading the column, I decided to call local tackle shops, and talk to fishermen around the island as Mr. Nash had done. I only told the tackle shop person that I had a fishing rod, and wanted to catch some dinner. Locally I was told to hit the bridges between Oak Bluffs, and Edgartown or the sea wall at the bend. If I had a car, head up to Menemsha, or Lobsterville beach among some of the suggested fishing hot spots. Not one shop told me to cast along the side of the SSA dock. As this would enable me to reach any spot that one would be able to from the proposed fishing pier, I thought that maybe as I had heard at the last meeting, "fishermen will not openly share their hot spots". As I drove around, I spoke with people I saw fishing, some were not aware of the proposed pier, most said "fish where the fishermen are." Over the past few months, I have not seen anyone fishing from the shore beside the SSA dock.

Good fishing needs bottom structure, such as rocks, boulders, mussel beds etc. There is plenty of structure under the SSA dock, but there will be no structure under the proposed pier (a 200 foot cast away). The bottom is all sand, very shallow, and at low tide one could most likely wade out  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the 300 foot pier and still be able to cast. Believe me, I would have saved a lot of fuel costs if fishing around the SSA dock was so good. I would have simply anchored 200 feet off the dock (distance between the proposed pier and SSA dock) and fished, but the fish are small, and rarely do you catch one that meets the minimum size requirements. Fish stocks for bottom fish have declined, as the catch size has increased and bag limits decreased, hence the population of small fish around the dock. There is no cost to the town for the construction, or significant maintenance. What constitutes significant? The town, I believe is responsible for clean up (there is no water), garbage removal, 24 hour surveillance / police enforcement, harbor master costs to patrol boats tying up. I wonder who will be the benefactor of liability? I am sure if a fall occurred, on a plastic bait bag, at night (there is no lighting), the town will point to the state, and the state will point to the town. This could be one costly fishing pier. I am not sure there would be much benefit directly on the opposite side of the SSA dock, other than cosmetic, it need help! Mr. Nash cites there is a "true swimming beach", as opposed to the false one on the proposed side, that would be impacted. The last time I looked there is about 200 feet of tar and rocks sloping down to the waters edge. There are other areas, hint, look to where people fish!

How do you enforce a general public fishing pier? If you want to fish, bring a rod, but your significant other does not have rod, can he/she join you on the dock? Six college students, down here for the Summer, decide to hit the dock at 2am to fish, two have rods, but they decide to share them on a rotational basis. Do the four not on rotation stand on shore to wait their turn? The other five state public fishing piers, in this state, which are not as close to residential areas, allow the public to walk out on the piers. This pier will serve as a scenic walk way, hang out area and will be difficult to enforce a "fishing only" policy just like the other fishing piers in our state. When fishermen go out to fish, and they are with other fishermen, they talk, sometimes loud. Some fishermen bring beverages, and over the course of the night may talk even louder. I have witnessed this hundreds of time. On a quiet night, no wind, it is amazing how even talking at just slightly louder than normal tone can carry. If you lose "the big one" there could even be a shout of profanity, I have been guilty of this! Teaching kids to fish can be done anywhere there is water, pier not necessary. There are several charter/party boats available to those with handicaps if they opt not to fish off the bulk head in Oak Bluffs, or either bridge along the beach road, or Memorial wharf in Edgartown, or off any of the beaches if they are able to make their way to waters edge. This pier will be open 24 hours a day, we cannot say when it will get most use for fishing. It will be across from a bar, and could pose problems. I think we should all take a hard look at the feasibility of even having another structure jut out from shore. With each structure, erosion and deposit will occur, somewhere. As concluded in Mr. Nash's letter, "one of the biggest issues" is that the SSA provided access to fish and it was taken away. If my memory serves me, there always was a "no trespassing" sign on the locked gates. We all simply hopped the fence to fish. The SSA tolerated us fishermen, until we lost the privilege due to the mess we created, and being rude to some of the customers waiting for the boat. Access is still available on either side of the pier for surf casting anglers to get a line wet. There is always a cost, for something

perceived as free. More research is needed to determine if an alternate location is better, or if a fishing/walkway pier is even needed in our town.

Harvey Russell  
Oak Bluffs

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