

Within the next few days, the SSS Board is going to meet to make a decision on the mooring field that has the potential to significantly impact all members – even those that don't have a boat on a mooring.

The most recent estimates show if the Squadron chooses to lease the mooring field from the state and not open the mooring field up to non-members, the cost of the mooring field will be approximately \$220,000 per year - \$130,000 for the lease and \$90,000 in overhead costs that will be incurred under the lease. If the \$220,000 cost is divided between the mooring users, that would equal approximately \$150 per month or \$1800 per year for each of the 120 moorings. If the mooring field costs are divided among all 870 Squadron members, including those that do not use a mooring, the cost would be approximately \$250 per year per SSS member. These fees would be in addition to the annual membership fees. Of course, there are also many other possibilities that fall in between these two extremes.

So far, the majority of Squadron members that are giving feedback on this issue are mooring members and many are stating that the \$150 per month for a mooring is too high a cost. Many are proposing that at least some of those costs should be spread to the remaining 750 members that do not have a boat on a mooring in order to bring down the cost for boats on a mooring. Small boat owners may not giving their feedback to the Board because they do not understand that the decision might impact them.

If you have an opinion on whether the Squadron should even enter into a mooring field lease (obligating us for costs of approximately \$220,000 per year) or how those costs should be paid, it is important that you email the Board with your input. Emails sent to sarataos@newmex.com will be tallied and considered at the next Board meeting. Please email sarataos@newmex.com within the next two days to ensure that your opinion is heard.

The mooring field is an integral part of the SSS and we need to do everything in our power to keep the mooring field. This should not be an issue that divides us, but an issue that we unite to solve, no matter what size boat one owns or how we use the Squadron. We should look to solve this issue in a way that is most equitable to the majority of the members but also preserves the fundamental rights of all members.

Personally, I am concerned about the idea of spreading mooring costs to all members for the following reasons:

- The purpose of the Squadron is to promote sailing. Part of making sailing accessible to more people is keeping our costs as low as possible. The idea that 86% (750) of the members, who do not even use the moorings, would have to pay higher costs to sail to keep costs low for 14% (120) of the members does not seem equitable, nor does it fulfill the mission of offering low cost sailing to only offer low cost sailing to a select subset of members with the result of offering higher cost sailing to other members.

- Even if the mooring fees are allocated primarily to mooring owners, the monthly fee of \$150 per mooring is still much lower than any other alternative in town. The next lowest cost moorings, at Marina Jack's, start at \$250 per mooring and go up from there depending on the size of the boat.
- The Squadron storage charges are already such that the small boat owners pay more than do the large boats owners do for the square footage used. For example, if one compares the yard storage fees paid for a sunfish (14') versus a 14' standard sailboat on a trailer versus a 30' standard sailboat on a trailer versus the dinghy storage fee for a mooring owner (currently the only storage fee paid to the Squadron by mooring owners), the following is the cost per square foot of storage yard used:

Sunfish	\$3.57 per square foot stored
14" Sailboat on trailer	\$1.39 per square foot stored
30' Sailboat on trailer	\$1.58 per square foot stored
Dinghy (Mooring field users)	\$2.62 per square foot stored

Per square foot, the sunfish, laser and other small boat owners pay more per square foot for storage than any other type of boat stored at the Squadron. Spreading mooring field costs to non-mooring owners will only exacerbate this issue.

- Although the membership fees are the same for every Squadron member, small boat owners and members without boats use significantly less of the primary SSS cost centers. To raise the membership fees that small boat owners or members with no boats pay to further subsidize large boats would make this inequitable situation even worse. The following is a quick summary showing the Squadron cost centers and what type of boats use those cost centers:

	Large Boats	Small Boats	Members w/No Boats
Clubhouse, restrooms, public areas	X	X	X
Ramps, improved/cement	X		
Large cleared no parking area needed for trailers to back into/out of ramps	X		
Dock – North, Wave Fence	X		
Dock – Mid, opposite hoist	X		
Dock – Short, N of ramp	X		
Dock – Long, raised bridge	X		
Dock – South	X	X (YSP coach boats only)	
Hoist	X		

Boat Work Area	X		
Personnel/FTE Resources			
Manage, stock, clean common areas	X	X	X
Account for and collect daily type usage fees – overnight docking, use of work area, dinghy rental, rescue boat charges, hoist charges, mooring inspections	X		

- One of the most pervasive arguments for spreading the mooring costs over all members is the idea that at \$150 per month the moorings will be too expensive for many of the current mooring owners to pay. I am sympathetic to this. On the flip side, we already have an issue where just the basic membership fees that all SSS members pay are too high for some people. We are losing several Luffing Lassies this year because they cannot afford the Squadron membership fees. It is logical to assume that if the base Squadron membership fees are raised by some amount, that we will lose more members. Given that we will lose members no matter which allocation of costs is chosen, it does not seem equitable to choose to spread the mooring costs to all members (870 people) when only 120 of the members will directly benefit from the mooring lease. If cost truly is the primary factor, then we might be better off taking another look at the option of leasing through the City of Sarasota and getting the \$130,000 in fees waived. As it is, asking 870 people to pay more to avoid the risk that 120 might not get a first-come-first-served mooring is not a reasonable choice considering the composition of the entire membership of the Squadron.
- Although the Squadron has renegotiated its land lease with the City of Sarasota for the next year, there is the strong possibility that future leases with the City will result in a higher land lease cost. If the City land lease cost increases, membership fees to all members will increase. Given that the general membership is already facing the potential for higher membership fees due to increased land lease costs, it may not be reasonable to also look to spread mooring costs to all members as well.
- There is a high probability that the general membership is already going to be absorbing a substantial amount of mooring field costs that may not be included in the estimated \$90,000 in overhead costs. Here are some potential costs that the general membership would be liable for even if the mooring owners are charged for all the direct mooring costs:
 - Financing costs. Although the SSS must pay the entire \$130,000 lease to the State on the first day of the lease, unless 100% of the mooring owners pay their portion of the costs on the first day of the lease, the SSS general membership is in essence loaning the mooring owners money or financing their lease.
 - Vacancy costs. The SSS is responsible for 100% of the lease costs and associated overhead no matter whether the moorings are leased or not. It

is reasonable to assume that at least a portion of the moorings will be vacant at any given time, so we will not be collecting revenues from them. So even if the fees are set that mooring owners are paying 100% of the mooring costs, if any mooring is vacant at any time, the general SSS members are effectively absorbing those costs.

- Legal fees. It is reasonable to assume that there will be at least some mooring owners who will default on their payments to the Squadron. Although there is a legal process for evicting those boats, it is not quick nor is it inexpensive. The general membership will be absorbing those costs.

The concept of the Squadron as “One Club” is a good one. We need to ensure that we work hard to protect the rights of all club members. On the other hand, with a One Club concept, it is also important to remember that we have a responsibility to all members, not just a certain type. Following the One Club concept, it would be fair to support mooring field users by entering into a mooring field lease; however, as the costs of the mooring field are substantial and only directly benefit a small portion (less than 14% of the members), it is fair that those members who directly benefit should pay the costs associated with the lease and the related overhead costs.

Regardless of my personal views on how costs are allocated, I believe that keeping the mooring field is in the best interests of the Squadron and should be championed by all members. Members have been incredibly supportive of each other and are trying to solve this issue fairly. The Board is seeking member input and highly values what members are saying. Meetings have been respectful and it is obvious that people are working together in good faith. No decision will be perfect, but working together we can make choices that will be in the best interests of the Squadron as a whole and are equitable. Please respectfully let the Board know your preferences so they can be counted.