ATTACHMENT 6

September 16, 1999

Mr. Steve Roberts
Department of Water Resources
Sacramento, CA

Re: South Delta - Effects of Weirs

Dear Mr. Roberts,

Thanks for taking my call last month to listen to my comments on the effects of the weirs. We are writing to facilitate incorporation of these comments into a report and to re-state our concern with the effects of the weirs. We realize that our problems are a small part of a large water distribution issue that will only become larger with each passing year as the population increases and the demand for water for farming, urban uses, environmental preservation continues to rise.

We probably have not adequately expressed our concerns while the various delta water fixes were discussed. Not being professional hydrologists, we find it difficult to assess what the impacts of the various proposed projects may be at our end of the delta, so, we are reacting to the most recent impacts we have experienced after the project has been completed (Weirs).

On August 15th, we experienced extremely low tides that created severe access problems. The fact that the water levels can be lowered to such a degree with no thought to the water-front property owners and boaters is surprising.

It is our request that the weirs be removed as they are having a significant impact on Hammer Island and the South Delta below the weirs. These impacts are as follows:

1. The weirs contribute to the siltation and erosion of the waterways above and below the weirs due to increased velocity of flows due to a reduction in the number of channels to draw from.

2. The weirs make the waterways unnavigable and other waterways now have new hazards exposed with the lower water levels. Due to the lower levels, some channels become very narrow, making it more difficult to steer around other boats. This creates hazardous boating conditions and increase likelihood of boats colliding, with other boats, rapid beaching on hidden shoals or striking submerged hazards

3. At Hammer Island, access to the levee parking is not possible at some low tides as the docks are completely beached. The docks at several of the homes are completely beached. At one house site, the constant beaching and floating has ruined one hydro hoist and boat house, it has collapsed on the mud. The docks that still float in the lower water have ramps now so steep that it is dangerous to use them.

   We have attached photos taken on 8/15/99 and 8/29/99 at low tides. These photos show the effects of the artificially low tides on the access to the docks as well as the siltation that has occurred over the last few years.

Discussion of the Effects:

Siltation, Erosion

The siltation in our part of the Delta has been accelerated over the last 10 years and very dramatic over the last three or so years. This area of the delta has experienced accelerated siltation and erosion due to a combination of recent floods, increased export flows and construction of the temporary rock weirs. Of course there is natural sedimentation that would be occurring if the two export facilities were never built. The entire delta system is a man made flood control system that will always need maintenance in order to maintain flow capacity.

The erosion on some parts of Hammer Island has also been accelerated. There has been an erosion problem for 40+ years due to the export pumps, however, the increased exports have accelerated this process. Pat Jacques, whose house sits on the Northern tip of the island has spent over $100,000 on various bulkheads to keep her portion of the island from washing away. JoAnne Frudden has also spent tens of thousands of dollars as have Bill Middleton, Bobbie Landers and many others in order to retain soil eroded by the fast current.

Ironically several of the sites on the West side of the island have had such significant siltation that the docks are only functional during 50% of the tide cycle. Arrivals and departures must be timed with the tide book. This condition has been exacerbated by the lowered water levels from the weirs.

Lower water levels

As discussed, the weirs reduce the water levels by approximately 18" on the downstream side of the river. This amount probably varies due to other factors such as the tides, export flows, location on river.

On Sunday, August 15, 1999 there was a low tide in the late afternoon that was the lowest tide ever observed by myself, JoAnne Frudden, Bill Middleton, Bobby Landers and everyone else we talked to. I toured the river in my 16' outboard, all the boaters I passed in the vicinity of Del's were shaking their heads in disbelief, they were concerned that they could even get back to Del's the water was so low. This occurred when all the boaters who launched at Del's for the day were heading home after a day of boating.

The Docks at the Hammer Island parking lot were completely beached. The docks on the West side of Hammer Island were also completely beached to varying degrees at approximately 8 of the home sites. This made access to the impossible island from the parking lot and for many of the homes it was impossible to leave the island.

This was more than a nuisance, it was a potential life-safety issue. If a resident had to leave the island for medical reasons, they would have needed a ride from someone else whose dock that still had water, however, it would not have been possible to get to their car since the levee docks were beached.

Example of another negative impact of the lower water levels:

Carl Landers (home owner on Old River) struck a submerged object with his boat Sunday. August 15, at the low tide and bent the propeller shaft. Will the Department of Water Resources reimburse Mr. Landers for the cost to repair the boat as this most certainly would not have occurred if the department had not artificially lowered the natural and regularly occurring water levels.

The San Joaquin River and Old River have apparently become irrigation canals whose main purpose is transport water for the water contractors. Never mind that there were property owners and boaters who considered the flows and tides a given quantity and enjoyed the delta for its scenic and recreation potential long before the State and Federal projects.

If these impacts are acceptable to those who proposed these measures, then what are the limits of the impacts. Ten years from now will the drop in low tide be -24" or - 30" as more and more water is taken from the Delta. Even more distressing is that these impacts were not even considered when the weirs were proposed.

Solutions:

It has been stated on several occasions that the Department of Water Resources would propose to dredge portions of the South Delta in order to maintain the waterways. This could correct the siltation caused by the weirs and pumps. If the dredging was extensive enough, it would allow all homeowners to use their dock facilities at all tide levels as was possible several years ago, prior to the weirs and prior to the recent increase in export levels.

We support the proposal to dredge our area of the Delta, we need this to be done soon.

The dredging, however, would not mitigate the negative impacts caused by the installation of the weirs and the increased exports of water. The tides would still be lower than the natural levels, the currents would still be excessive, siltation and erosion problems would continue. I doubt that the water contractors want to pay for dredging on a regular basis. Permits and spoils discharges will only be more difficult in the future. There needs to be another solution to the farmer's pumping problems.

1. Water exports should be adjusted to correspond with tide levels. Pump at high tides and shut down at low tides. More Seasonal pumping with long term storage. The month of August is probably the most recreation intensive month on the Delta This is not the month to suck the Delta dry and lower water levels to record lows.

2. Dredge Delta Channels to flow capacity that occurred 50 years ago. The natural siltation process will continue to raise the bottom level of many of the Rivers' channels. As I stated earlier, the Delta is an artificial system. Natural rivers overflow their banks and start new channels if existing channels become too shallow. Weather patterns that created the floods of 1997 will occur more frequently. Decreased flow capacity will not help water flows during the next flood.

3. Allow farmers to adjust their pick-up positions to get to deeper water until more permanent solutions can be implemented.

4. Do not install the permanent weirs as has been proposed, this is an expensive band-aid solution to a very complex problem. The weirs serve to eliminate a lawsuit by the farmers at the expense of all those property owners and boaters below the weirs. The weirs create as many problems as they solve and are not an acceptable solution.

Background

My wife and I are property owners on Hammer Island. I have seen the changes in the area over the last 30 years, some good, but mostly a degradation of the environment and a river that has declined compared to the river of the early 20th century up to the 1950's when the Federal Project was installed.

My family has photos of Hammer Island from the 1920's through the present. Before the water export facilities were installed, the banks were lined wild willow trees, reeds, shrubs, down to the water. Tide differentials were just a few feet, the water flowed very slowly. Bulkheads were not necessary to keep the banks from eroding. The channels were very green and lush and the water had greater clarity. Compare this picture to miles of rip-rap where plant materials are regarded as an impediment to maintenance of the levees. Fast currents that caused the unprotected islands located within the waterways to vanish if not protected by bulkheads.

In the late '60s and early '70's, the banks of the levees were littered with garbage. I remember watching floating islands of debris containing a mixture of litter and bubbly scum. More recently there were the incursions of the water hyacinths, the elodia, floods, Chinese mitten crabs, the future Mountain House development and the weirs.

The floating garbage is less frequent and the population in general is more conscious of pollution. The hyacinth seems under control thanks to a spraying program.

Needless to say this part of the Delta is not an easy place to have a house. However, the Delta's wildlife, recreation and proximity to the Bay Area make it an attractive destination and we are saddened to watch it deteriorate further.

In conclusion, we ask that the impacts to our area be considered when reviewing alternative solutions to Delta water problems. We appreciate the hearings and meetings that give us the opportunity to get information from the various departments. Please call us if you wish to get further information regarding these impacts. thanks.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Lyman
Laura L. Lyman
Hammer Island Home Owners

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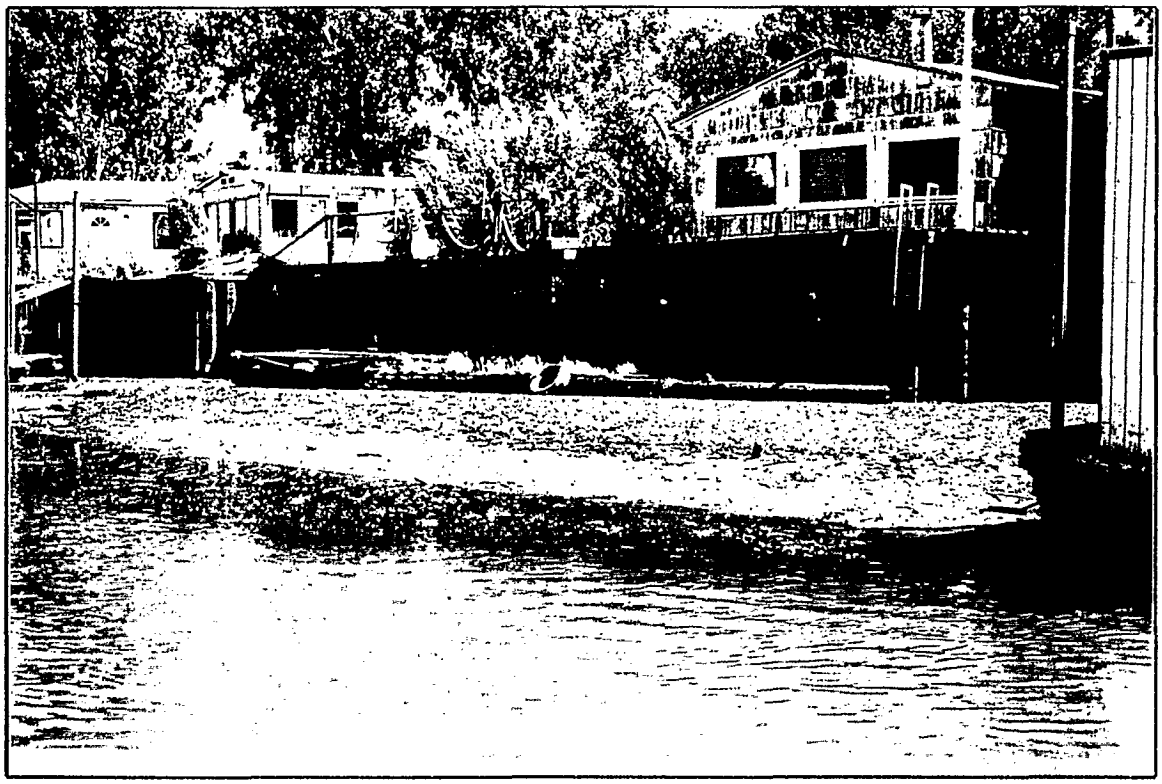
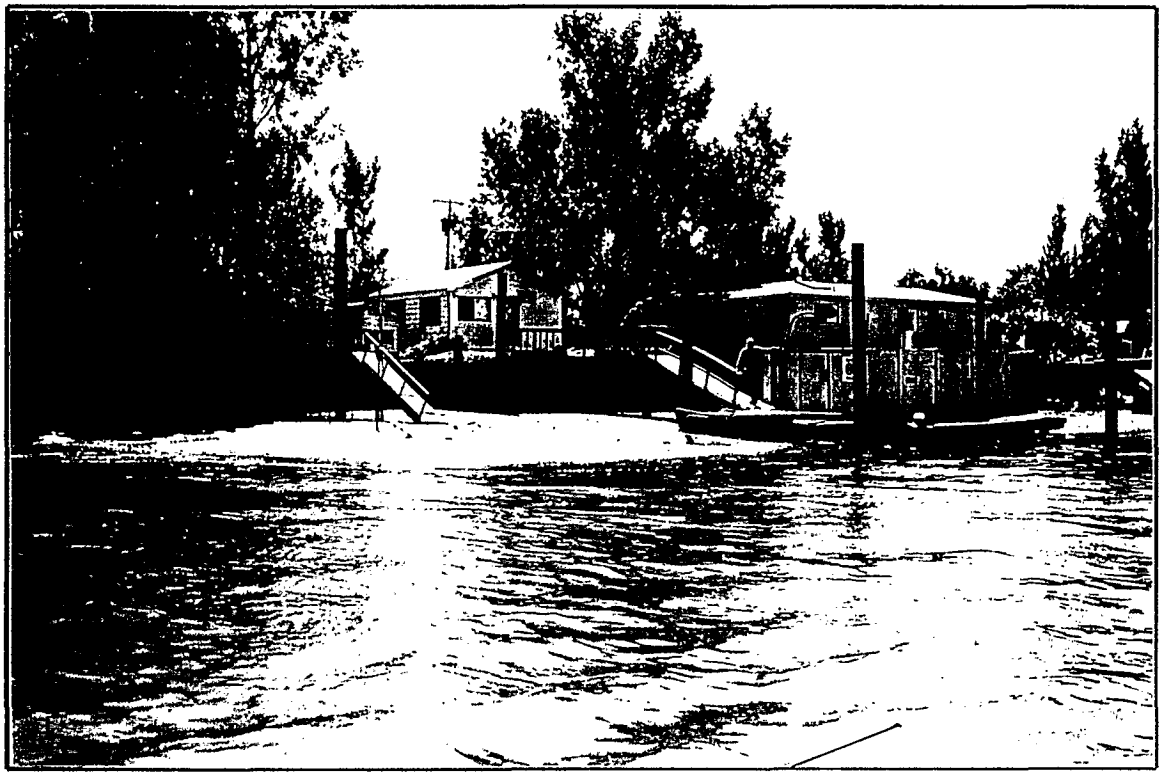
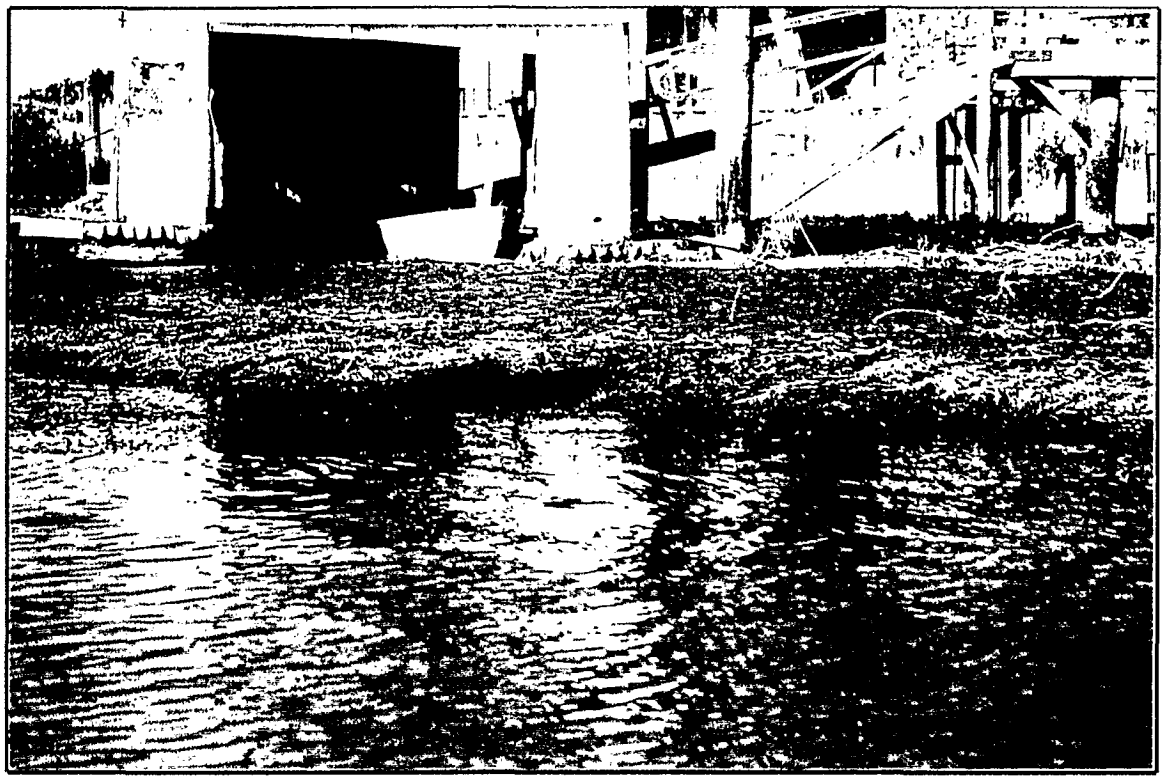
cc: Stein Buer, Assistant Director, CALFED Bay-Delta Program
Mark Holderman, Temporary Barriers Program, Department of Water Resources



SILTATION AND VERY LOW TIDE AROUND HAMMER ISLAND - 8/15/99



SILTATION AND VERY LOW TIDE AROUND HAMMER ISLAND - 8/29/99



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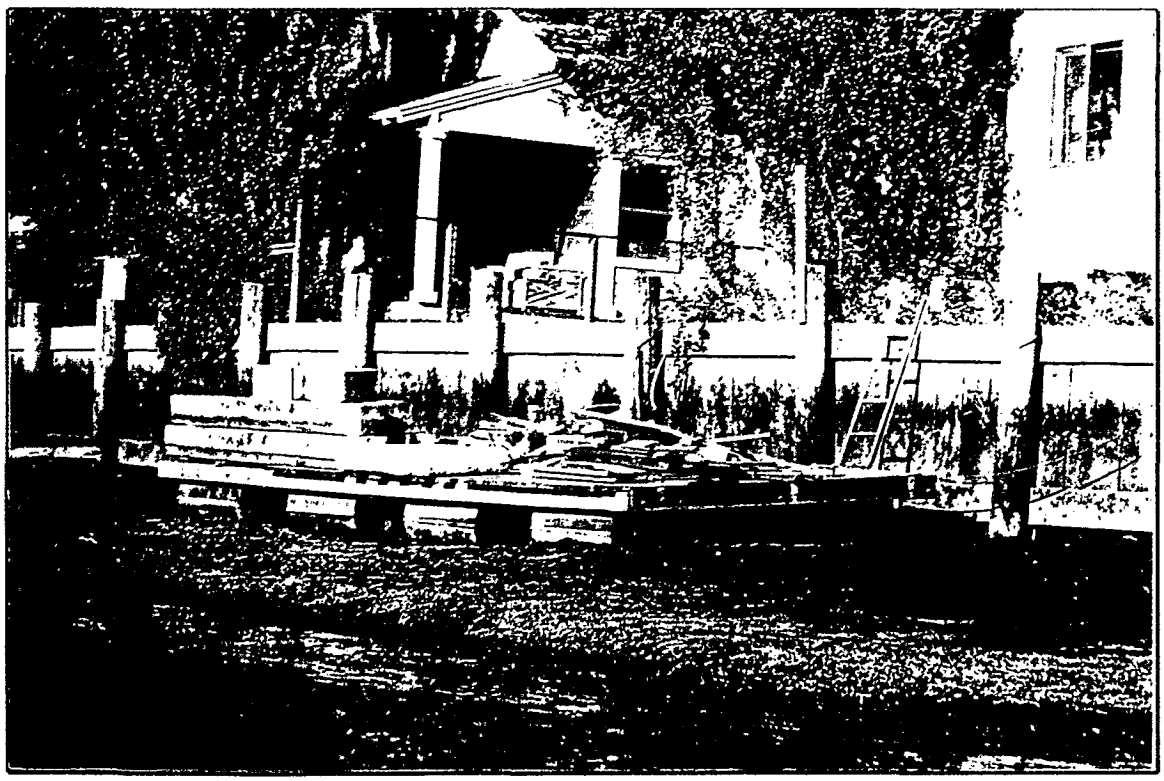

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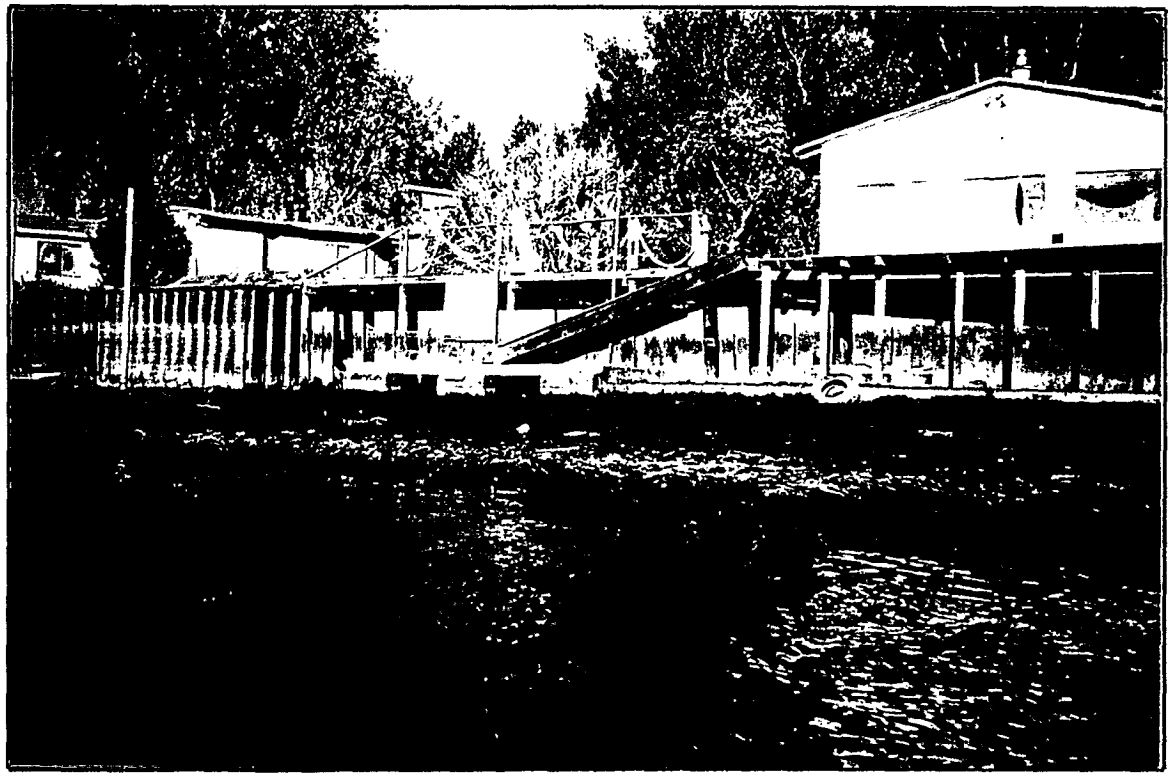

SILTATION AND VERY LOW TIDE AROUND HAMMER ISLAND - 8/15/99

SILTATION AROUND MIDDLETON ISLAND - 8/15/99

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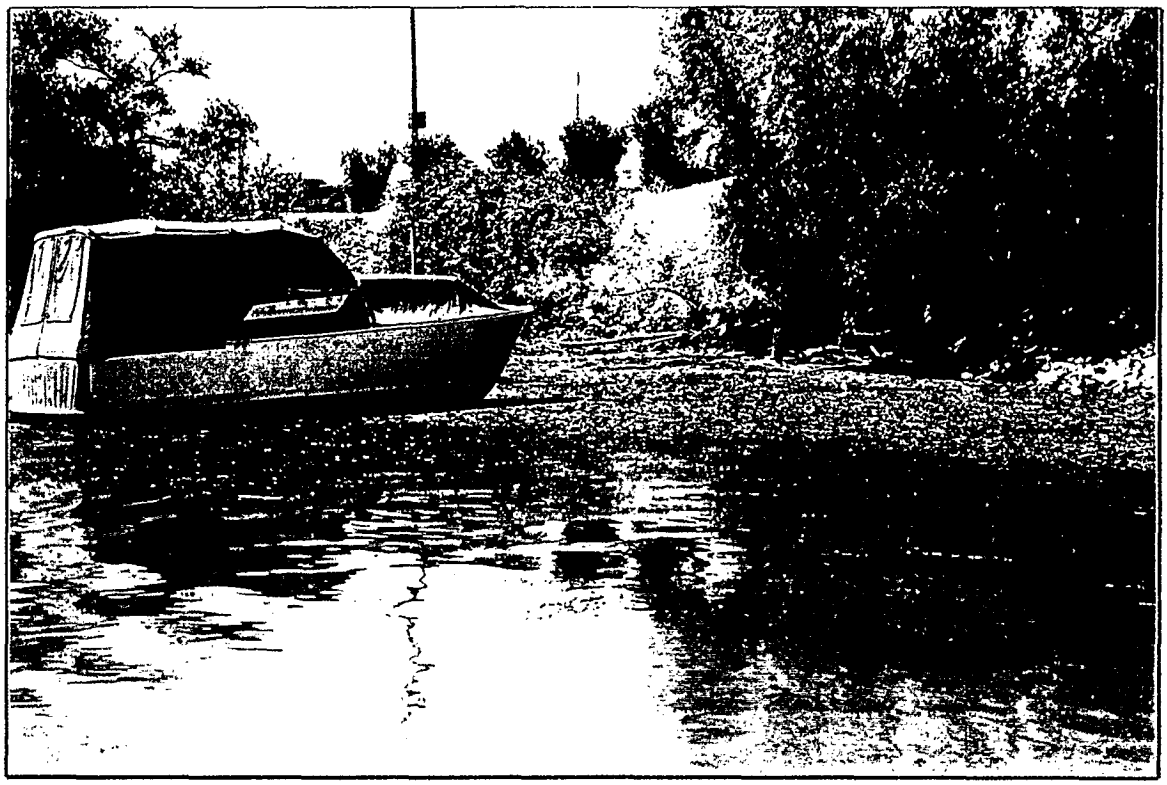
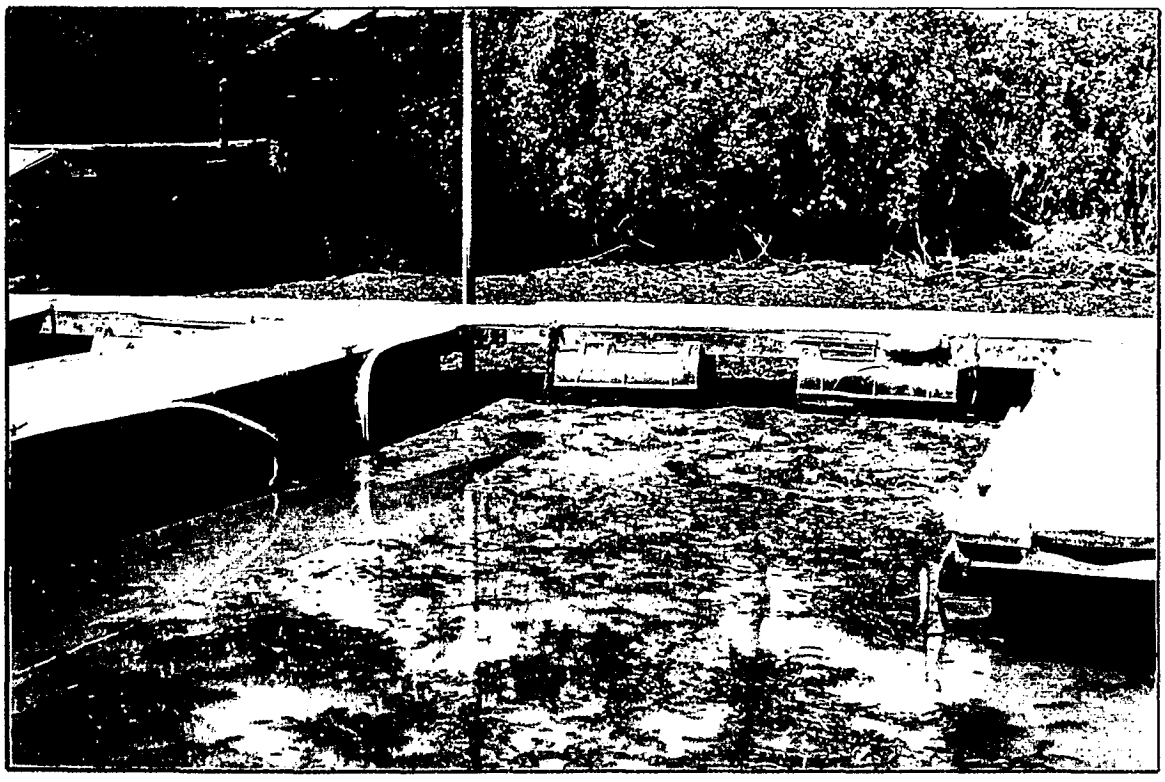


HAMMER ISLAND HOMEOWNERS DOCKS - 8/29/99



HAMMER ISLAND HOMEOWNERS DOCKS - 8/29/99

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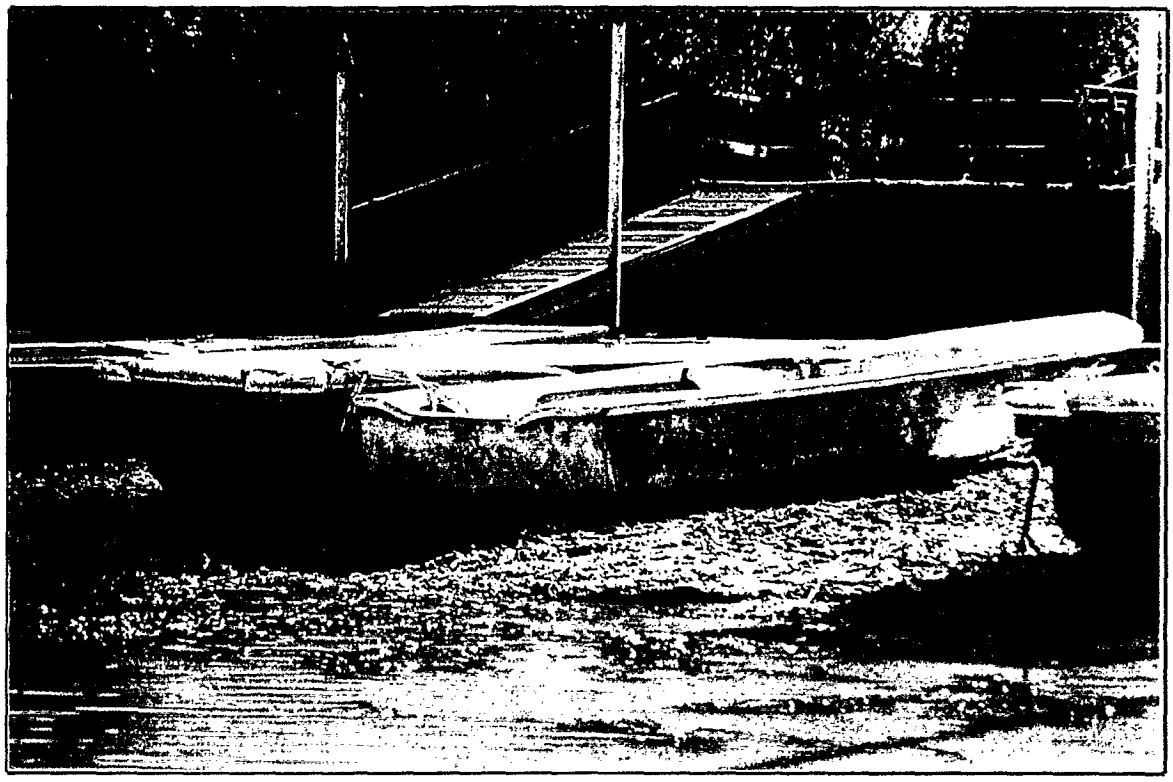
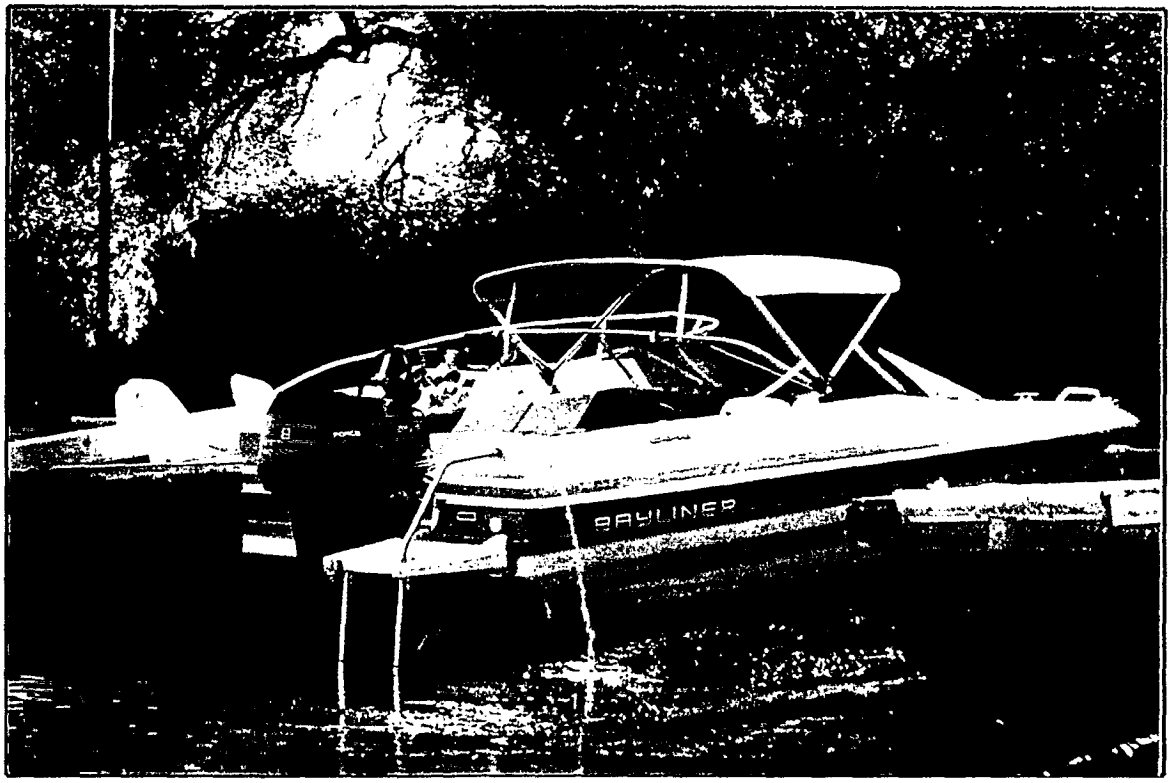


HAMMER ISLAND HOMEOWNERS DOCKS - 8/15/99



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