



## **Southold VOICE Information Session How to Build, Protect or Repair Your Bulkhead March 12, 2016**

Sixty residents attended to hear information and have their questions answered by 3 experts on the topic of Bulkheads.

The panel was moderated by Marie Beninati, Chair of SoutholdVOICE and included:

Dave Bergen Associate Dean at SCCC and former Southold Town Trustee  
Rob Herrmann Principal, En-Consultants  
Dan Higgins Owner, Higgins Marine Construction

Q. What does the Town of Southold require to build, repair or alter a bulkhead?

- A wetlands permit is required from the Town and two other agencies, but the Town does not require a building permit for a bulkhead.

A permit to build a bulkhead must be approved by three agencies that regulate construction on the water. The complexity of the permit process usually requires using the services of an expediter with experience in the process.

- Army Corps of Engineers
- Southold Town Trustees
- Department of Environmental Conservation

Q. Are bulkhead builders licensed? No

- Neither dock nor bulkhead builders are required to be licensed
- Town Trustees have considered licensing builders for bulkheads and docks but have not acted on the topic
- Buyers need to do due diligence before choosing a builder. Ask for references, review the builder's website, ask your neighbors.

Q. Is bulkhead construction supervised by the Town the way building construction is supervised? No

- Since bulkheads do not require a building permit there is no review at stop points during construction to review the workmanship.



- There is also no due diligence for bulkheads during buy or sale of a house

Q. When do I know I need to replace my bulkhead?

- Give it the “eye test”
- Does the shape look like a snake with protruding sections
- Are the backings coming loose
- Are pieces falling out?
- If it is made of creosote or CCA (chromated copper arsenate) it should be upgraded to vinyl.

Q. What lessons were learned about bulkhead from the Sandy storm?

- Creosote and CCA bulkheads were the first to go.

Q. If my neighbor’s bulkhead is in disrepair and impacting my bulkhead what is my recourse?

- Bulkhead owners have filed suits under the Nuisance Laws but has not been successful.
- The only recourse is to reason with your neighbor and try to influence them.

Q. What is the best way to protect waterfront property and bulkheads from erosion?

- Leave the natural vegetation in place, don’t cut it down
- Add more native plantings to your waterfront.
- Town trustees will allow a 10 year permit to cut phragmites, but the DEC will not allow this.
- The DEC has designed a waterfront plan to manage phragmites and replace them with native plantings like groundsel bush
- Consult with the Southold Town Trustee’s office before you plant.

Q. If my waterfront home is on a creek can I build a bulkhead?

- Southold Town no longer allows bulkheads on waterfront property on creeks.
- Alternatives to protect the land are: low sill bulkheads constructed below the high water line, a wall of low stones, natural plantings.
- Grass at the waterfront is not a good buffer since water erodes the sand under the grass.
- Jute matting laid in the water will encourage natural plants to grow up through the jute. The jute dissolves in time.



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