

# 6 Public Involvement

Public involvement is important to a community-based parks and recreation plan. The citizen members of the Marina Advisory Committee provided valuable input, evaluated the draft plan and made a recommendation prior to final adoption. A web-based project priority survey, public workshops and public meetings were also conducted to augment and inform the Port Commission and Marina Advisory Committee's discussions. A public hearing was held with the Port Commission prior to final adoption.

## 6.1 Project Priority Survey

The Port of Bellingham conducted a project priority survey as a part of the planning process for updating the Port's six-year Comprehensive Park Recreation and Public Access Plan. The purpose of the survey was to help identify people's priorities and preferences for proposed park, trail and boating facility projects contemplated in either the Port's Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements or Strategic Capital Budget forecast.

The survey consisted of seven qualifying questions, two open ended questions and asked participants to prioritize twenty different projects over five different service areas within the Port District.

Initially, the survey was rolled out on Saturday, February 25, 2017, between 1 pm and 6 pm at the Northwest Recreation Expo held at the Bellingham Cruise Terminal. Exhibitors at the Expo included various outdoor recreation gear and equipment retailers, guides, outfitters, health & wellness services, race organizers, stewardship and public lands agencies. Public attendance at this event was estimated between 2,000 and 3,000 by event organizers. Attendance at this event resulted in the Port randomly receiving 61 surveys. Of these 61 surveys, 49 were considered complete, 5 only completed the qualifying questions without prioritizing any projects and 7 appear not to have noticed the remaining projects on the reverse side of the form.

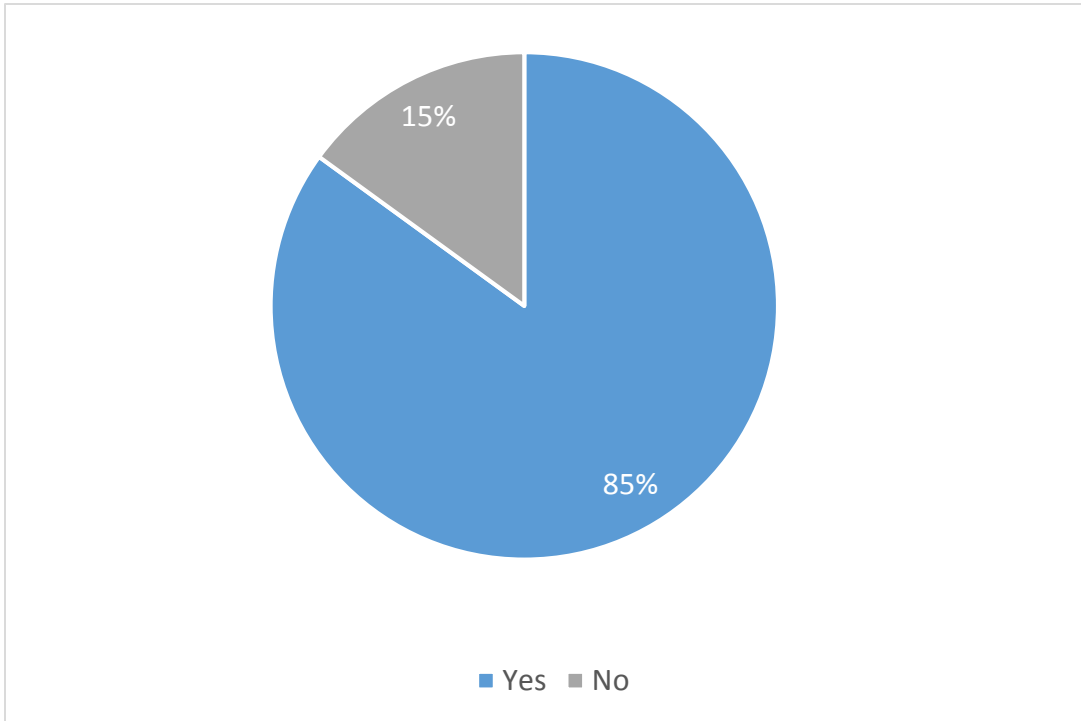
Thereafter, this survey was made available online using an application called SurveyMonkey® to any member of the general public who wanted to provide input between March 21<sup>st</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The Port publicized the opportunity for the public to participate in the survey through its Facebook® page, Twitter® feed, its Blaine and Squalicum Marina Customer email address database, on the Port's website on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017, in open session at Port Commission meeting April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017 which is also broadcast live via its YouTube® channel and at the Port's Marina Advisory Committee meeting on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Also, On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 between 11 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., in partnership with the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Foundation, the Port hosted a "Take a walk on the Westside" open house promoting the potential location of a proposed Airport trail project in which it also solicited public participation in the project priority survey. This additional electronic media outreach effort and open house resulted in an additional 898 responses, of which 821 responses were considered complete.

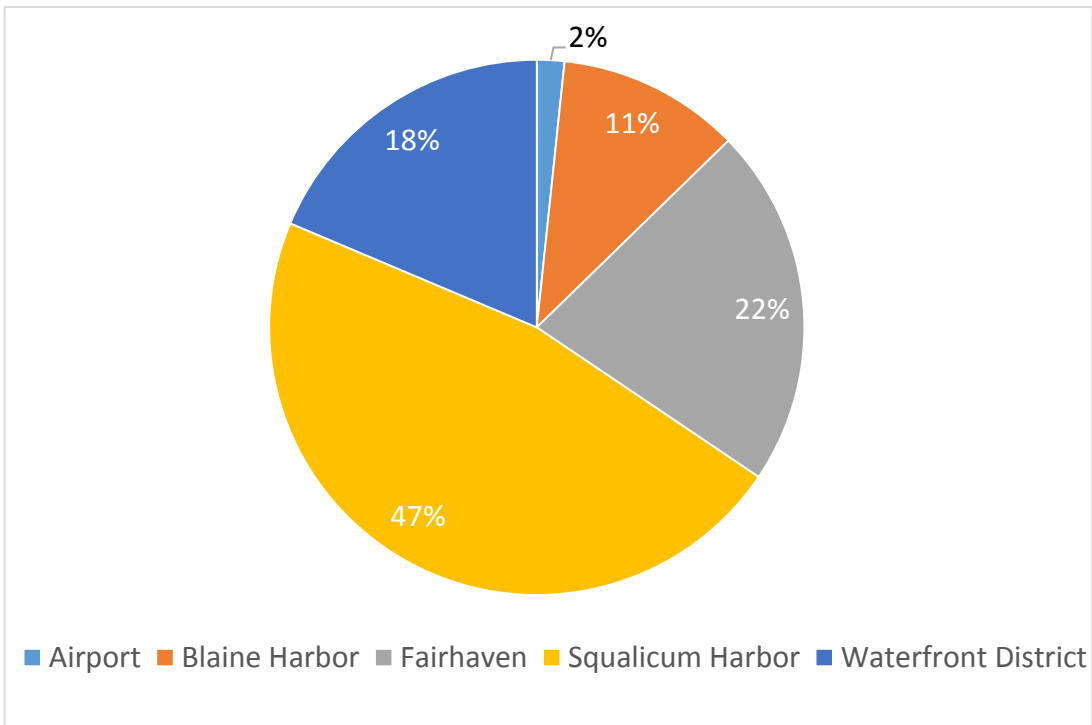
Respondents were asked whether they lived or worked in Whatcom County; what Port service area they lived closest to; whether they owned a motorized vessel, its approximate length and where it was stored or moored; whether they owned a small hand powered recreational craft and their overall satisfaction with Port facilities.

The results are as follows:

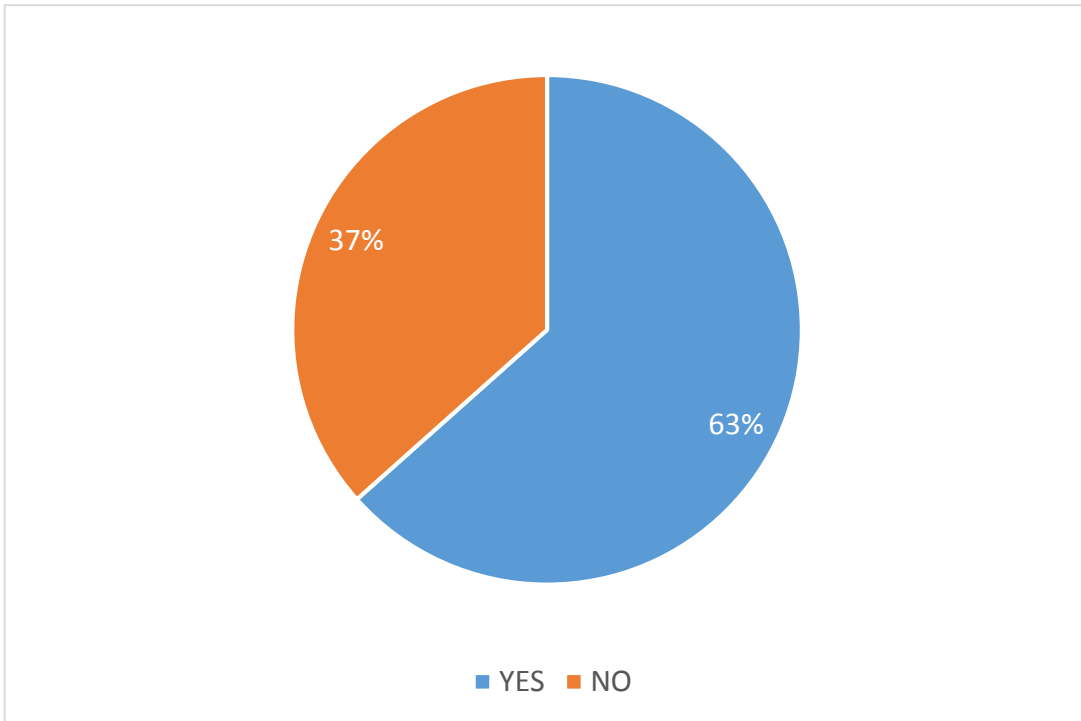
**Q1: Does anyone in your household live or work in Whatcom County?**



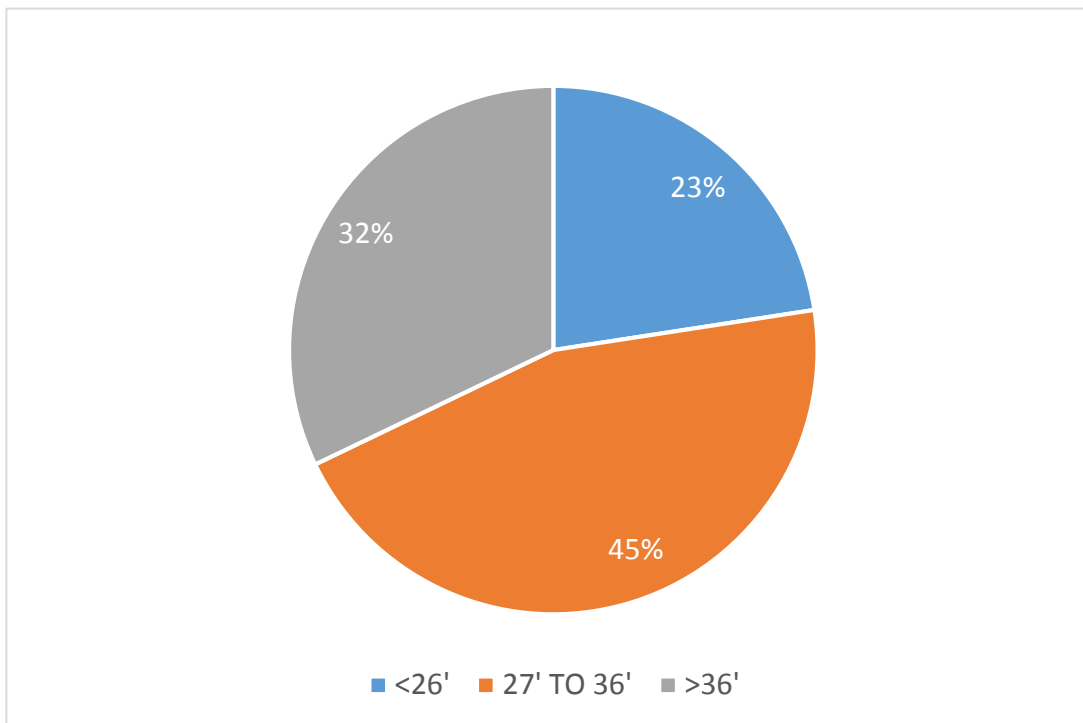
**Q2: If yes, which of the following Port of Bellingham areas is closest to your home or work.**



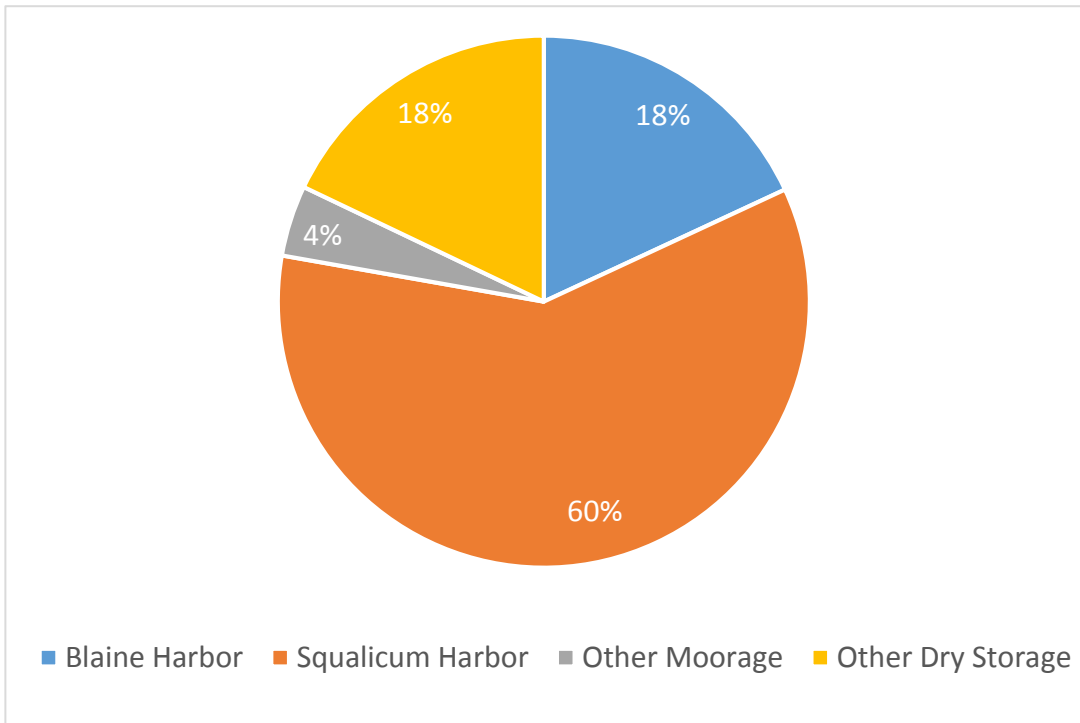
**Q3: Does anyone in your household own a recreational motorized vessel or sailboat?**



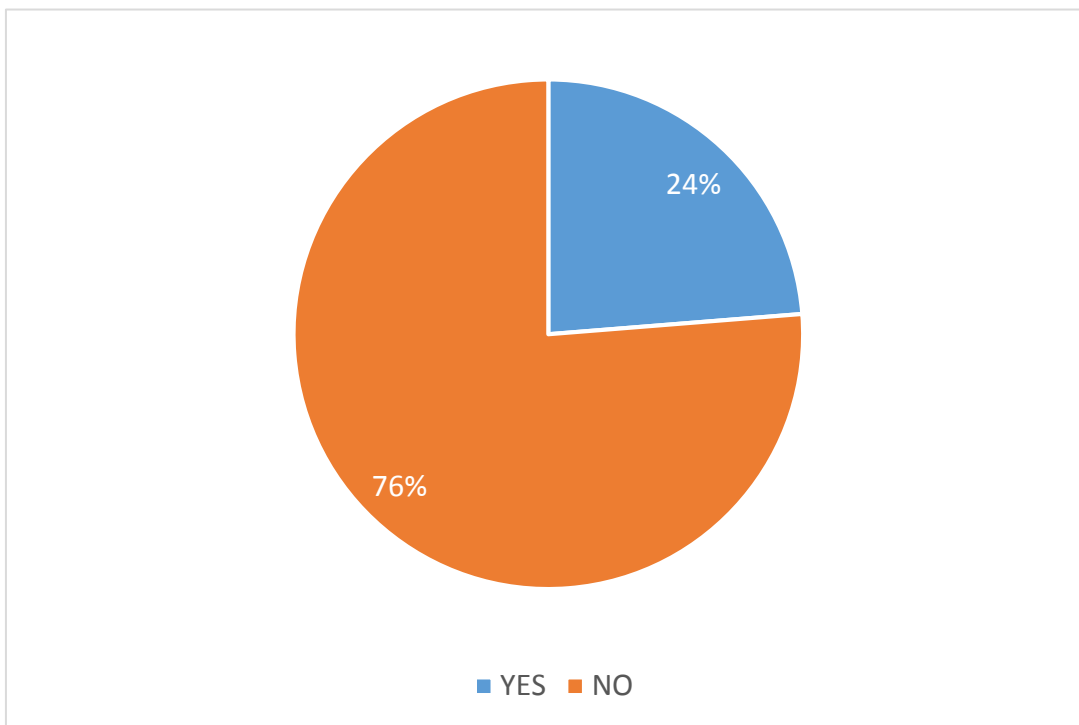
**Q4: If yes, indicate vessel length.**



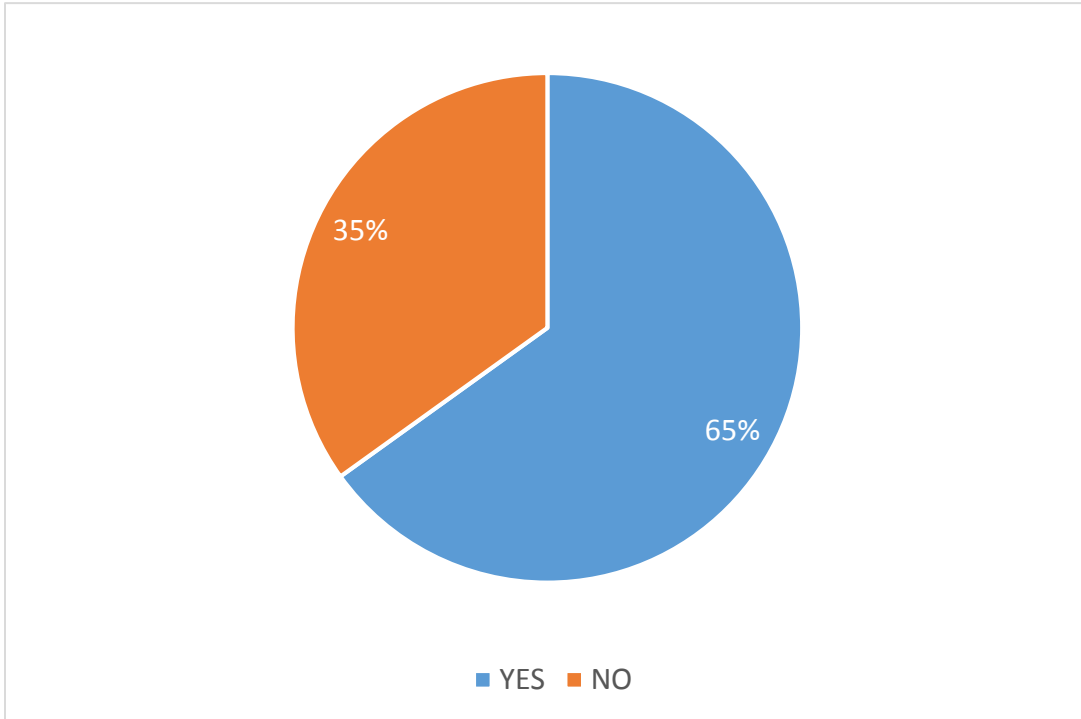
**Q5: If yes, where is the vessel currently moored or stored?**



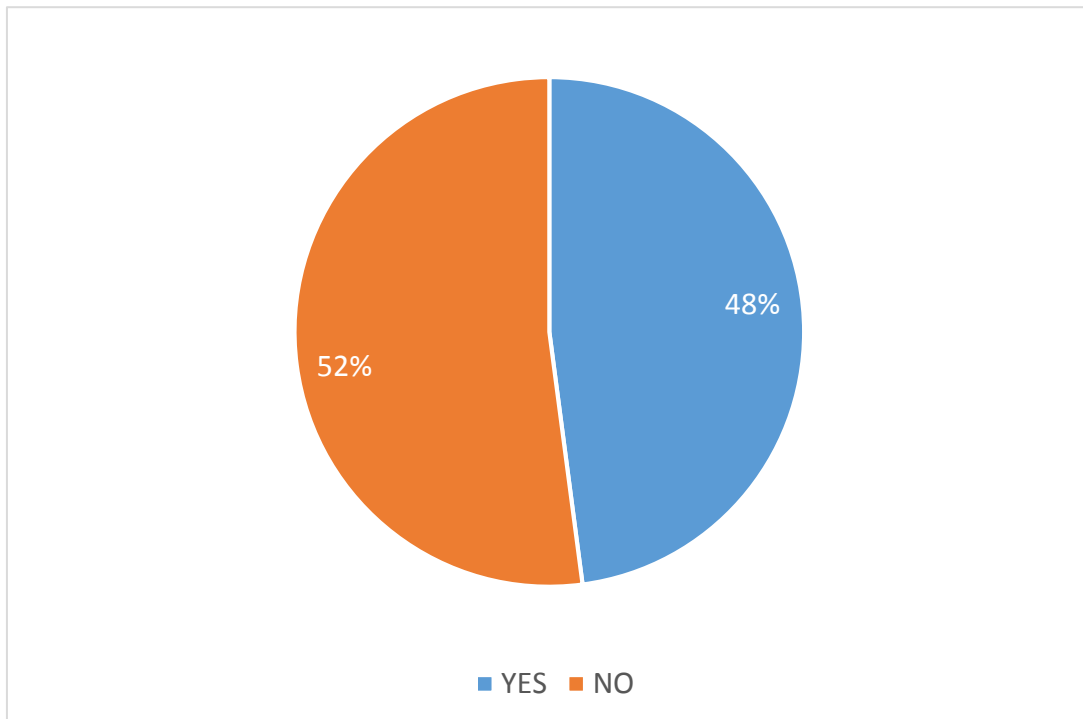
**Q6: If dry-stack storage for vessels 25' or less was available in Bellingham for a fee, would you utilize this service?**



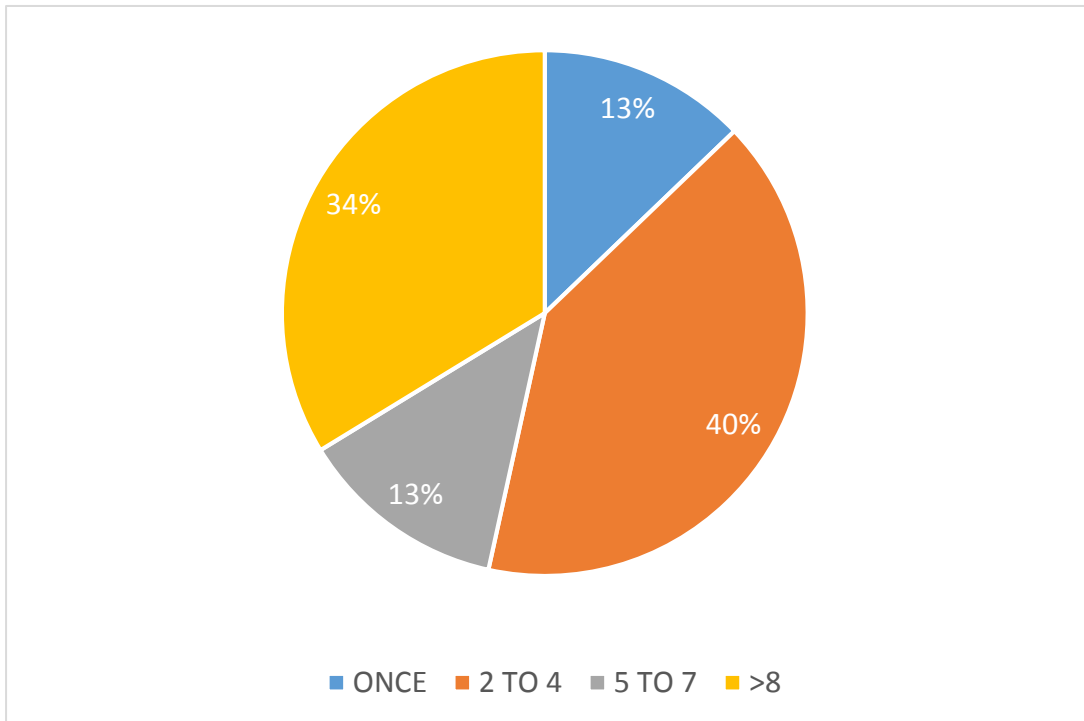
**Q7: Does anyone in your household own a hand-powered craft (i.e. kayak, canoe)?**



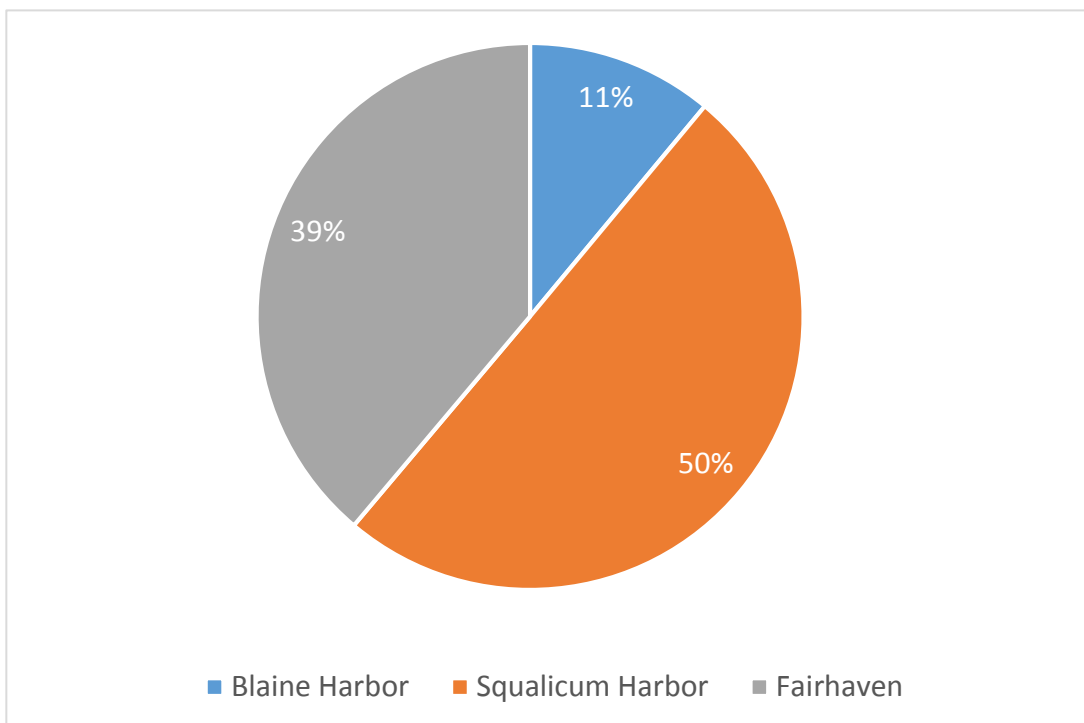
**Q8: Has anyone in your household used any of the Port of Bellingham Boat Launches in the last year? (Blaine, Squalicum, Fairhaven)**



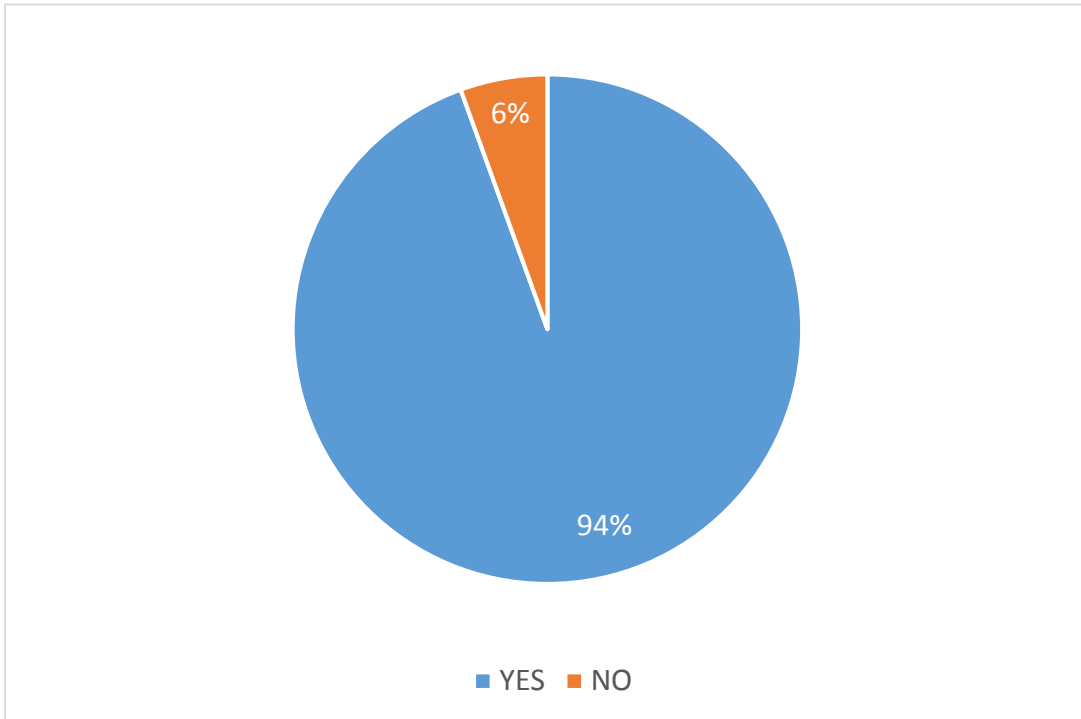
**Q9: If yes, how many times a year did you use the launch last year?**



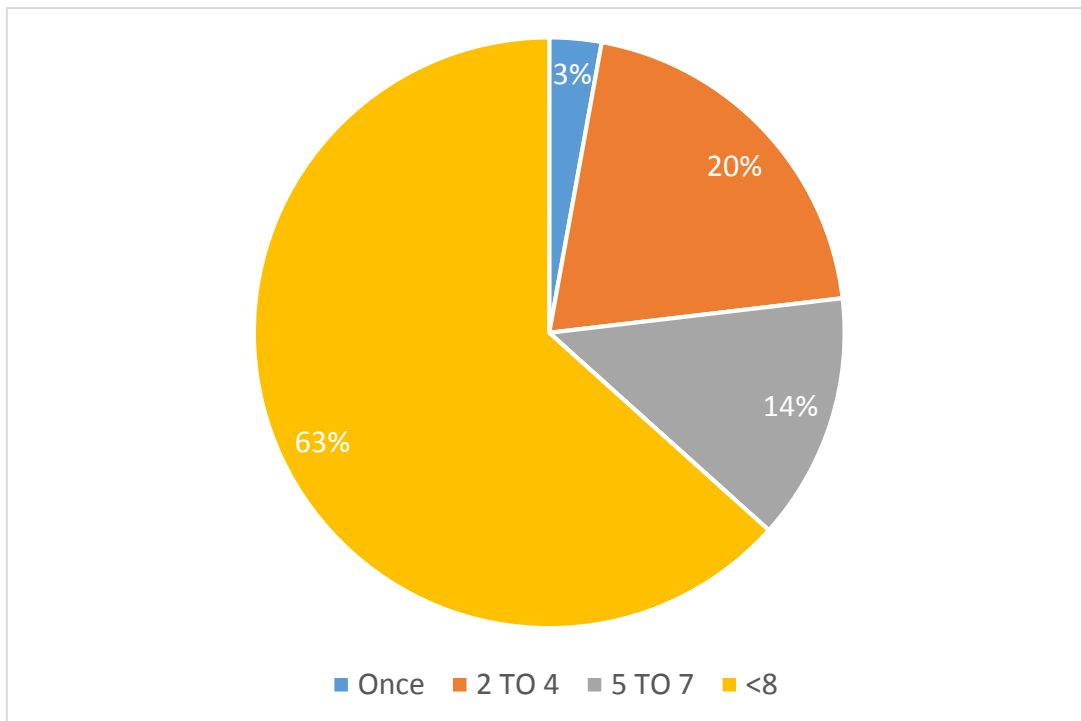
**Q10: From which facility did you usually launch?**



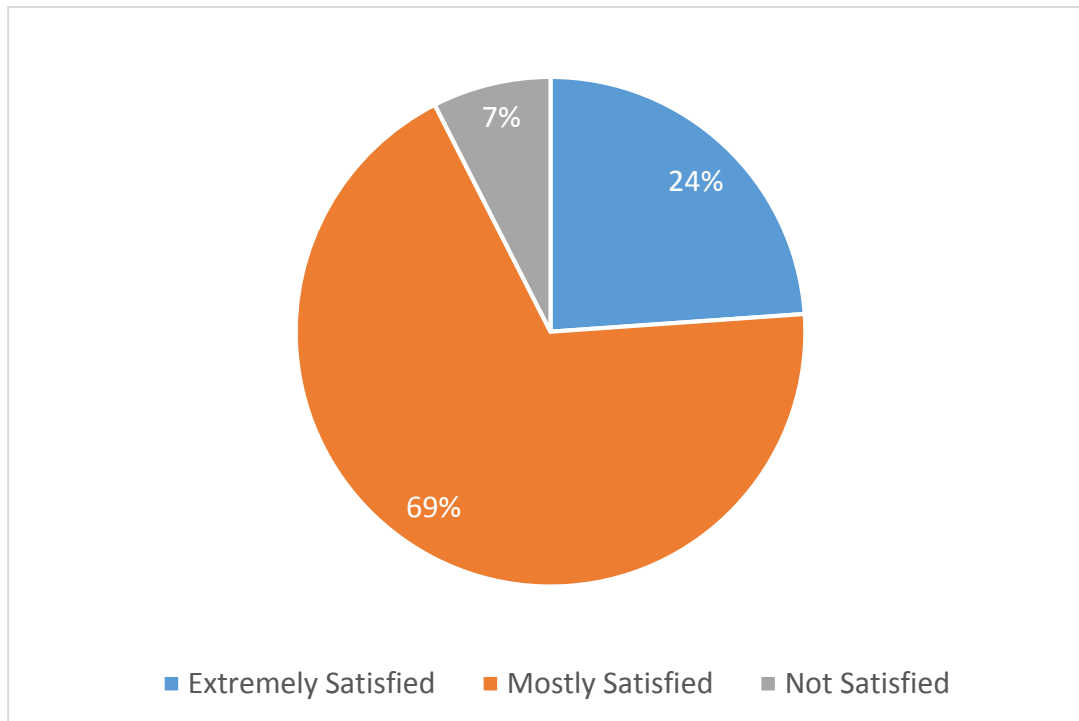
**Q11: Have you or anyone in your household visited any Port of Bellingham parks or trails in the last year?**



**Q12: If yes, about how many times did you visit last year?**



**Q13: What is your overall satisfaction with Port of Bellingham recreational facilities?**



Respondents not satisfied with Port facilities were asked to identify the specific facility or provide the reason they were not satisfied. Many respondents used this open ended comment opportunity to comment in general rather than provide reasons for their dissatisfaction of facilities. There was a total of 208 responses even though only 7% of respondents categorized themselves as “Not Satisfied”. Twenty Eight percent of all responses for not being satisfied related to the lack of non-motorized craft amenities. Verbatim responses of dissatisfaction with Port facilities can be found in Appendix A. Otherwise, these comments are summarized below.

**Boat Launches-** 36 responses: 28 regarding Fairhaven Boat Launch and 8 regarding Squalicum. Most of the Fairhaven Boat Launch responses were concerning the difficulties non-motorized craft have with the new float or would like year-round amenities in this location. The 8 responses regarding the Squalicum Launch were either about the removal of one ramp or inadequate parking.

**Marinas-**47 responses: 13 related to maintenance issues, 9 related to rates, 5 related to wanting more dinghy storage on the docks, 4 related to waitlist and slip mix; 4 related to security issues and 12 miscellaneous responses.

**Parks-** 45 responses: 18 related to wanting more non-motorized craft access & amenities ; 8 related to wanting more waterfront parks, 5 specific to Little Squalicum Beach, 4 specific to Jorgensen Pier access, 3 specific to Marine Park and 7 Miscellaneous.



**Trails-21** responses: 14 related to more trails with better connections to other trails, 2 specific to the wood portions of the promenade at HCB and Blaine, 2 specific to irresponsible pet owners and 3 Miscellaneous.

**General** (uncategorized)-59 responses: 17 related to wanting more facilities, 14 related to the lack of non-motorized craft amenities; 5 related to Homeless/vagrants, 3 related to parking issues and 20 Miscellaneous.

### Project Priority Rankings

Based on the respondents sense of project priority, potential projects were scored by a straight forward method of the most “High Priority” votes, as well as, a weighted scoring method including points for those who felt a project was “Somewhat Important”. The following is a listing of how the projects ranked.

**Figure 27: Project Priority Rankings**

Proposed Projects	Region	High Priority (HP)	Somewhat Important	Low Priority	Weighted Score (WT)	Place (WT)	Place (HP)
Restore former GP Wharf for public access	WF	528	226	76	1282	1	1
Log Pond Area shoreline habitat enhancement	WF	446	271	113	1163	2	2
Construct Clean Ocean Marina in the ASB	WF	423	260	134	1106	3	3
Provide hand powered craft facilities	WF	375	280	169	1030	4	4
Provided visitor moorage along the Whatcom Waterway	WF	332	366	130	1030	5	6
Construct hand powered craft facilities	FH	345	268	181	958	6	5
Little Squalicum Beach habitat enhancement and public access/parking improvements	SH	292	371	180	955	7	7
Upgrade Boat Launch Restrooms	FH	262	355	182	879	8	9
Zuanich Point Park visitor float and ramp replacement	SH	283	283	110	849	9	8
Maintain Existing boating facilities & equipment	BH	222	324	149	768	10	12
Replace Gate 1 waste pumpout dock with new floats, pumps, pedestals & new ramp	SH	195	373	236	763	11	14
Assist with Planning a pedestrian bridge over RR	BH	256	214	234	726	12	10
Dedicate land and coordinate with City for development of proposed Plover Park	BH	225	274	198	724	13	11
Construct Hand powered craft facilities near boat launch	BH	208	256	238	672	14	13
Upgrade Boat Launch Restrooms	BH	142	308	248	592	15	16
Support development of trails around the Airport	AP	155	260	387	570	16	15
Improve Access to Jorgensen Pier	BH	140	287	252	567	17	17
Boat Launch parking overflow lot improvements	SH	95	347	394	537	18	19
Extend Promenade to Boat Launch	BH	99	281	300	479	19	18
Designate an aircraft operations public viewing area	AP	49	203	544	301	20	20

Lastly, respondents were asked to describe any other parks trails, boating facilities or other recreational projects that they would like the Port to consider. A total of 275 respondents provided comments. A summary of those responses in no particular order is provided below.

**Boating Facilities:** A total of 95 comments or approximately 35% of all comments to this survey question were related to boating facilities; of which 49 were more general in nature including fourteen which supports the development of a new marina somewhere in Bellingham. Four respondents supported additional motorized boat launches and twelve respondents would like additional hand powered launch sites and amenities. Nineteen respondents provided general comments which included suggestions regarding expanding Port of Bellingham recreational service areas to Birch Bay, providing new, additional or upgrades to existing services in existing services areas, affordability and rates,

changes to slip mix availability, expanding the amount of live aboard's allowed, and security. In addition, respondents provided 12 comments specific to Blaine Harbor boating facilities, 7 comments specifically supporting the development of a new marina in the Central Waterfront ASB; 10 comments related to new or improved boating facilities in Fairhaven of which six were related to providing a visitor moorage dock in Fairhaven. 11 comments related to improvements in Squalicum Harbor, and 6 comments related to boating facilities improvements in the Waterfront District including providing space for "Houseboat- only" residential use.

**Public Access:** A total of 82 comments or approximately 30% of all comments to this survey question were related to public access facilities; of which 15 were more general in nature including nine respondents supporting more parks and beaches for water access, two wanting more parks & trails, and 4 miscellaneous comments asking the Port to consider an underwater park or reef for divers and marine habitat, a park for drones and other remote control clubs, and more habitat restoration and natural history interpretive signs. 28 additional respondents were specific to wanting more trails and better trail connectivity and 27 respondents providing specific comments about more parks and trails in the Waterfront District including a project that had been proposed in the past, namely a pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks in the vicinity of Broadway and the proposed I & J Waterway in the Central Waterfront area. Six respondents were specific to public access policies or improvements in Fairhaven such as discouraging "off leash dogs" at Marine Park or providing dogs a swimming area and more hand powered craft access sites.

**General:** A total of 98 comments or approximately 35% of all comments to this survey question were general in nature. 13 comments related to new projects of which three favored camping and/or an RV Park; two would like to see a maritime historical museum, two wanted an outdoor music venue; two wanted more electric vehicle charging stations and one respondent would like the Port to consider an indoor Performing Arts & Native cultural center; one would like a Convention Center, one would like a direct seafood sales dock near the Granary Building; and one would like to see the port consider a small boat center in the waterfront district. 31 respondents included comments regarding policy issues of which eleven supported the purchase of the City property in the 800 block of Roeder; three supported Marine Trades as a priority, three supported job creation and industry in general, two were for more commercial/retail sector uses; one for a well balanced mix of uses and one against residential use in the waterfront district. Four respondents don't support additional recreational projects if fees or taxes will increase, two want the Port to support the CBC, one wants the Port to protect view corridors, one would like the Port to recruit more airlines to the airport, one would like the Port to support Walsh Marine in Blaine and one thought the Port should invest more in Birch Bay; 8 respondents would like the Port to support additional services of various nature, 12 complimented the Port for the opportunity to comment and for the community service it provides. 3 had complaints of which 2 are maintenance issues and 1 was vagrancy related. Lastly there are 31 various general suggestions made by respondents.

Verbatim responses describing anything respondents wanted the Port to consider can be found in Appendix B.

## **6.2 Comments on Draft Plan**

Two public open houses specific to introducing the Port's Draft 2018 Recreation, Conservation and Public Access Plan were held on Wednesday, November 15<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 5:30 pm in Blaine and Bellingham respectively.

A notice of Public hearing was placed in two consecutive Sunday editions of the newspaper of general circulation in the County for a public hearing to solicit public comments on the Port's Draft 2018 Recreation, Conservation and Public Access Plan on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Comments

on the Port's Draft Recreation, Conservation and Public Access Plan are included in Appendix C.

The Port of Bellingham Board of Commissioners is anticipated to take action on the Port's Final 2018 Recreation, Conservation and Public Access Plan on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017. A copy of the Commission Resolution adopting the final Plan will be included as Appendix D.