

Permits Issued for Broward's First Boat Slips in Four Years

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Broward recreational boaters will soon get their first new boat slips in over four years, with the newly-issued permit to build 176 new dry-stack storage slips at Harbour Towne Marina in Dania Beach.

The new dry-stack project at the marina is the first new commercial marina facility permitted in Broward County since 2004. Over the past four years, Broward County has enforced a moratorium on new commercial boat slips, pending the adoption of the Broward County Boating Facility Siting Plan, as part of a greater Manatee Protection Plan. The Boating Facility Siting Plan was years in development, but finally adopted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission in late 2007.

"The new dry-stack project will be a state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly facility located directly on the Dania cutoff canal and will accommodate recreational boats up to 42 feet in length," said Gary Groenewold, Vice President-Southern Area for Westrec Marinas Worldwide, the project's developer. Other leaders of the development team include Stephen Tilbrook, environmental and land-use partner at the Fort Lauderdale office of the Florida law firm Shutts& Bowen, LLP, and Tyler Chappell, Vice President of The Chappell Group, an environmental consulting firm.

With the Feb. 7 permit in hand, Groenewold said he expects to be under construction within next three months, and have the new slips up and operational by early 2009. Harbour Towne Marina, located at 801 NE Third St in historic Dania Beach, is known as one of the top marina facilities in the Southeast, with 165 wet dockage slips, 465 existing dry-storage spaces and more than 20 professional marine related businesses. Harbour Towne is also the first marina in South Florida to receive simultaneous "Clean Marina" and "Clean Boatyard" designations from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Westrec is one of the largest marina operators in the United States, operating 25 marina facilities with more than 500 employees.

"We are pleased that this is the first dry dock facility to be approved under the new Manatee Protection Plan," said Stephen Tilbrook, who is also a member of the City of Fort Lauderdale Marine Advisory Board. "Because of the moratorium, there is a significant pent-up demand for dock slips in Broward County. Harbour Towne has the capacity to provide the new boat slips in an existing marina that is well-located and environmentally sensitive."

The number of registered recreational boats in South Florida has grown more than 16 percent since 2002, while the number of boat slips has actually decreased in the recent wave of condo developments. The trend of more boats and fewer boat slips has forced boaters to move to the Bahamas or elsewhere in the state.

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"Harbour Towne's new state-of-the-art dry storage facility comes at a critical time and will go a long way toward meeting the needs of recreational boaters in Broward County, while balancing the interests of manatee protection," said Frank Herhold, executive director of the Marine Industries Association of South Florida, a trade group that represents more than 800 marinas, boatyards, boat dealers and marine-related businesses. "This project demonstrates Westrec's commitment to help grow our marine industry and the region's \$13.6-billion marine economy."

Over the past two years, Mr. Tilbrook and the Project Team have worked with officials of Broward County, the City of Dania Beach, the South Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to process the necessary permits for the project. In addition, the Project Team has played a pivotal role in helping craft, amend and support adoption of the Boating Facility Siting Plan.

"Permitting new marina projects in the current regulatory environment demands patience, sophistication and reasonable give-and-take, and the Harbour Towne project is an excellent example of how to navigate the regulatory process," Tilbrook said.

In late November 2007, Broward County officials passed the Boating Facility Siting Plan which establishes a cap of 4,392 new slips in Broward County, up from the current 30,379. Broward County will charge a one-time fee of \$400 for each new boat slip and an annual fee of \$20 a year for existing boat slips. The fee proceeds will be used by the Broward Sheriff's Office to patrol the areas frequented by manatees, and by the county to install flashing caution lights and survey the region's manatee population.

The members of Shutts & Bowen's environmental and land use practice groups assist clients in obtaining permits for marina development projects in the quickest possible time frame and at the lowest reasonable cost. George Platt, a former Broward County Commissioner, is managing partner of the Fort Lauderdale office and a member of the government and land use practice groups.

Practice Areas

Government Law

Land Use & Zoning