

Channel Islands Harbor Marina Gets a Makeover

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Complete renovation includes new docks — and a whole lot more.

CHANNEL ISLANDS HARBOR — Ahead of schedule and nearing completion, Channel Islands Harbor Marina is getting ready to open new slips in the last phase of the complete renovation of the aging marina.



Photo by: Catherine French photo

New and Improved — Channel Islands Harbor Marina Manager Tom Kunz pointed out a new dockside utility pedestal that houses electrical, water, television and telephone hookups — one of many new features at the renovated marina.

“We are glad it is done,” stated an elated Brian Dunn, president of Vintage Marina Partners, operators of Channel Islands Harbor Marina. “We’ve had a few setbacks on the way, but we will have completed the waterside part of the renovation — all the docks systems — in March. That’s 15 months from the beginning of construction.”

The more-than-40-year-old marina was formerly showing its age, with listing and weatherbeaten wooden docks, unstable gangways and crumbling concrete. Its new aluminum ramps, contemporary entry gates and Unifloat concrete docks are a testament to modern technology. Cash and Associates and Bellingham Marine have provided design and construction support for the renovation.

The \$15 million-plus project, which had been scheduled to take up to two years to complete, will be finished this month. Some shoreside improvements are still to be completed — including refurbishing the marina office, restrooms and showers.

Dunn stated that marina construction would have begun sooner if it hadn’t been for delays caused by two local environmental groups with concerns about noise levels affecting nesting birds in the area near construction.

“We hired a full-time biologist to help with bird and noise level monitoring,” Dunn

explained. “This added about \$100,000 to the cost of the development.

“We even used a mesh sound curtain to help reduce noise further, by about 20 decibels, during pile driving,” Dunn added. He also said that the sound curtain was a custom design, as he knew of no one else who had used this before.

“We lost a total of 123 slips in the process (of renovation), due to new building codes from the California Department of Boating and Waterways that require wider fairways, wider docks and special gangways to improve access for the disabled,” Dunn said. “We also gave 25 slips to the harbor for the development of the (planned) Boating Instruction and Safety Center.”

The approved renovation plan, according to Dunn, required that 50 percent of the 402 remaining slips be built for boats 38 feet and smaller, and 25 percent for boats 32 feet and smaller. The marina can now accommodate boats from 12 to 106 feet in length.

The marina's extensive renovation included the replacement of all the docks, floats, pilings and storage lockers; and addition of new aluminum gangways and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant 80-foot gangways, and new entry gates and abutments. Updated dockside utilities include water, power, cable television and telephone hookups, and the marina now has a new security/monitoring system.

Pile rollers were replaced with Teflon blocks that provide the same function, but are now hidden below the dock surface.

Throughout the rebuild, marina staff members have been cleaning up years of debris under the dock systems. "We have brought up old concrete floats from the original building of the docks, bicycles, furniture, old engines — you name, we found it," explained onsite marina manager Tom Kunz.

Reaction from marina boaters has been overwhelmingly positive.

"I like it," said slip holder Chris Conlin. "The docks are stable, and so much quieter. When people walk by, especially if they're rolling a dock cart, you can barely hear them — and the lighting is a major improvement."

Having had to move three times during the construction, Conlin was philosophical about the process. "It had to be done — and it wasn't so bad," Conlin said. "I'm in my new slip, and I like it."

Seven-year liveaboard in the marina, longtime harbor resident and professional boat painter Kevin Bell, said the long renovation process "seemed to go more smoothly as the project continued.

"In general, marina management seemed sensitive to our needs and did their best to accommodate us in the process," Bell said.

Other renovations include refurbishing the restroom and shower facilities at the Channel Islands Yacht Club building, completed as part of the marina renovation. Also in the plans are 'facelift' improvements to the club building, including new siding, decks, railings and windows.

The California Coastal Commission requested that Vintage Marine Partners prepare a separate Notice of Impending Development (NOID) for the renovation of two other buildings that house the marina office and slip/guest restroom facilities.

"We hope to get on the (Commission's) agenda in May to get the NOID approved for the redo of the other two buildings," Dunn said. "If it gets approved, we will begin construction in the summer and we'll be finished by about October."

"We have worked with the slip renters to help ease the pains of transition," Kunz said. "We got better at it as the project continued. We've had a few complaints — not unexpected — but overall, the consensus has been positive."

New dinghy/kayak racks that are still under construction are expected to be installed in a few weeks.

Also, around the periphery of the docks, boaters will find a variety of smaller side-ties for dinghies, electric boats and other small vessels. "We have more dock space for small craft like PWCs, dinghies and electric boats than we did before," Kunz explained.

Glad that the project is nearing completion, Dunn said, "The process has been difficult. But we have managed to keep moving forward despite all the delays caused by the detractors. The Harbor Department staff and the county of Ventura have been very cooperative, and this has helped us get the project completed."