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Renovating a yacht club marina requires boater participation

by Robert Wilkes

Renovating a yacht club marina requires at least some boater participation. Every member of the yacht club has a vested interest in the facility both socially and financially. So when Silver Gate Yacht Club Marina (SGYC) in San Diego, Calif., decided to renovate in 2007, the effort involved not only consultants and design-build contractors but also a spirited group of hard-working, resourceful boaters from the yacht club.

The marina

SGYC is a world-class facility for many reasons, but the most important one is its location on Shelter Island just off Point Loma and across the water from the North Island Naval Air Station. Shelter Island is wall-to-wall yachting interspersed with swaying palm trees, fabulous restaurants, and a host of marine services. Bill Sedgwick, SGYC's current commodore, said, "We've had this spot since our first marina was built in 1953, and we treasure it. The old marina served us well...but it included a variety of materials and construction techniques that were added over the years, and it was evident that we needed to renovate."

A key issue in the design phase of the renovated marina was ADA-access and compliance. This was not a coincidence given that SGYC is known throughout San Diego for its annual Wheel Chair Regatta. "We hosted our first Wheel Chair Regatta in 1960," said Sedgwick. "It's the only event of its kind in the world."

Sedgwick explained that the Regatta

brings in both young and old people with disabilities, and the club takes them out for a day of boating followed by a festive dinner party onshore. "[The Wheel Chair Regatta] was a factor in our selection of concrete floating docks," said David Lancaster, a former SGYC commodore. "We also considered wood and aluminum, but the stability of the concrete docks is incredible." The new marina provides guests with extra wide walkways and one-piece fingers that enhance stability. The special features exceed ADA guidelines and help make the marina accessible to everyone.

A necessary renovation

The decision to renovate the marina may appear to be a voluntary choice, but it was driven by necessity. When the lease from the Port of San Diego came up for renewal, it was clear to yacht club leaders that the port authority would not approve a new lease unless a major renovation took place. If SGYC wanted to stay at its pristine location, its only option was to renovate the marina.

Because the renovation project included dredging, replacing old docks, and constructing a new ramp connecting the marina to the shore side pier, SGYC engaged Bellingham Marine to do the work and Anchor QEA, LLC (formerly Anchor Environmental, LLC) to assist with obtaining permits, designing a safety program and analyzing sedimentation for the



The renovation project at Silver Gate Yacht Club Marina required five boat repositionings. Credit: Bellingham Marine

dredging program, and determining what would be done with the dredged sediment.

Ed Heaton was Bellingham Marine's construction manager for all dredging and construction work. Dr. Joshua Burnam of Anchor QEA was Anchor's overall project manager and provided guidance through the permit and dredging process. SGYC assigned Mark Reemts of Anchor for on-site quality assurance and to be the project manager representing SGYC's interests.

The permitting process was complicated. It included working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, Port of San Diego, and consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The selection process

In choosing equipment and suppliers, the club formed a dock committee and invited three companies to present proposals illustrating their capabilities and ideas. After reviewing the three proposals, the committee selected Bellingham Marine of Bellingham, Wash., a design, construction, and engineering company, as the general contractor and dock supplier.

Lancaster said the decision was easy. "Bellingham Marine was by far the most professional," he said. "We were particularly impressed by the detailed plan they presented that addressed our need to stay operational during the renovation. We can't just tell our members to vacate the marina." Bellingham proposed a phased construction plan that kept the marina operational and boats in the marina during removal of the old marina, dredging activities near the shoreline, and installing the new float system.

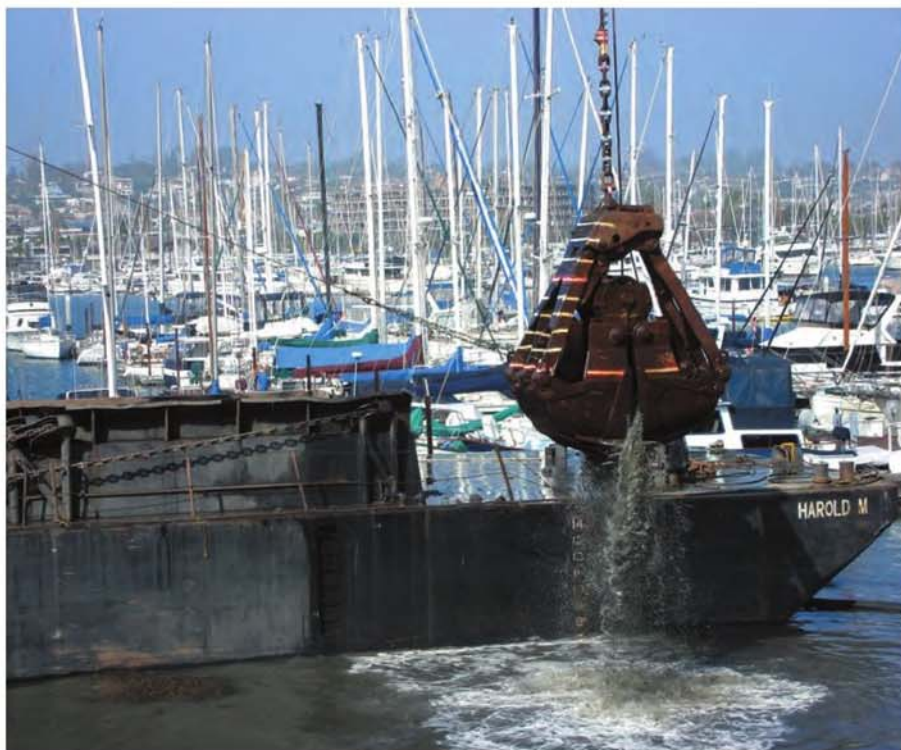
For SGYC, keeping the marina operational during the renovation project was a must. "As a yacht club, we members take a keen interest in the financial activities of the club, unlike renters in a commercial marina," said Lancaster. "We appreciated that we did not have to pay extra costs to temporarily keep our boats at another marina facility during the rebuild project."

The SGYC dock committee also identified equipment maintenance as a top priority, which is another reason why they chose Bellingham Marine's Unifloat concrete floating docks. The committee liked the fact that member and volunteers could easily maintain the docks for years to come.

SGYC also liked Bellingham's experience with other marinas. Eric Noegel, manager of project development for Bellingham's West Coast operations, who would handle the SGYC renovation, had also been in charge of a previous renovation at Portofino Marina in Redondo Beach, Calif. This factor was particularly important to SGYC because that renovation left little room to spare when it came to moving



As part of the renovation, workers get ready to move the concrete floating docks into place at the marina. Credit: Bellingham Marine



A dredger used a large scoop to remove sand and silt from the water and move it to a nearby shore area for reuse. Credit: Anchor QEA

and repositioning boats. "With SGYC we used every available square inch, rafting the boats together in whatever space we had," said Lancaster.

One helpful tool Bellingham Marine used to coordinate boat movements was

a flip book showing each phase and where the boats would go. "You could flip through it and see the movement of boats, like a cartoon," said Noegel. It helped coordinate the volunteers and smooth out the operation.