



For Immediate Release

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Flexibility Pays off for Manatee Pocket Dredging Project

Port Salerno, Fla.--June 30, 2009--The dredging of the Manatee Pocket in Port Salerno will soon become reality now that the review process to select a dredging contractor is nearly complete. A request for proposal (RFP) was developed and distributed in March and favorable responses were received from six contractors.

In developing the RFP, the County provided contractors with the flexibility to select alternative methodologies and staging areas as part of their response. This proved to be beneficial because unforeseen circumstances arose and at the last minute the Federal Aviation Administration decided against allowing the County to use Witham Field as a staging area for the dredging material, which was the County's initial plan.

“We are more than satisfied with the responses we received and are confident we can select a dredger that will complete the project successfully and within budget,” explained Martin County Coastal Engineer Kathy FitzPatrick. Cost always remains a key issue, and the County was able to capitalize on several matching grant opportunities through local, state and other sources, securing approximately \$10 million for the project.

While some bids came in above the project's budget, the staff recommendation is for a response that came in very close to the original estimate. What this means is that while there are sufficient funds to complete the basic project, it leaves nothing for contingencies or “unforeseen circumstances.”

“In any project this size we expect that there will be some modifications required to adapt to situations that arise,” FitzPatrick said. “A 10% contingency backup is preferred for projects of this size, but those funds do not exist.” County Commissioners will consider alternate funding sources

to provide these additional funds. An assessment of waterfront property owners on the Pocket would be one of several options to make up the deficit. Should an assessment be required, property owners would receive advance notification of the proposed assessment and the date of the public workshop held prior to the meeting at which the Board takes final action. "The County's goal has been and continues to be to minimize or eliminate the need for the assessment if possible," FitzPatrick said.

Keeping costs low is only one of the criteria being evaluated as part of the bid review process to select a dredging contractor. Other factors include: the Contractor's proposed work plan, project duration and timeline; Contractor's proposed Environmental Compliance Plans; Contractor's ability to reduce impact to residents and area infrastructure during the dredging process; Contractor's willingness and capacity to provide clear and continuous communication about the status of the project; and Contractor's use of technology.

A recommendation for a dredging contractor will be presented to the Martin County Board of County Commissioners at their July 7th board meeting. If the Board approves the recommendation, the selected dredger could begin mobilizing and working on permit modification to allow an alternate dredge material handling area. Construction could start by September 2009 if the state and federal permitting agencies can move swiftly to process the necessary changes. The dredging project is expected to be completed by fall 2010. Martin County citizens are invited to learn more about the **Manatee Pocket Project** at www.manateepocketproject.com.

About the Manatee Pocket Project

The Manatee Pocket Project is a dredging project that entails the removal of about 280,000 cubic yards of muck in the Manatee Pocket in Port Salerno. Once completed, the project will result in a clean, 100-foot-wide channel that will provide navigational, economic and environmental enhancements to the Manatee Pocket and its adjacent waterways.

The goals of the project are to:

- Increase the draft and size of vessels that will be able to access the Pocket
- Define a channel to minimize impacts to adjacent shallow water areas and benefit manatee protection

- Remove detrimental muck sediments
- Improve the ability of marine life to re-establish in the Pocket
- Improve the water quality in the Pocket

For more information visit www.manateepocketproject.com

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