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## Marina, yacht club nears completion

**Dry storage area at Fort Morgan facility open; half of 160 new wet slips will be completed by summer's end**

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Wayne Burnett is not a deep-sea fisherman, but buying and upgrading the old marina at the end of Fort Morgan was an investment he couldn't pass up.

The retired accountant and his investor partners purchased the former Fort Morgan Marina and renamed it Gulf Shores Yacht Club & Marina. Half of the 160 new wet slips will be finished by the end of summer.

"I knew what the value of this venture could be over a period of time," said Burnett, who divides his time between homes in Kiva Dunes on Fort Morgan and Birmingham. "We need different things down Fort Morgan, and it's been exciting to see the response we've had since we started renovations."

Most of the existing wet slips had been damaged by hurricanes, mostly prior to Hurricane Ivan in 2005, he said.

Both Ivan and Hurricane Katrina largely spared the dry storage area, he said. Now the 108-unit "rackominium" has been upgraded and is open, along with a fuel storage facility and Tacky Jacks 2 restaurant. A rackominium is a dry rack storage condo for a boat, according to Rebecca Wilson, a spokeswoman for Joe Raley Builders of Gulf Shores.

Raley is the contractor for the marina renovations and has built homes for Burnett on Fort Morgan, Burnett said.

Construction of a 3,000-square-foot dock store and a yacht club is under way and should be completed by the end of summer, according to Burnett.

The marina is the closest facility in Gulf Shores to the Gulf of Mexico, according to Mandi Coe, administrator for the yacht club and marina. It's about 1.5 nautical miles from the Gulf and 2.5 miles from Dixie Bar, a popular fishing spot, according to Coe.

"Everybody I've talked to says the best fishing around here is off Fort Morgan and around the rigs," Burnett said. "People put their boats in at Perdido Pass and come down to Fort Morgan. We're in the peak of fishing season and we've had a lot of inquiries from charter captains."

The upgraded marina will bring big boat people to Fort Morgan and is a welcome asset for the peninsula, according to Larry Powell of Meyer Real Estate on Fort Morgan. The membership prices are competitive with other marinas, said Powell, who also lives in Fort Morgan. "Without any question, it will help our end of the island."

The rackominiums can accommodate boats up to 34 feet long. Membership for dry storage starts at \$32,340, depending on the size of the boat, according Wilson. Wet slip memberships start at \$39,600 and are available for boats up to 70 feet long.

There will be some wet slips available for daily rental at \$50 per day, she said.

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