

Fort Pierce OKs rebuilding of marina

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FORT PIERCE — The city's marina may begin to be rebuilt and expanded by August of next year.

The City Commission approved at its Monday night meeting the proffered permit from the Army Corps of Engineers for the \$21 million project, which consists of rebuilding the marina damaged in the 2004 hurricanes and construction a storm protection island system.

The permit, which the city received at the beginning of this month, was the final step before beginning the project. The city already received approval from the state Department of Environmental Protection in August of last year and has been waiting for the final permit ever since. Engineering project coordinator Ed Seissiger said Monday the city and the Corps have been back and forth about mitigation requirements for the project. After the city sets up submerged land leases and finalizes construction documents, Seissiger said the project could go out to bid in May. The 18 months of construction could start a few months later.

The project includes rebuilding and expanding the docks to add about 130 boat slips, Seissiger said.

It also includes a storm protection island system as a hazard mitigation project, consisting of a 12-island chain and a peninsular structure for a total of 14.66 acres.

In addition to protecting the marina, the islands would simultaneously create habitats for birds, mangroves, fish, shrimp, lobsters, coral, sponges and oysters.

Seissiger designed a graphic listing some of the project's public benefits: shoreline protection for public parks and open green spaces, protection of public access, recreational boating and the working waterfront, and habitat enhancement of the Indian River Lagoon estuary.

Funding for the project consists of \$6.5 million from the marina's insurance, about \$1 million from the state Division of Emergency Management, and the rest from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The cost to rebuild the docks is \$10 million to \$11 million and to build the storm protection islands is \$9.6 million.

Seissiger said construction won't disrupt marina activities and won't affect day-to-day operations because work won't be done in the channel.