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## Manatee Pocket dredging to be done by Nov.

■ \$13M project will have moved 280K cubic yards of muck by the time it is complete

By Susan Burgess

Special to Treasure Coast Newspapers

PORT SALERNO — Boaters who love the Manatee Pocket off Port Salerno soon will be able to navigate the new 10-foot-deep, 100-foot-wide main channel allowing larger boats to enter the popular cove.

Martin County Coastal Engineer Kathy FitzPatrick said most of the work that started in July 2010 will be finished by November with some wrap-up continuing after that — although boaters are already using areas where work has been finished.

So far, 157,000 cubic yards of

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit [www.manateepocketproject.com](http://www.manateepocketproject.com).

muck, equal to about 7,850 dump truck loads, have been removed from the main channel; 50,000 cubic yards remain to be dredged

from there.

"Dredging the Manatee Pocket was a huge undertaking," FitzPatrick said. "It was a very intricate project with lots of challenges. To have a project of this magnitude come through without any major obstacles that could not be overcome was wonderful."

When complete, about 280,000 cubic yards of muck from the

See DREDGING, 5A

### DREDGING from 1A

main channel and the pocket's four tributaries will have been dredged and removed by contractor Dickerson Florida. In a dump truck that holds 20 cubic yards, that would be equivalent to 14,000 trips.

The Manatee Pocket has never been dredged.

The project, which cost about \$13 million, includes dredging the four tributaries that feed into Manatee Pocket. Work in Chapman Creek and Crooked Creek is complete. The smaller dredge used in the tributaries is in Manatee Creek and is expected to move into Salerno Creek in a few weeks.

The dredged material will end up at a sand mine in western Martin County where it will be used to replace habitat destroyed during the sand mining operation. Until then, it is being stored at Southeast Slater Street and Gran Park Way along U.S. 1 in Stuart.

Boaters were regularly getting stuck and having to pole their way out or reverse their engines.

John Hennessee, owner of the Fish House Art Center on the pocket in Port Salerno, said he had been stuck in the ooze himself.

"I reversed the sailboat's engines to get out of there," he said. "It didn't hurt the engines, but it isn't something you really want to do."

The pocket was so deep in muck that boats in slips were regularly ending up with ruined cooling and refrigeration systems, he said, because they were sucking particles in from the water.

"This is going to help the environment as well," Hennessee said. "The water quality will improve and we'll see oyster beds, clams and crabs return, and new seagrass beds."

He estimated that 50 to 100 boats pass through Manatee Pocket daily and on weekends, at the entrance near Sansprit Park, perhaps 200 to 400 boats a day might be on the water.

"This will be a tremendous economic benefit to us," he said. "We have three marinas and 12 restaurants in downtown Port Salerno and now larger boats will be able to enter the pocket once again."