

**The Port of Edmonds celebrates a year—and a decade—to remember**

By Chris Keuss, Executive Director, the Port of Edmonds

This is the time of year when people who write columns look back on the year just past, attempt to predict the year ahead and—this is a temptation I shall avoid—to make New Year's resolutions.

Reflecting back on an eventful 2006 is harder to resist. It was a year of significant happenings in and around the Port of Edmonds. Before you turn the page—or worse, nod off—it is important to point out that these developments either affected you personally or soon will. Allow me to explain.

The Port is *your* port. It is publicly owned and is operated totally in the public interest. When something happens down here it can affect you, your community, your lifestyle and in some cases the amount of money you have.

A case in point: 2006 was the year the Port bought all but two of the eight buildings in Harbor Square. We have owned the land for thirty years, but last year we bought out the private firm that had been our tenant and significantly broadened our economic development potential by purchasing the buildings themselves. By doing so we are now free to seek out ways for those properties to boost local employment, enhance the local lifestyle and even increase City tax revenues. On that latter point alone, there is a real potential of reducing local dependence on property taxes. It may take a few years, but the potential nonetheless exists.

The year just past saw the Port of Edmonds briefly take the national spotlight when we opened the first of its kind public Weather Center. This innovative, hands-on facility is available to the public 24/7 without charge. It relays real-time data from nearby weather instruments, has video presentations of the whys and hows of local weather and current NOAA forecasts and other weather links through the Internet. As near as I can tell, the Port Weather Center is the only facility of its kind in the country.

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The end of 2006 gave us all reason to look back to ten years earlier. It was on December 29, 1996, that a record snowfall blanketed the community. The subsequent wet thaw over-stressed the wooden roof supports of our covered docks and caused the unprecedented collapse of all but two them. Three hundred boats went to the bottom and hundreds more were damaged.

Now, a decade later, our marina is a showplace, one that is truly state-of-the-art. The concrete and steel design has become a model for marinas all over the land. At the same time, we have become recognized as a pioneer in best management practices, customer relations, environmental stewardship and quality of facilities.

Just last week I received word that a leading industry publication will be naming the Port of Edmonds the national marina of the year. I can't tell you more, because I don't want to spoil their announcement, but the honor shows what a monumental year 2006 was. Even more so, it is a testament to everyone who helped reconstruct our entire infrastructure from the ground up. What a remarkable year, and decade as well.

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