



National Association of Charterboat Operators

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Westport Charterboat Association

October 4, 2007

USEPA
Atlanta Federal Center
61 Forsyth Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
Attn: James D. Giattina, Director
Water Management Division

RE: DOC # CWA-04-2007-5757

Dear Sir:

NACO is a national association of charter boat owners and operators that was formed in 1991 and represents over 3,400 individuals across the United States, with close to 900 of those members residing in Florida. We wish to comment on and support the effort by Taylor County through their partnership with Conservancy Partnership, LLC in their endeavor to create a regional marina and boat launch. We understand that Conservancy Partnership, LLC is actively engaged in a permitting study evaluating the use of a significant part of their property to create public access to the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, via the Steinhatchee River.

Our membership is extremely concerned with the cycle of private marinas, boat launches, and charter dockages being sold and ultimately turned into private dwellings. This vicious cycle has eliminated much of the water access available for charterboat owners and private recreational vessel owners. The proposed regional marina is a very important step in protecting the future of charter fishing and private recreational boating activities in the Big Bend Region of Florida.

In addition to the need for more access for vessels, currently, there is little safe harbor access for charter boats and private recreational boats who travel the west Florida coast. While there is safe harbor available in Apalachicola and Clearwater, the wide area between the two cities is essentially vacant of any marina capable of providing access to vessels. There is a real need for this safe harbor in the region.

We encourage you to exercise all available options to allow the proposed marina to be built. It will provide safe refuge to vessels that encounter adverse weather and serve to enhance the social and economic welfare of the area. It is our understanding that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission fully supports this project and we also endorse the project.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Zales, II

Capt. Robert F. Zales, II
President

BMW/sim