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Securing valuable waterfront property from erosion

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When the Navy began populating Quonset Point and Davisville in the 1940s and 50s, it undertook a massive infrastructure project to accommodate staff, equipment and ships. The transformation of the old Navy bases into a thriving business park has also involved extensive infrastructure work- most recently the replacement and repair of the South Bulkhead at Davisville. The barrier runs south of the southern pier at Davisville toward Quonset Airport. This site is a critical component of the Quonset Business Park and represents a primary interface with the waterfront. The existing bulkhead is nearly 70 years old and the wall has failed, causing some erosion of land behind it. The existing 1,000 linear feet of wooden bulkhead had deteriorated to such a state that it cannot be safely used for marine activity. Additionally, existing voids in the bulkhead are releasing upland materials into former berthing areas, diminishing water depth and developable land in the park. The project will stop erosion and protect the waterfront area.

While the old bulkhead was made of timber, its replacement will be constructed with 822 tons of steel to form 725 linear feet of steel sheeting with 400 feet of sloped stone revetment.

The bulkhead and the valuable waterfront property it protects are important elements of Quonset Development Corp.'s (QDC) ongoing mission to create good platforms for new and existing businesses that provide good jobs for Rhode Islanders. The QDC vision for the site includes a marine trades facility for construction and maintenance of mega yachts. There is an intensified demand along the East Coast for waterfront property and a limited number of commercial sites to support water dependent marine businesses. The unique combination of deepwater access, unobstructed bulkhead, and secure port facilities make the Quonset site one of only a very few that can accommodate the largest yachts under construction and in use today.

The new bulkhead will secure over 40 acres of valuable waterfront property for use by marine trades. Rhode Island, the Ocean State, has a long and successful tradition as a center of excellence for designing and building recreational yachts and also as a destination for the enjoyment of these yachts. The state has a competitive cluster of marine trades, from builders and brokers to yacht management specialists and naval architects. QDC envisions a project that will enhance and expand Rhode Island's marine industry. With the repaired and replaced bulkhead, the site offers opportunities for docking accommodations and hauling infrastructure to expand Narragansett Bay's capabilities for docking hauling and servicing.

The entire bulkhead is undergoing replacement and will be engineered to accommodate a travelift and potentially a syncrolift with the final lift/bulkhead configuration to be developed in collaboration with the development partner.

The contractor for the bulkhead work is CRC of Quincy, with the steel supplied by Skyline Steel of Taunton and design by CLE Engineering of Marion. The project will be funded with a portion of the taxpayer approved \$48 million Quonset bond issue. The bond, approved in 2004 is allocated for

infrastructure improvements at the business park and has been used to date for new road construction, demolition, and rail repair and upgrade.

As with all of the projects at Quonset, the QDC has taken careful measures to make sure environmental concerns are addressed in the renovation. For example, in compliance with State Water Quality regulations, QDC will not be using material treated with creosote since it could result in the introduction of pollutants to the water. In addition, the Coastal Resources Management Council has given its assent for the project.

Work is underway and, weather permitting, completion is anticipated by the early fall.

Steven King, PE, is the chief operating officer of the Quonset Development Corp., North Kingstown.

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