

Deal near to build 300-boat storage at Matheson Hammock

BY ASHLEY HOPKINS

To improve water access for recreational boaters and add \$5 million to Miami-Dade's bank account, the county commission is set to rule today (July 7) on a contract to develop and operate a 300-boat storage facility at Matheson Hammock Park in Coral Gables.

The park's current dry storage facility is at capacity and demand for boat ramp launching and parking exceeds capacity on most weekends and holidays, says Kevin Kirwin, assistant to the director for the county's Park and Recreation Department.

A traffic impact study concluded that there's enough space to accommodate added storage and that the facility will allow boat owners to store vessels on location and not haul them up and down Old Cutler Road, so the project could "reduce traffic from trailered boats," Mr. Kirwin said via email.

If the county commission approves the construction contract, the storage facility should be done by August 2015, Mr. Kirwin said.

While the county agreed to advertise the solicitation in October 2007, issuance was delayed until June 2008 as officials worked to confirm that the City of Coral Gables

didn't object to county plans.

According to county documents, the county evaluated all proposals by March 2009, following a comprehensive review by an evaluation and selection committee. While contract negotiations with Aventura's Aqua Marine Partners, the highest-ranked firm, were to begin in July 2009, the process took longer than expected and delayed the project's start.

With negotiations complete, the storage facility should generate \$5 million for the county over 20 years, or \$8.7 million if the county exercises its two five-year options to renew.

Aqua is to pay the county \$17,000

monthly rent. Should annual gross receipts on the operation top \$3.2 million, the county is to receive a share of the total.

According to county documents, Aqua expects the receipts to surpass the threshold within five years.

While the county would receive liquidated damages if Aqua didn't complete the facility on time, if construction came in under budget the county would get additional yearly revenue.

Aqua has also agreed to include a 1,000-square-foot dockmaster's office, which the county is to lease for \$1 a year.