

New owners announce improvements at Dutch Harbor Boat Yard

By Jeff McDonough

Even the casual visitor at the Dutch Harbor Boat Yard may notice the difference. The facility, located at the west end of Narragansett Avenue, has been spiffed up and is ready for business.

Alison and Larry Eichler are the new owners of the Dutch Harbor Boat Yard and say they have made a "total commitment" to the facility. They have hired a new management team and have invested some serious money in capital improvements.

"I was hoping you would notice," Alison Eichler said of the boat yard's recent housekeeping efforts. "We've been cleaning the place. We've hauled away all of the junk and debris and derelict boats."

Late summer and early fall have been busy for the new owners. They have upgraded all 100 moorings managed by the boat yard with new equipment and ground tackle.

A new launch was purchased and christened "Comet." The vessel, which came from Old Port in Newport, can carry 23 passengers. "We will now be able to run two launches if needed," Eichler said.

The boat yard purchased a new crane, along with new straps for lifting boats.

A portion of the wood pier has been rebuilt. The lower floating docks will be replaced this winter and the dock house renovated with red cedar shingles.

Finally, the marine railway has



A champagne bottle christened the recent launch of the renovated marine railway at the Dutch Harbor Boat Yard. From left are Dave Whitlock, Ted Mercier, Heather Shoener, Tom Lafazie, Steve Brown and Jaime Cherry. The first boat to be hauled on the railway was Blue Blazer, a 1956 Dyer 29 owned by Frank Gladding of Jamestown.

Photo by Jeff McDonough

been reconstructed. The railway tracks were leveled and placed on a new bed. A new railway car was built and a new hydraulic boat trailer was purchased.

Eichler said they respect the history of the boat yard. She wanted to stress that Dutch Harbor would always be a working

boat yard. "Dutch Harbor Boat Yard has been saved. We are making a commitment to quality and a commitment to our customers," she said. "We are concerned with taking the best care of our customers and their boats that we can."

The Eichlers live in Provi-

dence, having moved to Rhode Island from New Jersey four years ago. Larry is an attorney and Alison has a background in commercial real estate. Together they own a property management company that manages many apartment buildings in New Jersey. They have two sons, who are

both active sailors. Alison grew up in Providence and sailed with her family on Narragansett Bay.

This is their first venture into the marina business. "We didn't have any knowledge about boat yards, so we knew we had to hire to right people to run the place," Alison Eichler said.

The new staff at Dutch Harbor Boat Yard includes Ted Mercier as general manager, Tom Lafazie as yard manager, and Heather Shoener as office manager. Dave Whitlock is the mechanic, Steve Brown is the marine service tech, and Jaime Cherry is the all-around yard guy.

Alison Eichler had high praise for the Town of Jamestown. The lease for the bulkhead has been signed, she said, and the town recently graded its gravel surface. "The town has been great to work with," she said.

She also complimented P&C Marine of Newport for its efforts on the marine railway and HO-STAR Marine Transport System of Wareham, Mass., for quickly producing the custom-built hydraulic boat trailer. She added that Bill Munger of Conanicut Marine has been a big help.

Eichler said they are consulting with local architect Bill Burgin to see how the property can be best utilized as a working boat yard.

"We are thrilled to be here," Eichler said. "We want everyone to know that this will always be Dutch Harbor Boat Yard."

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Photo taken at Beavertail Park