

Koehler Kraft Renovation Finally Under Way

Upgrades include new docks, a new seawall, dredging and a state-of-the-art repair building.

By Jack Innis

SAN DIEGO — Ever hear an actor or actress labeled an “overnight success” only to find out he or she has spent 10 years waiting in the wings?

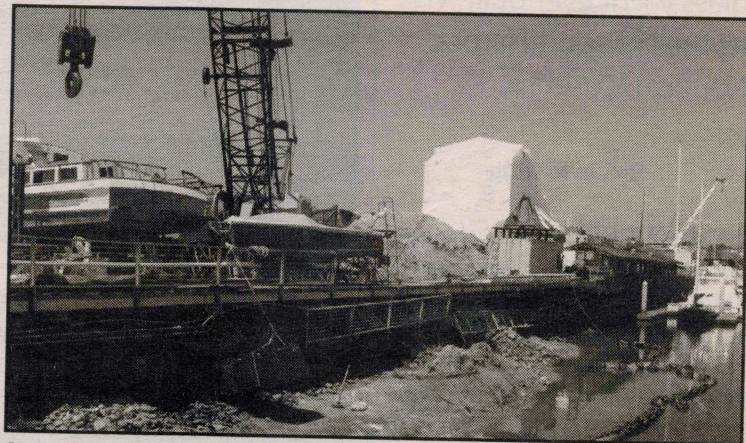
Well, C.F. Koehler Jr. of Koehler Kraft Boat Building and Services can relate.

Construction has just begun on a major boat yard facelift at Koehler Kraft that he first proposed in 1996. Recently completed dredging is part of a \$2.5 million project that will include new docks, a new seawall and a new building. Although permits, permissions and other delays took 10 years, the actual dredging was accomplished in two weeks.

With the first phase of the dredging complete, Koehler Kraft should be able to remove the scooped-up material, which was piled behind a facility building as of this writing, in the near future.

After the material is removed, construction crews will build a seawall that will allow deeper draft vessels to come closer to the shore. As it is now, deeper draft vessels have to wait for high tide to get close enough to the yard’s crane to step masts or perform other similar work.

Once the seawall is in place,



Jack Innis photo

Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes — After 10 years of proposed changes, the Koehler Kraft Boat Building and Services facility is being renovated. New docks, a new seawall and a new repair building are planned and will have the ability to handle boats 70 feet in size.

new docks will round out the waterside part of the project. Landside improvements include a 10,000-square-foot boat repair shop with state-of-the-art environmental controls. The steel building will be able to accommodate boats up to 70 feet in length. The yard will also boast a new railway/cradle boat haulout system.

Proprietor C.F. Koehler hopes the waterside improvements will be completed by fall, and that the entire project will be wrapped up by Spring 2007.

“We had many false starts since 1996 where we had to throw our (original letter of intent) away and start from scratch,” Koehler said. “We finally got the final go-ahead in March. It took two weeks to do the dredging. That’s how all these projects work.”

Agencies typically in line for review on such permits include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Coastal

Commission, state Lands Commission, state Regional Water Quality Control Board and the San Diego Unified Port District. Koehler Kraft Co. was founded in 1938 as a builder of mahogany sportfishing boats and racing runabouts.

Clarence Koehler Sr. moved the yard to its current Shelter Island location in 1952. In 1956, Koehler Kraft built the first San Diego Harbor Patrol and rescue boat. At the time, this ultra-modern craft boasted radar and firefighting capabilities with a top speed of more than 40 knots.

C.F. Koehler Jr. now owns and operates the yard after working with his father for more than two decades. Koehler Kraft has a reputation around the waterfront for offering both traditional and modern boat building and repair.

There’s no doubt in Koehler’s mind that the new covered boat repair shop is the real showstopper.