

# Wharf dedication on tap

Rep. Leon Panetta will be the keynote speaker Saturday afternoon when Capitola dedicates its newly renovated Fishing Wharf.

The wharf will be officially opened to the public Saturday at 8 a.m. for the start of a fishing derby.

Formal dedication ceremonies will be at 1 p.m. with state, county and city officials invited.

The public is invited and refreshments will be served.

The wharf, built more than a century ago, was closed to public use 2½ years ago after being severely damaged by ocean waves.

The storm damage and closure ultimately resulted in builder Rick Karleen and his wife, Jennifer, purchasing the wharf and under an agreement with the Capitola City Council deeding the wharf to the city for renovation in exchange for a long term concession agreement.

The City Council had been toying with the idea of

purchasing the wharf for more than a decade, and had turned down two offers by previous owners for the city to purchase the structure.

But nothing was done until after the City Council hired City Manager Steve Burrell, who had been heavily involved in finding state and federal funds for the reconstruction of the San Clemente pier and then oversaw its construction.

Burrell was able to persuade the little-known state Wildlife Conservation Board to fund half of the reconstruction costs, and to get another 25 percent contribution from the federal government.

Karleen will start building two buildings on the far end of the wharf as soon as the city and Coastal Commission approve revised plans showing two instead of three buildings there.

Ultimately, Karleen will operate a snack bar, bait and tackle shop, boat launching and rental services on the wharf. The facility itself will be open to

the public on a no-charge basis from 5 a.m. to midnight.

Renovation of the wharf has cost the city \$800,000 over the last year, including replacement of all decking, many of the pilings and support beams under the deck, installation of new utilities, and construction of handrails.

Originally, the reconstruction was estimated to cost \$600,000, but extra work, including new decking for the entire surface of the wharf, and extensive pigeon-caused damage to support beams and pilings raised the construction cost to the \$800,000 mark.

The fishing derby Saturday, chaired by City Councilman Ron Graves, is open to all comers and NO fishing license is required, City Manager Steve Burrell said.

Prizes, including fishing tackle, rods, and gift certificates, will be awarded to the first, second and third place winners in the adults and kids under 16 classifications.

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