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Panama City Selected for Mercury Marine Testing Facility

Mercury Marine is coming to Panama City.

Panama City, FL—The Wisconsin-based company – the world’s largest manufacturer of marine engines – selected Watson Bayou in Panama City over 52 other potential sites as home to its new main testing facility. Mercury’s development plan – which includes a multi-slip marina, as well as an office, laboratory and boat-rigging building – recently received unanimous approval from Panama City commissioners. Construction is slated to begin immediately on the 8.4-acre site purchased in August by Brunswick Corporation, Mercury’s parent company, and is scheduled to be fully functional by April 1, 2004. The initial project represents an estimated \$5.3-million investment.

Mercury is well known for its extensive product testing. Trials include accelerated “normal use” testing, accelerated weathering, endurance runs, simulated impact testing, maximum run tests and fuel efficiency research.

A specific set of criteria was used by Mercury in its search for a new testing site, including realistic boating conditions, available marine technical personnel and a degree of seclusion. One of the big advantages Panama City had over many other candidates was the presence of suitable calm and rough saltwater and freshwater testing areas, so the same facility and staff could be used to test everything from high-end offshore race boats to small outboard-

powered tenders. A combined testing facility is directly in line with the company's lean-thinking philosophy and migration toward increased integration.

Jim Hubbard, Vice President and Chief of Staff of Mercury, said Panama City and Mercury are a perfect match.

"A quality saltwater boating environment usable 12 months per year, easy to get to, along with a solid local infrastructure, made it ideal for us as a marine propulsion systems company," Hubbard said. "Being able to test our products under 'normal use' conditions year-round is an important factor in our product development process."

Another advantage Panama City offers is its very effective and helpful city government, which is led by Mayor Girard Clemons Jr. According to Mercury Manager of Plant Layout Herb Keding, that factor played a huge part in Mercury's decision to build on Watson Bayou.

"The cooperation and support we received from the Mayor and his staff along with the Economic Development folks was outstanding," Keding said. "They answered our questions and got us the necessary information in a timely manner. It was clear they were truly interested in making this a win-win situation."

When construction is complete, the operation will employ approximately 20-30 people, including contracted seasonal boat drivers.

Mercury Marine is a division of Brunswick Corporation. Headquartered in Lake Forest, Ill., Brunswick Corporation endeavors to instill "Genuine Ingenuity"™ in all its leading consumer brands, including Mercury and Mariner outboard engines; Mercury MerCruiser sterndrives and inboard engines; Teignbridge propellers; MotoTron electronic controls; Northstar marine electronics; Navman GPS-based products; IDS dealer management systems; Sea Ray, Bayliner, Maxum, Hatteras, Meridian and Sealine pleasure boats; Baja high-performance boats; Boston Whaler and Trophy offshore fishing boats; Princecraft fishing, deck and pontoon boats; Land 'N' Sea marine parts and accessories distributor; Life Fitness, Hammer Strength and ParaBody fitness equipment; Brunswick bowling centers, equipment and consumer products; Brunswick billiards tables; and Valley-Dynamo pool, table hockey and foosball tables.

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