



Ship would serve as museum

Group hopes to bring post-World War II Navy vessel to IR Inlet

By Alyson Cunningham • Staff Writer • January 26, 2011

INDIAN RIVER INLET -- A nonprofit organization is working toward housing a post-World War II Navy vessel at the Indian River Inlet.

The USS Forrest Sherman DD-931 Foundation Inc. hopes to use the USS Forrest Sherman destroyer as a museum and display ship, an overnight camping venue for youth, an educational tool and a fishing platform for fishermen.

While the ship, currently docked in Philadelphia, would not relocate until after the new Indian River Inlet Bridge is constructed, Foundation President Kurt Wagemann said the group is exploring the possibility of a move.

"It's a great location for the ship," he said. "It has access to a great number of people, especially in the summer, being halfway between Ocean City and Rehoboth Beach."

The economic benefits for the beach towns are plentiful, Wagemann said. Local contractors would be hired to restore and renovate the ship, and the vessel would draw people to the area. In addition, the ship would provide at least 20 new jobs.

"(More than) 10 million people a year go to historic ships throughout the country," he said. "A vast majority of those people wouldn't come to the area if it weren't for the ship."

Gary Wray, president of the Fort Miles Historic Association -- a nonprofit group that aims to preserve local history -- thinks bringing the vessel to Sussex is a great idea.

"It's exciting," he said. "Fort Miles is a World War II fort. It'll bring more attention to what (the association) is all about."

Before the Indian River Inlet was considered, the foundation was looking at possible homes in Wilmington and Delaware City, Wagemann said.

The ship is listed on the National Register of

Historic Places. Wray said he believes placement at the inlet will bring more attention to coastal Sussex.

"If it comes to the inlet, it'll be just marvelous," he said.

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If relocated to the Indian River Inlet, the USS Forrest Sherman would be used as a museum and display ship, an overnight camping venue for youth, an educational tool and a fishing platform for fishermen.

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