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DI-based Coast Masters just might float your boat

Club membership allows use of boats without the costs of ownership

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If you attended the boat show held at the Mobile Convention Center last month, you were probably amazed at all the beautiful vessels on display.

After inspecting your dream boat, you had to finally ask the big question: How much?

Even to the wealthiest would-be customers, there had to be some sticker shock upon discovering how much new boats cost these days. When you add the cost of insurance, storage fees and possible purchase of a tow vehicle, it gets harder to justify the expense, especially if the boat is used only once or twice a month.

But there may be a solution to many of the concerns of boat owners or potential owners. Coast Masters, a newly formed boaters club based at Dauphin Island, will allow members the opportunity to participate in the boating lifestyle without the hassles of ownership.

For a monthly fee, club members will have access to a couple of new boats located at the Dauphin Island Marina. Members can reserve one of the boats by contacting the club by phone or Internet.

There are no hidden charges to worry about either. The only expense, besides the membership fee, is the fuel used.

Bill Anderson, the originator of Coast Masters, said that while a boaters club is new to our area, many such clubs have been in existence for years in Florida.

"There have been boaters clubs along the East Coast since 1995," he said. "The idea spread and looped around the peninsula of Florida. There is a gap that extends through our area of the Gulf Coast and picks back up along Texas, where the concept is very popular."

There are many benefits to being a member of a boaters club, but one of the best to seasoned boaters or anglers is when you make it back to the dock.

"Most folks who have spent the day on a boat are pretty tired and sunburned when they get back to the dock," Anderson said. "As a member of our club, all you are required to do is to fill the boat back up with fuel to replace what you used. Next, you remove all your belongings and any trash from the boat. Once you've placed the trash in the dumpster and loaded your vehicle, you are on your way home without the hassle of pulling a boat. Plus, we do the cleaning and scrubbing of the boat so you don't have to."

Boat owners know all too well the drudgery of unloading and cleaning a vessel and flushing the motor after a long day on the water. And not having to worry about costly repairs is surely peace of mind.

The Coast Masters club currently has two options. One of the boats is a 21-foot Pro Line with T-Top,

powered by a Yamaha 150 outboard and including a Garmin GPS/bottom machine combo, VHF and stereo. The other boat is a 25-foot Sea Pro walk-around cuddy -- powered by twin Yamaha 150s -- with a hard top, freshwater washdown, fully flushable head, radar, GPS/bottom machine combo, stereo and VHS. Both boats are new and equipped with all required Coast Guard safety gear.

As the club grows, Anderson said more boats will be added to the fleet.

"Since speckled trout and redfish are so popular with anglers, we are looking at buying some skinny-water bay boats to fill that need," he said.

Coast Masters has a Web site -- www.CoastMastersBoatClub.com -- where members can check the availability of the boats and make instant reservations. The site also includes a forum where members can share fishing information or possibly hook up to make a trip and share fuel expenses.

"One of my goals for the club is to have members get together for trips and make new friends," Anderson said. "We plan on having a party or membership meeting where we can bring on fishing experts to do seminars and such for the club."

To learn how to become a member of Coast Masters, call 251-533-6431 or visit www.CoastMastersBoatClub.com.

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