



Area produce hits Food World, Navarre Pier to be longest on Gulf

Louis Cooper • lcooper@pnj.com • March 17, 2010

Produce grown on Santa Rosa County farms may be at Food World stores this summer; the new Navarre Pier is set to be the longest on the Gulf of Mexico; and property at the new Northwest Florida Industrial Park at Interstate 10 may sell for \$50,000 per acre.

Santa Rosa produce going to Food World

1 Fruits and vegetables grown in Santa Rosa and surrounding counties are scheduled to hit the bins at regional Food World stores this year.

The Panhandle Fresh Marketing Association has struck a deal with Southern Family Markets — which owns Food World and Bruno's grocery stores — to supply produce, Andrea Sutrick, marketing director for the association, said this week.

Talks also are ongoing to sell local produce to wholesaler Sysco Corp. for distribution to regional high-end restaurants, she said. The two-year-old marketing association already sells produce to local Walmart stores and to Santa Rosa Medical Center.

"We've more than doubled our sales in two years (from \$125,000 in 2008 to \$290,000 in 2009)," Sutrick said. "We've more than doubled the number of farmers who participate."

Farmers who participate have grown from six to 17.

The association also expects to launch a

community-supported agriculture program in May. That program will deliver weekly boxes of locally grown produce to subscribers for 26 weeks. The cost is expected to be about \$30 per week, limited to the first 50 subscribers who prepay.

For more information about the Panhandle Fresh Marketing Association, go to www.panhandlefresh.com.

Navarre Pier to be longest on Gulf

2 All hurdles have been cleared to allow the new Navarre Pier to be the longest on the Gulf of Mexico.

The state Department of Environmental Protection and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have signed off on allowing the pier to extend 1,545 feet into the Gulf, County Commission Chairman Gordon Goodin announced Thursday.

"It's going to be a proud day when we can open up that pier and say it's the longest pier in the Gulf of Mexico — not just the state of Florida," Goodin said.

That day should come early this summer, according to county engineer Roger Blaylock.

"We're projecting the pier should be complete sometime at or near the end of May," Blaylock said. "We're looking to put the pier in operation sometime in June."

Originally, the pier was budgeted at just more than \$8.4 million. Because the old pier was damaged by hurricanes Ivan and Dennis, 90 percent of that is being covered by FEMA. The state will pick up 7.5 percent, and the county will cover 2.5 percent. That's a local share of \$210,626.

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The extension should cost another \$125,000 for permitting, design, materials and equipment.

Industrial land could be \$50,000 per acre

3 Property at the new Northwest Florida Industrial Park at Interstate 10 should be priced at \$50,000 per acre, the TEAM Santa Rosa Economic Development Council is recommending to the Santa Rosa County Commission.

The \$50,000 per acre would be the base price, with potential discounts based on the number of jobs a company would create and the size of the facility, TEAM Santa Rosa Executive Director Cindy Anderson told the TEAM board of directors on Monday.

The County Commission purchased 90 acres in the 200 acre park — formerly called the Pullum Park — in 2009 for \$3.1 million. The property is on State Road 87 just south of Interstate 10 in East Milton. Anderson believes the park would be ideal for distribution centers for large retail and grocery chains needing easy access to the interstate.

The commission is expected to discuss the pricing plan on Monday.

Land at the Santa Rosa County Industrial Park, also in East Milton, has a base price of \$35,000 per acre for land without rail access or regional stormwater management and \$50,000 per acre for property with those amenities, with performance-based discounts there as well.

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