

# New owners to expand marina

## Renovate, build new facilities

By Mike Perry  
Staff Writer

A Colorado family has some big changes planned for Highland Marina after purchasing the facility in what they and the previous owner call "a multi-million dollar deal."

Danny Ellrich, a former CEO and president of a printed circuit board manufacturer in Colorado, and his wife Kris bought the marina at West Point Lake earlier this month from Ken and Betty Manning.

For starters, Ellrich said he has hired an interior decorator to help him renovate all 36 of the marina's rental cabins. Before the end of this year, he plans to add two pavilions accommodating 600 people for social gatherings, a parking lot with 300-plus spaces, a large deck on the marina's Waterfront Restaurant with plenty of lakeside seating for patrons. The expanded restaurant will offer a new dinner menu, with weekend specials featuring steaks and outdoor fish cooking.

But Ellrich said he's not stopping there.

His five-year plan calls for a new swimming pool with children's water play area, concession stand and tennis and basketball courts. Eventually, Ellrich said he wants to build a general store on the water to sell fishing tackle, gasoline and other items. The present store will be expanded into a larger restaurant, he said.

And with only 50 to 70 acres of the 198-acre tract currently developed, he wants to build some high-end rental properties near the waterfront with prices ranging from \$250 to \$400 per night.

"We have huge development potential here," Ellrich said,



Mike Jacoby / Daily News

New owners of West Point Lake's Highland Marina, Danny and Kris Ellrich, have been busy planning improvements and serving customers of the popular fishing outpost since moving in three weeks ago.

seated in his new office at the marina. "We see our customers as not only coming from LaGrange and Troup County, but also Atlanta and other outlying areas."

Ellrich and his wife began searching the Southeast for a marina to buy around three years ago. He had gotten burnout during his 20 years of leading a rapidly growing, \$16-million-a-year technology company and was looking for a more relaxed line of work.

"I felt like I was an old man," said Ellrich, 50. "I recreated a lot to get away from that pressure, and it always related to the water."

He spent a couple of years competing on the pro bass fishing circuit before deciding to buy a marina. Then, he and his wife spent about 18 months checking out 17 marinas looking for a potential buy. Highland Marina was the next

to last spot they visited.

"We were really happy to see this area," he said. "We felt like we were out here in the middle of nowhere but could be in downtown LaGrange within 10 minutes, enjoying the amenities of a city."

Besides, he said, Highland Marina already had lakeside lodging and camping facilities, a restaurant, marine service, boat and slip rentals and dry boat storage spaces. He also saw the rapid growth projected for LaGrange and figured he could attract newcomers and long-time residents with his planned improvements.

Manning, the former owner of the marina said he wasn't interested in selling the place until he got a call from a real estate broker who said, "what about at any price?"

"I said if you find the right buyer I would be interested," he said.

Then Manning met the Ellriches and discovered their love for fishing and their interest in expanding the place as more of a vacation spot. Manning said he knew the couple would be able to offer great service to fishermen and people who come to stay at the marina for recreation.

"What they plan to bring to the marina is great for Troup County and the city of LaGrange," he said. "(Ellrich) also knows how to run a business. He and Kris are going to be wonderful assets to the community."

Now that they've sold the business, Manning said he and his wife plan to retire, do some traveling and enjoy their new lakefront home off Rock Mills Road.

"We will get to play on the lake a little bit, which we haven't done much in a while," he said.