

# Pinnacle won approval for second Lake Charles casino resort

Pinnacle Entertainment will build its second Lake Charles riverboat casino at its site, instead of using a shipyard, state gambling regulators were told this week.

The Louisiana Gaming Control Board unanimously approved Las Vegas-based construction plan for the company's USD 350 million Sugarcane Bay resort, located near its current L'Auberge Du Lac casino.

Cliff Kortman, Pinnacle's president of design and construction, said the current oil boom in the Gulf of Mexico has resulted in enough shipbuilding to keep Pinnacle from getting a shipyard until late 2011. So, the company will construct the boat at the Sugarcane Bay site.

Kortman said Pinnacle has done that previously with a casino barge it built at the company's site in downtown St. Louis. „It's basically the same methodology,“ Kortman said.

Normally Tuesday's action would have triggered a 30-day period for Pinnacle to begin construction, followed by an 18-month period to complete the project. But because of a change in the way the boat's design will be inspected for safety concerns, the first deadline won't start until the board approves the safety report.

In the past, the Coast Guard has reviewed riverboat designs, as well as conducted periodic safety inspections on the boats. But with the boats no longer required to cruise and staying dockside, the Coast Guard has informed the state it will not handle that duty.

On Tuesday, the board approved an agreement for those tasks to be assumed by Houston-based ABS Consulting, a wide-ranging consultant for marine and other services that currently handles safety inspections for gambling vessels in Missouri, Mississippi and Indiana.

ABS' first official task will be to review plans for the Sugarcane Bay casino boat, and a casino that Pinnacle plans to put in Baton Rouge. After the Coast Guard stops inspections in 2009, ABS also will take over those duties. No firm timeline was given on how long the Sugarcane Bay review would take.

Sugarcane Bay, a proposed tropical-themed casino also will feature a 400-room hotel, numerous restaurants, an arena and a golf course. Since its opening in May 2005, L'Auberge du Lac has been a hit with gamblers. Last month, the casino took in USD 26.5 million – the most among Louisiana's 13 floating casinos.