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## Firefighters resurrect troubled Whaler

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News editor

SANDPOINT — A nautical maxim holds that the happiest days in a boat owner's life are when they buy their boat and when they sell it.

But Sandpoint Fire Chief Robert Tyler seems happiest right now. The department's 27-foot Boston Whaler is bobbing next to a dock on Sand Creek, prepped and primed to fight fires and conduct rescues.

"A lot of blood, sweat and tears went into this boat," Tyler said as he worked a boat brush over the deck and hull.

The boat was purchased using \$50,000 provided by The Seasons condominium development. Developers put up the money for the boat, plus an additional \$100,000 to be used for terrestrial fire-fighting equipment, to mitigate safety concerns over the resort's single access road.

Tyler hunted for a suitable vessel and found the Whaler at an equipment dealership in Florida. In its prior life, the fire-fighting boat served Sarasota County.

But the boat's days in dry dock were anything but kind. It weathered two hurricanes. The dealership assured Tyler the pump used to take up water and shunt it to the cannons mounted on the bow and amidships was in working order.

It might have been, although some of the pump's attachments were removed, exposing the pump's innards to the elements. The boat's small cabin and electrical system were also damaged from weather exposure.

Faced with rolling the dice on pricey litigation against the seller for misrepresentation or restoring the boat, Tyler figured the latter option held the most promise and value.

At least \$4,000 in taxpayer funds were invested in getting the boat shipshape, but firefighters contributed two or three times that amount in improvements, according to Tyler.



—Photo by KEITH KINNAIRD Above, Sandpoint Firefighter Troy Badeaux demonstrates one of the water cannons mounted on the Boston Whaler he and his colleagues restored.

Mick Adams, Britain Whitley and Troy Badeaux resurrected the boat's mechanics and electrical system. Kevin Amorebieta, Clint Frank and Allo Pucci did an assortment of work, as did Jake Hilton, Mike Gow and Glen Cassidy, who also repainted the boat. The firefighters also rebuilt the cabin's entrance to make it more durable and secure.

"It should be a very solid, consistent piece of equipment," Tyler said.