

# ON THE WAYS

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CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY AT WORKBOAT YARDS

## Eastern Shipbuilding is busy with a boatload of projects

Business is good at most Gulf of Mexico yards, but some are busier than others. For example, look at what's taking shape in the Florida panhandle at **Eastern Shipbuilding Group Inc.**: five 98' Z-drive tugs, three 150' ATB tugs, 17 90' pushboats, a 280' PSV, a 300' "needle" barge, a 425' tank barge, and a 150' offshore tug. That's about 30 vessels in all.

This would be too much for Eastern's 11-acre Nelson Street shipyard location in Panama City to handle, and it is. That's why all of the main fabrication for these projects are spread out at the company's roomy 140-acre yard 12 miles away in Allanton. The facility features over 5,200' of water frontage and is adjacent to the intracoastal waterway.

The main steel processing shed is 400'x80'. It features three 10-ton overhead cranes, a new Wheelabrator automated horizontal shot blasting and painting machine, a new MG CNC plasma-arc burning machine with four 10'x40' cutting tables, and a 500-ton

apron brake. The Allanton yard also has a 21,000-sq.-ft. fabrication building, a warehouse and office space.

The facilities, beginning with the steel processing shed, are lined up one after the other. "It's a straight line production process, about three-quarters of a mile direct to the water," said Stephen Berthold, Eastern's vice president of sales.



At Eastern, everything from OSVs to offshore tugs to inland barges are being built.

David Krapp



Eastern has completed four of five 5,000-hp 98' Z-drives for Seabulk Towing.

Eastern Shipbuilding

the yard's vice president/general manager. "There's a lot more room to build here."

Eastern began to ramp up production in Allanton when business really took off during the past couple of years. Before that, the yard was largely idle after the '80s bust. In the early '80s, Eastern had around 1,100 employees. Five years

The boats are mostly finished out at the Allanton yard, then head 16 miles by water to the Nelson Street yard for sea trials.

"If you had to do everything at one place it would be tough," said Ken Munroe,

ago it was 200. Now the yard employs around 600 and would like to add another 150.

"This is pretty unusual," Munroe said. "The last time it was this busy was the late '70s, early '80s. Then there was a dramatic ending to the boom."

Back then it was mainly OSV construction for the energy market. But that's changed. It's no longer one market fueling the building boom. "Now it's inland, ATBs, Z-drives, barges, harbor tugs," said Munroe.

Eastern's latest delivery was the *Harvey Spirit* (see story page 56) in May. The 280'x60' DP-2 offshore supply vessel for **Harvey Gulf International Marine Inc.**, Harvey, La., carries the most advanced machinery space classification issued by ABS. The vessel is approved for unattended machinery space for up to 24 hours.

"It's fully automated," said Munroe. "That is a complicated boat" where all

cargo operations can be handled from the bridge. The sister vessel, the *Harvey Supplier*, was launched in April and will be delivered in August. Eastern is also building the 150'x45' *Harvey War Horse II* for Harvey Gulf. The 16,500-hp ocean tug is scheduled for delivery in November.

In June, the 98'x36' ASD Z-drive tug *Sabine* was delivered to **Seabulk Towing**. The *Sabine* will be followed by the *Buccaneer* in September, the final tug in a five-boat contract for the **Seacor Holdings** Inc. subsidiary. The tugs have an estimated bollard pull of 70 tons.

Also on the near-term delivery schedule is a 300'x40'x10' inland gate "pin" barge for the Army Corps of Engineers, with delivery set for July. Eastern is also finishing up its contract for 25 90' pushboats for **Florida Marine Transporters**. The final dozen pushboats will be delivered between now and May 2008. Eastern has also secured an option to build another five for the company with delivery ending in October 2008.

Further out, there's three more 98'x36' Z-drives — two for **McAllister Towing** and one for **E.N. Bisso & Son** Inc. The Bisso tug is due for delivery in October and the McAllister tugs are scheduled for delivery in January and May 2008.

With all the work and more being bid on each month, Eastern would like to

ramp up to its 750-employee target level as soon as possible. "We're not at 100 percent, but it's not holding us up," said Munroe.

— DAVID KRAPP

## Gladding-Hearn delivers its second 40' pilot boat

Not all that long ago, Peter Duclos realized that some RIB builders were turning out larger boats and making inroads into the pilot boat market for boats under 50' in length.

At that time, Duclos's company, **Gladding-Hearn Shipbuilding** in Somerset, Mass., had three options for pilot boats — the 75' Charleston class, the 52' Jacksonville class, and the 53' Chesapeake class.

"We thought there was a place for a smaller boat," Duclos said. So Gladding-Hearn developed the aluminum 40' Resilient class.

The second boat built to this design, the *Matajet*, was delivered to the Matagorda Bay (Texas) Pilots on April 30. The first one went to the Charleston Pilots in Charleston, S.C., in 2005.

Duclos thinks the Resilient-class pilot boat works well in two markets. "It's a niche fit for a lot of operators that have 50-foot-plus boats. This one burns half the fuel, has one operator and is basi-

cally half the price of the larger boat, and it does 80 percent of the work," said Duclos. "It's a way for pilots to save operating costs by not operating a larger pilot boat when they don't have to."

The other market is for pilot groups that can't afford to buy a boat over 50 feet. That's the slot the Matagorda Bay Pilots fit into.

"The boat has opened up a new market for us in the pilot boat field," said Duclos.

Besides the size difference between a boat like the *Matajet* and a 50-footer, another thing that's quickly noticed is the large collar that is wrapped around the hull.

"A 50' pilot boat would have an 8" D-type fender," Duclos said. In contrast, the Resilient-class pilot boats have a 28"-dia. hybrid fender. It has an air chamber in the middle that is surrounded with a low-density foam cover and over that is a heavy-duty fabric cover.

Duclos said that though it looks like an air collar, it doesn't have anything to do with buoyancy. "It's a very large fendering system. You can come alongside in rougher conditions than with a traditional fendering system. Basically you can drive the 40-footer into the side of a ship as hard as you want," Duclos said.

Pushed by two 500-hp **Caterpillar** diesels turning waterjets from **HamiltonJet**, the *Matajet* has a top speed of 35 knots.

All the talk of the Resilient class doesn't mean Gladding-Hearn isn't building larger pilot boats. In April, the yard delivered a 53' Chesapeake-class pilot boat to Corpus Christi, Texas.

Gladding-Hearn also recently delivered two new boats to New York City. In March, they delivered a 36' utility boat to the city's **Department of Transportation**, and in May, **New York Water Taxi** received another 72' catamaran passenger boat. — MICHAEL CROWLEY

## Aluminum Chambered Boats delivers more for the military

On June 5, **Aluminum Chambered Boats**, Bellingham, Wash., was due to unveil its newest design in Little



Gladding-Hearn Shipbuilding

Smaller pilot boat from Gladding-Hearn is just right for some operators.