

Marine

News

JANUARY 2026

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Fire Island Ferries

Tim Mooney & Team Prep for the Fourth Generation

Insights

Capt. Steve Jones, Gateway
Clipper Fleet, Past PVA President

U.S. Shipbuilding

Tactical Strategy or Ready
to Cut Steel in 2026?

U.S. Navy Contracting

Approach Fails the Stability Test

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Fire Island Ferries



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On the Cover

Tim Mooney discusses the evolution of Fire Island Ferries, with its primary focus on moving people to and from Fire Island, as well as its somewhat new and growing marine services business.

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Editor's Note



Greg Trauthwein, Editor,
trauthwein@marinelink.com

Following a much needed two-week hiatus at the end of 2025, maritime 2026 has roared in like lion, with rapid-fire announcements on battleships, Venezuela, oil tanker shadow fleets and last – but certainly not least – U.S. shipbuilding. Since President Trump took office around this time last year, there has been voluminous chatter that has put maritime and shipbuilding front and center. To date, however, that talk has not ended with a proportionate money flow, and most reading these pages wait anxiously to read the long overdue Maritime Action Plan, reportedly out sometime in Q1 '26.

In the meantime, there has been no shortage of foreign interest and investment in the U.S. maritime sector, and in this first edition of 2026 we ask Barry

Parker, our resident maritime finance guru with a knack for digging details from volumes of government and corporate reports, to give a thorough shake-down of what transpired in 2025 in terms of investment and partnership, and what could be brewing as a result in 2026 and beyond. Hist story starts on page 34.

While there is much unsettled on many fronts of U.S. maritime, one beacon of stability is the passenger vessel sector. Next month, just across the river from Cincinnati, the Passenger Vessel Association (PVA) will convene for its annual convention and discussion on all matters passenger vessels. To prepare, in this edition we offer a powerful one-two editorial combo to help set the stage.

- **Captain Steve Jones, Gateway Clipper Fleet, President of PVA (2025),** offers insight not only on his company's operations and experience in and around Pittsburgh, but also that 'view from the top' of PVA, diving into many of the burning issues of the day that will effectively shape passenger vessel ops for the coming generation. From burdensome regulation to the relationship with the U.S. Coast Guard to U.S. shipbuilding, Jones offers insights starting on page 24.

- The cover story in this edition is my interview with **Tim Mooney**, the third-generation family leader of the iconic **Fire Island Ferries**. This story is personal and tardy, as Fire Island Ferries out of Bay Shore, NY, is literally a 20 minute ride from my home on Long Island. In addition, one of the Fire Island communities served by the ferries – Atlantique – is our literal 'home away from home' during the summer, as my wife and I find our boat docked in the Atlantique marina more often than not, with a daily front row seat to Fire Island Ferry operations. Tim shares insights on the company's ferry ops today, as well as the future which includes a growing marine services business and fleet of workboats and floating assets.

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New York: 118 E. 25th St., New York, NY 10010
tel: (212) 477-6700; fax: (212) 254-6271
www.marinelink.com

CEO

John C. O'Malley • jomalley@marinelink.com

Publisher & Editor

Greg Trauthwein • trauthwein@marinelink.com
Tel: 516-810-7405

Contributing Writers

Joseph Keefe, Celia Konowe, Robert Kunkel, Rhonda Moniz, Barry Parker

PRODUCTION

Production & Graphics Manager
Nicole Ventimiglia • nicole@marinelink.com

SALES

Vice President, Sales & Marketing

Terry Breese • breeset@marinelink.com
Tel: 561-732-1185 Fax: 561-732-8414

Advertising Sales Managers

Lucia Annunziata • annunziata@marinelink.com
Tel: 212-477-6700 ext 6240 Fax: 212-254-6271

John Cagni • cagni@marinelink.com
Tel: 631-472-2715

Frank Covella • covella@marinelink.com
Tel: 561-732-1659 Fax: 561-732-8063

Mike Kozlowski • kozlowski@marinelink.com
Tel: 561-733-2477 Fax: 561-732-9670

Gary Lewis • lewis@offshore-engineer.com
Tel: 516-441-7258

CORPORATE STAFF

Manager, Marketing
Mark O'Malley • momalley@marinelink.com

Accounting

Esther Rothenberger • rothenberger@marinelink.com
Tel: 212-477-6700 ext 6810

Manager, Info Tech Services

Vladimir Bibik

CIRCULATION

Kathleen Hickey • k.hickey@marinelink.com
Tel: 212-477-6700 ext 6320

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Contributors

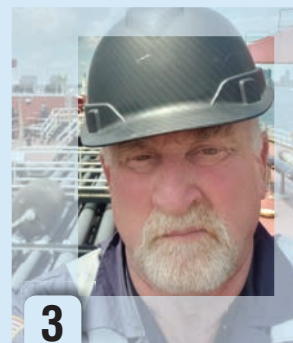
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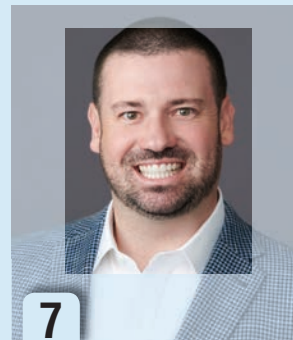
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1 Jim Bunsey

is the senior manager of business development at the Propane Education & Research Council. He can be reached at jim.bunsey@propane.com.

2 Heather Combs

is the newly appointed CEO of Ripple Operations and AdonisHR.

3 Robert Kunkel

is president of Alternative Marine Technologies and First Harvest Navigation, served as the Federal Chairman of the Short Sea Shipping Cooperative Program under the DOT's MARAD from 2003 until 2008. He writes regularly for *Marine News*.

4 Erik Milito

is the president of the National Ocean Industries Association (NOIA), representing the interests of the

offshore oil, gas, wind, carbon capture, and ocean mineral industries.

5 Charlie Papavizas

is partner in the firm of Winston & Strawn LLP and the author of the 2024-released U.S. merchant marine policy book *Journey to the Jones Act – U.S. Merchant Marine Policy 1776-1920*. The views in this article are those solely of the author.

6 Barry Parker

of bdp1 Consulting Ltd provides strategic and tactical support, including analytics and communications, to businesses across the maritime spectrum. He is a freelance writer and regular contributor to this magazine.

7 Tracy Zea

is the President and CEO of Waterways Council, Inc.

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U.S. Shipbuilding: Tactical Strategy or Ready to Cut Steel in 2026?

By Bob Kunkel

Maritime 2026 opened with a bang

between the announcement of Battleships, Venezuela, shadow fleets and yes, U.S. shipbuilding. The commercial building issue may come down to strategic patience or the adaptability to evolve through new technology while ignoring historic, old tactics. The subject requires another year of debate as the line separating the success or failure of Naval and Commercial shipbuilding in the U.S. is slowly becoming a blur. Look towards Naval growth developing in non-traditional patterns ... because it has to.

With China leading all of the discussions, it is only fit-

ting to quote Sun Tzu in the Art of War.

“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat”

In no uncertain terms 2025 brought plenty of “noise” to both commercial markets and geopolitical events. We now need a strategic path coupled with new tactics to move forward in the shipbuilding world to dictate how and when that U.S. victory can occur.

A newly elected Administration in Washington raised the question of our capability to rebuild and revitalize U.S. shipbuilding in 2025. Executive Orders, draft legislation

Leading Off U.S. Shipbuilding

The Navallinks Supplylink ATB brings together technologies readily designed and constructed in U.S. Jones Act markets and shipyards. The barge as a floating resupply base is capable of storing up to 8.4 million gallons of fuel and 120 TEUs.

and Senate hearings creating the “noise” Sun Tzu warned of. That noise exposed a lack of priority and support from previous administrations. The debate of our shipbuilding capacity, our shipbuilding labor issues, costs and delays has reached every public, military and private news agency. Most of the reports have little to no knowledge of the problem or the solution. All speak to the influence of China. All of the solutions need to support the Warfighter.

The “noise” has gone beyond U.S. borders.

Our Korean allies have realized that inflationary costs, labor issues, tariffs and capacity can lead to their decline in competitive shipbuilding within the Korean peninsula and with that they are looking elsewhere for growth. Their problem can present itself well within one or two decades addressing many of the same U.S. problems discussed throughout 2025. Japan experienced the same problems when they first competed with Korea in the 1990’s and with that we question where Japan’s naval shipbuilding is headed as it enters the discussions.

India has now joined the group negotiating technical relationships with Korean Shipbuilders and announcing a \$5.4 billion massive subsidy to direct shipbuilding costs and increase shipyard capacity and infrastructure. The support extends well into 2036 and can continue to 2047. The length of the support is important to note as India determined the period is necessary to build greenfield, upgrade operations and rise to near Asian shipyard capability.

Those competitive realizations were all based on a global commercial shipbuilding supply and demand. Prior to those decades, no one questioned U.S. Navy superiority or our ability to build as a superpower. All four Far East countries are now ramping up Naval construction, boosting military budgets, exporting Naval vessels and creating a global “cold war” market of who can build bigger, better, faster and cheaper.

Our past American generations confidently blanketed singular Soviet Union cold war efforts. That is no longer the case. The divide is much deeper and more dangerous as China has proven there is no “blur” between their Na-

val fleet and commercial fleets. The term “dual use” has a new definition.

China recently released reports of a medium size commercial cargo ship carrying a selection of sixty (60) containerized vertical launch cells, supporting radar systems and close combat weapons.

China recently released reports of a medium size commercial cargo ship carrying a selection of sixty (60) containerized vertical launch cells, supporting radar systems and close combat weapons. New Year reports photographed a ship outfitted with EMALS – a modular mobile road drone launch system. The same medium size cargo ship was photographed at the end of 2025. Doubtful this is the new attempt of piracy protection at sea. Commercial tonnage will have military usefulness and civilian mariners will have PLAN military training. We need to fall into the same line.

The U.S. Shipbuilding Path Ahead

Think about the length of time required for U.S. shipbuilding to reach capacity levels that can compete internationally with China. This is heavy lifting and our long-term shipbuilding solutions need to take that into account. The short solution is all about tactics in the immediate future with that tactical choice being a period of two to five years. Listen to Sun Tzu.

Each one of these four countries subsidize their shipbuilding efforts, while the U.S. has taken the position “we will not subsidize our yards.” Unfortunately for all the wrong reasons.

With that it is our opinion we will not compete with China in a shipbuilding market. The global commercial giants will continue to build in China until such time that the Indo-Pacific theater becomes a perceived threat or a call to arms. Make no mistake how that theater develops will be the basis of India’s and the Far East shipyard’s bet – whether they are friend or foe. Whether hot or cold war.

Leading Off

U.S. Shipbuilding

With China leading all of the discussions, it is only fitting to quote **Sun Tzu in the Art of War:**

“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat”

And with that it is our opinion we need to move into a war time mindset as multi domain manned and unmanned systems blur both military and commercial boundaries.

We must develop programs to deliver bottoms within the two to five years and follow-on tonnage in updated and efficient U.S. shipyard capacity in long term strategies. The Amtech Network is working though more than several projects as design integrators and Vessel Construction Managers (VCM) to meet those goals. All tactical projects and all meeting short term delivery requirements simply because the first series are built with foreign capacity and partnerships.

Look to the Arctic

The first positive tactical movement within the Administration, MIB, and USCG was the current contract award for the construction of the “Arctic Security Cutters”. Under that Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S and Finland, Rauma Marine Construction will provide their icebreaking technology and experience to deliver two vessels from the Finish yard by 2028. A total of four (4) medium size icebreakers will be built in Finland. Up to seven additional vessels will be built in the United States with Bollinger Shipyard in Houma. That is the beginning



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of an important Arctic strategy.

The second tactical 2025 year-end Memorandum of Understanding was executed in Washington DC between the Maritime Operating Group (MOG) and Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI) Naval Shipbuilding Group to collaborate on the design and construction of hybrid diesel electric submarines for U.S. Navy training, technology testing, research & development and special missions. The MOG principals and advisors bring more than 50 years’ experience in SEAL team SDV operation and Hyundai brings its decades of shipyard manufacturing expertise as the largest and most successful shipbuilding company in the world. Grand Bay Capital Management is navigating the financial requirements of the project and the Amtech network is selected as the VCM.

The first series of submarines will be built in Hyundai under commercial contract and meet the tactical delivery periods we have addressed. The MOU meets MASGA tariff agreements between the U.S. and ROK governments and supports Montana Senator Tim Sheehy’s “As a Service” agenda to introduce a commercially based advanced undersea defense ecosystem. The MOU addresses the development of MRO facilities in the United States under HHI supervision and eventual construction of follow-on

Leading Off U.S. Shipbuilding

vessels in the United States. That is the subsea strategy to support our nuclear fleet.

A **third tactical proposal** is being developed by NavalLinks (<https://navallinks.com/>)

The NavalLinks Supplylink ATB brings together technologies readily designed and constructed in U.S. Jones Act markets and shipyards to maximize the efficiency and storage of material. The barge as a floating resupply base is capable of storing up to 8.4 million gallons of fuel and 120 TEUs. The clear deck design is capable of supporting VTOL aircraft, vehicle storage and modular habitation facilities. Outfitted with hydraulic twist locks in key defensive locations allows for rapid mounting of self-defense mission modules.

To meet the tactical time periods, US Navy Navajo Class T-ATS tugs are retrofitted with an Intercon model 64 ATB

coupler pin in the stern notch to perform ocean transits at speed up to 12 knots. The strategy concept allows construction to be introduced to second tier US shipyard capacity for both tug modification and barge construction.

Dual use defense capability with US shipbuilding current designs and capacity well below current defense budget costs to move the same cargo.

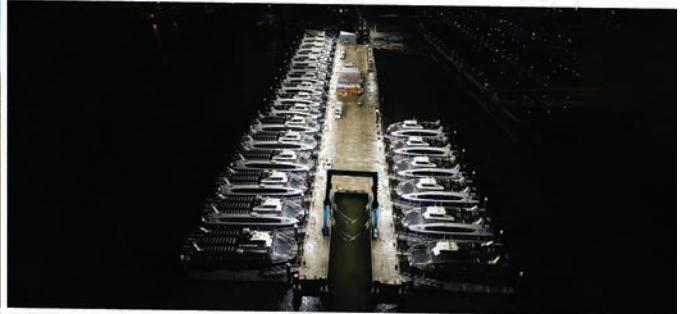
There are other support vessel tactical solutions and they are available if the defense industry understands the current shipbuilding issues while old tactics are set aside. The strategy is to place commercial tonnage in the water to serve defense purposes. We may not meet Chinese capacity at this tactical period. However, we can follow Sun Tzu's guidance and build the strategy. After all he was Chinese.

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles"



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Column

Back to the Drawing Board



That was then ...
Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro gives remarks at the keel laying of the lead ship of the Constellation-class of guided-missile frigates USS Constellation (FFG 62), April 12, 2024.

U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd class Jared Mancuso

The US Navy Contracting Approach Fails the Stability Test

By Rik van Hemmen, Martin & Ottaway

In the 1990's,

my father was asked to attend a side shell damage on a US Navy vessel. The damage was caused by assist tug hard contact. He surveyed the damage and came back to the office to write it up. His partner Harry Ottaway saw my Dad's commercial damage repair estimate, and said: "Henk it is a Navy ship. Double it, and double it again". He did and

came pretty close to the Navy's claimed repair cost.

This was not a complex damage, and in actual repair process was no different than the repair of a commercial vessel side shell damage, but still it somehow cost four times as much as it would cost in a commercial setting. To my father this was a surprise because when he worked for US underwriters in Rotterdam in the 1960's, he remembered attending to a US Navy destroyer that had a contact

Column

Back to the Drawing Board

damage on the transom a few feet below the waterline.

He suggested to the XO that they arrange for drydocking, but the XO said: why don't we do it ourselves with a cofferdam. The cofferdam was faster and less expensive, but also technically much more aggressive. My father was sufficiently impressed to tell me about it a number of times over the passing years. In retrospect it made sense that wartime hardened US Navy personnel knew how to deal with an issue like that.

However, that experience base had long since faded away and by the 1990's we ran with the double and double again multiplier.

Recently we were asked to attend on another tug assist sideshell damage on a US Navy hull. The US Navy had helpfully supplied their cost estimate in the form of manhours of the various trades. Noting that it was a simple steel side shell damage that only required the removal of some crew racks and ducting, it was disturbing to note that in this estimate the cost to repair was double, then double, and then, once more, double the commercial cost to make the repairs.

Because the manhour estimate was provided, and there was a clear and simple understanding of the amount of steel that needed to be repaired, it was rather easy to calculate the amount of welding that a welder was supposed to perform in this estimate. It turned out that the US Navy estimated that a welder would produce about 1 foot of 3/16" side shell butt or seam weld per day!

It is difficult to precisely predict how much welding a welder can do in a day on a repair job, but one foot of stick welding in an hour should be easy to achieve, and with proper focus on production, much higher speeds can be achieved. In other words, the US Navy assumes that weld repairs take at least 8 times longer on Navy ships than commercial vessels.

There are associated hourly costs with welding work such as fire watches, QA and supervision that also drive the cost for this simple repair through the roof. The estimate appeared to indicate that instead of one fire watch, the Navy needs four fire watches during hot work.

When I discussed this with the Navy, the estimator noted that this number of fire watches is the minimum required for an 8 by 8 foot side shell plate repair in a single compartment.

He explained to me that this was not some commercial vessel and that a Navy vessel needed this many fire watches. Noting that the US Navy is quite successful at setting ships on fire during repair work this may be true,

but maybe compared to commercial work they are putting the fire watches on the wrong jobs.

The estimator insisted that his estimate was based on prior experience and followed the NAVSEA repair estimating manual and was therefore proper and reliable.

That comment will take a bit of work to unpack. Prior experience is only valuable if it provides realistic data. One foot per day welding may have become "prior experience" in Navy repairs, but that does not mean it is realistic. To assume that prior experience is necessarily realistic is inherently flawed. If something is done incorrectly in the past, to rely on it will simply result in incorrect processes in the future.

Next one will have to consider how the Navy ended up with such "prior experience" data. In retrospect it makes perfect sense, once a contractor knows that the Navy relies on prior experience in assessing the fair and reasonable cost of repairs, they will work extra hard at increasing the "prior experience" cost. It is a vicious cycle.

Bizarrely, it is easy to break. Send a Navy estimator to a productive shipyard with a box of donuts, walk into the office and ask the manager to be able to watch a welder do some side shell welding. Measure how much welding gets done and that becomes the "prior experience".

I suppose government contractors will then have to figure out other ways to gild the lily.

Generally, shipbuilder lily gilding is achieved through customer naivety or ignorance, but sometimes it is self-inflicted by the customer and ends up frustrating the shipbuilder.

The US Navy reportedly spent billions on modifying the Italian Constellation Frigate design to an extent that it is unbuildable and that project has now been cancelled. That is not the fault of the builder, in this case the builder is suffering from the customer's lack of discipline.

Regardless, it all amounts to incredibly inefficient Navy construction and repair, and in the end we all pay for it. Defense is a cost we all need to carry, but inefficient defense is a recipe for disaster.

For every column I write, *New Wave Media* makes a small contribution to an organization of my choice. For the foreseeable future I am selecting SL7Expo. An industry wide effort to develop a Smithsonian level exhibit center for commercial maritime.

<https://sl7expo.org/members/>

Stop Studying and Build Ships

By Charlie Papavizas, Partner, Winston & Strawn LLP

Maybe it is a human trait,

or maybe a Washington, D.C. trait, but when confronted with a difficult problem with unpalatable solutions, there is usually an impulse to delay the moment of difficult decision by ordering a study. The U.S. merchant marine industry is the poster child for this behavior. The industry has been studied and studied, and is currently being studied, but studies don't build ships -- shipyards build ships.

Going back to the Lynch Committee in 1870, the U.S. government has regularly produced studies on how to revive the U.S. merchant marine. President Trump's April 2025 maritime executive order sticks to the pattern and directs the production of more studies albeit together with an action plan that may be released early this year. Meanwhile, nothing is happening to spur the building of commercial ocean-going ships in the United States even though a bipartisan group of members of Congress and President Trump have said that goal is a national policy imperative. It is long past the point where the United States should stop studying and just build some ships.

The United States faced a similar situation in 1937. The Merchant Marine Act, 1936 had been enacted to replace the scandal riven mail subsidies of the Merchant Marine Act, 1928. The 1936 Act mandated that the United States have a substantial U.S. merchant marine for national and economic security purposes, a goal which remains in the law today.

There were high hopes in the U.S. marine industry that a corner had been turned and that the industry would be supported in a meaningful way. President Franklin Roosevelt had prompted the 1936 Act. The newly formed U.S. Maritime Commission was headed by someone with political heft -- Joseph P. Kennedy, father of future President

John F. Kennedy. Rear Admiral (ret.) Emory ("Jerry") S. Land was the Vice Chairman. Land had deep shipbuilding knowledge as the former head of the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Construction, was a formidable Washington hand, and had a close relationship with President Franklin Roosevelt. There was reason for optimism.

And yet the first thing the Commission did was -- study. At least that study was forthright. It determined that the U.S. merchant marine was rife with problems and that it would be difficult to turn things around, but the Commission was duty bound to follow the 1936 Act mandate to sustain and create a modern merchant marine. The Commission set a lofty goal -- build 500 ships in ten years. Considering that virtually no ocean-going cargo ships had been built in U.S. shipyards since World War I, this was an ambitious, almost audacious, goal. That did not stop the Commission from taking decisive action.

The Commission canvassed existing ship owners and goaded them into firming up plans to build modern replacement vessels in U.S. shipyards. The total number was nowhere close to 500 over ten years. The Commission also created standard vessel designs -- one of which was later modified to be the World War II "Liberty" ship.

The Commission then used the authority given to it by Title VII of the 1936 Act to order vessels for its own account to reach its 500-ship goal and sought bids from U.S. shipyards based on a standard design. Title VII had been added as a compromise to assuage members of Congress who were skeptical that a privately owned merchant marine -- in the wake of ocean mail scandals -- could succeed.

When U.S. shipyard bids came in too high for the Commission's liking, the Commission entered into hard-nosed negotiations and simultaneously asked Congress to give it permission to build vessels outside the United

Column

Washington Watch

States. Prices were agreed and construction commenced which set the United States on its way to having a solid shipbuilding foundation it sorely needed when World War II started in Europe in 1939.

The Commission (which morphed into U.S. Maritime Administration or MARAD in 1950) did not forget its Title VII authority. The World War II overhang of surplus vessels stymied U.S. commercial vessel construction just like the World War I overhang had done.

The Korean War brought home the dearth of U.S. commercial shipbuilding for international trade and the already growing obsolescence of the war-built U.S. flag fleet. MARAD for once did not stop to study what to do. Instead, it stepped into the breach and obtained an appropriation from Congress to order 35 vessels of a standard MARAD-designed vessel called the “Mariner” class. The break bulk design was an offshoot of one of the standard World War II designs (the C4 cargo ship). Bidding commenced and MARAD ordered the vessels in early 1951 from seven U.S. shipyards – five each. The vessels were fast and large for the day and had features such as hydraulically operated hatches that were leading edge.

Private owners at first were not admirers of the Mariner-class vessels and many went to the U.S. Navy or were operated under MARAD general agency agreements. But the industry got used to them and even more were ordered for private account. Thus, the Mariner program succeeded in helping to get U.S. shipyards back in the

commercial cargo vessel game and out from under the World War II ship overhang. The same type of program can be repeated today.

Title VII has not been repealed – it exists in the U.S. Code and can be utilized today no different than MARAD used it in the early 1950’s. The system has already been designed to have shipyards bid in a competitive process and, if MARAD charters the vessels to private owners, to have owners competitively bid on charter rates. No study is needed except to pick a standard ship design from many in the world that would be suitable for U.S. shipyard construction and would be commercially viable. Standardiz-

ing the design would give U.S. shipyards a chance to get the benefits of series construction which they have not enjoyed for many years.

MARAD has also already set up a program of private ship construction supervision for its National Security Multi-Mission vessel construction program that could work with Title VII. That can be expanded. All that is needed are the resources to get such a program going and the will to do it. The authority already exists. No new law is needed. If the Nation is serious about its commercial shipyards and its maritime industrial base, then it should stop studying and just build ships.



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By the Numbers

U.S. INLAND WATERWAYS CAREERS

The U.S. inland waterways don't just move cargo—they move people into long-term, well-paid careers. At a time when trucking and rail struggle with shortages, turnover, and burnout, inland waterways operators quietly offer something different: a job you can start without experience, a career you can grow into, and a paycheck that gets better every step of the way.

A new study commissioned by the National Waterways Foundation and conducted by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute puts hard numbers behind what operators and mariners have known for decades.

- **25,000 Miles of inland waterways**

America's inland waterways network spans 25,000 miles of rivers, lakes, bays, and man-made channels across 38 states. It's the backbone of domestic energy, agriculture, and bulk commodity transport—and it requires people on board, 24/7.

- **\$73 Billion Annual cargo moved by inland waterways**

Towboats and barges move more than \$73 billion worth of

cargo every year, including fuel, fertilizer, grain, chemicals, and construction materials. Every dollar moved depends on trained crews—no crews, no cargo.

- **127,500 Jobs supported nationwide**

Inland waterways employment supports 127,500 jobs when direct, indirect, and induced impacts are included. These are not temporary or gig positions—they are skilled, long-term careers tied to infrastructure that cannot be outsourced.

- **\$36.1 Billion Total annual economic output**

Using IMPLAN modeling and Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the study found inland waterways employment generates \$36.1 billion in annual economic output, including:

- \$10.2 billion in labor income
- \$4.2 billion in national tax revenue

- **Entry-level access Zero Experience Required**

Unlike trucking or rail, no prior experience is required to start an inland waterways career. Entry-level deckhand



© Brian/AdobeStock

positions provide paid, on-the-job training with advancement based on merit, performance, and certification—not seniority alone.

• **Safety advantage**

Inland waterways transportation is:

- 25 times safer than rail
- 120 times safer than trucking

• **14 to 30 / 7 to 30 Days on, days off**

Schedules are predictable and reliable:

- Typical rotations range from 14–30 days on, followed by 7–30 days off
- Travel to and from the vessel is often paid by the company
- Pay is not mileage-based and not reduced by congestion, weather, or delays
- Many mariners live anywhere in the U.S. and commute just once or twice per month.

The Career Path: One Boat, a Lifetime of Options

Deckhand → Mate or Tankerman → Engineer or Steersman → Pilot → Captain

That’s the ladder—and it works.

Deckhands learn vessel operations, line handling, cargo work, and safety. From there, mariners move into supervisory, cargo-handling, mechanical, or navigation roles. The highest rung—Captain—commands both the vessel and the crew. And the career doesn’t stop at the dock.

Shore-Side Opportunities

As mariners advance, many transition into shore-based roles:

- Port Captain

- Port Engineer
- Fleet Dispatcher
- Shore Tankerman
- Operations & safety management

The waterways industry values experience on the river—and rewards it ashore.

Annual Pay Depends on Days Worked:

- 180 days worked / 180 days off
- 240 days worked / 120 days off

Either way, compensation outpaces trucking, rivals rail, and delivers far better schedule certainty.

Compared to trucking’s chronic turnover and rail’s unpredictable scheduling, inland waterways jobs deliver:

- Stable schedules
- Predictable income
- Lower burnout
- That translates into lower turnover and longer careers
- Automation-Resistant

Job Security Built-in

Towboats operate in complex, dynamic river environments that cannot be automated easily. Demand for skilled mariners is expected to remain strong as energy, agriculture, and infrastructure needs continue to grow.

The Bottom Line

The inland waterways industry offers something rare in modern transportation:

- Entry without a degree
- Advancement without debt
- Pay that grows with skill
- Time off that actually counts

Compensation: What the Paychecks Look Like		
(Midpoint annual earnings, based on national averages)		
Position	Daily Rate	Annual Earnings
Deckhand	\$204/day	\$37,000–\$48,960
Mate	\$250/day	\$45,000–\$60,000
Tankerman	\$367/day	\$66,000–\$88,080
Engineer	\$479/day	\$86,000–\$114,960
Steersman	\$545/day	\$100,000–\$130,800
Pilot	\$754/day	\$136,000–\$180,960
Captain	\$827/day	\$150,000–\$198,480

Insights

Inland Infrastructure



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The Time is Now

By Tracy Zea, President/CEO, Waterways Council, Inc.

As Americans do each year,

with 2026 just the same, we are hopeful for a more promising year, with better outcomes and calmer seas. But for construction of the Nation's inland waterways lock and dam infrastructure, there is a strong sense of urgency like never before.

Since 1987, just 10 projects to modernize or expand locks on the inland waterways system have been completed, with seven of them started and finished between 1987 and 1997 at an average cost overrun of 33%.

Since 2008, only two lock modernization projects have been completed. One of them, the Olmsted Locks and Dam, opened in 2018 and took 26 years to complete at a cost hike of 275% from its original authorized cost. Olmsted had become the poster child for what could go wrong in Corps of Engineers' construction and project delivery – until now. Unfortunately, the lessons from Olmsted to avoid repeating another multi-decade construction timeline haven't been leveraged. Kentucky Lock is now slated to carry an even higher cost overrun, at currently 297% and expected to increase. Its projected finish date is sometime in the 2030s and will mark over 30 years since its construction started. Before 2014, inadequate or uncertain annual funding was to blame for cost overruns and delays for navigation projects, but the infusion of \$2.9 billion

from the bipartisan infrastructure bill of 2021 has demonstrated that execution challenges extend beyond funding.

The time is now for the Corps to make critical changes to its delivery process for these essential infrastructure projects that help to propel the Nation's economy forward.

A recent HDR study commissioned by Waterways Council, Inc. (WCI) recommends the Corps treat the inland navigation waterways as a system rather than a series of individual projects and manage it through the Capital Investment Strategy (CIS).

It also recommends the Corps create a centralized program management office for the inland waterways and improve cost estimations and value engineering, to use standard designs for locks and dams where possible, to expand site investigation efforts, to use 3D modeling and conduct constructability reviews; and to centralize competencies and deepen the Corps' knowledge base.

WCI has called for the revocation of Executive Order (EO) 12322 (EO), issued by President Ronald Reagan in 1981, that mandates federal agencies submit any water and related land resources project proposals to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review before sending them to Congress for approval. This creates an inefficient bureaucratic bottleneck, allowing OMB to interpret projects and limit access to effective solutions such as continuing

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Inland Infrastructure

contracts and alternative delivery methods that provide considerable opportunity to improve execution and reduce risks.

We also call upon Congress to pass the FY26 Energy & Water Development (E&WD) appropriations bill that funds the Corps of Engineers. At press time, things are looking positive with the House releasing text for a three-bill funding package that includes E&WD, immediately upon their return from the holiday recess. The minibus legislation, if passed, will provide nearly \$400 million for inland navigation construction- funding critical in keeping ongoing modernization projects on schedule and within budget. Currently, the federal government is operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR) for FY26 funding that lasts through January 30, 2026. If the House and Senate fail to pass the minibus, Congress will need to pass another

stop-gap funding measure to extend funding beyond the current January 30 deadline. It also increases the likelihood of another full-year Continuing Resolution. For the inland waterways, if a full-year CR is enacted and direction to fund earmarks in the base appropriations bills is not included, OMB could dictate where funding will go for federal programs, including the Corps' Civil Works program, which is not ideal for the navigation construction program.

With the start of the new year comes opportunity for change and improvement, and that *must* begin now for the Nation's inland waterways. WCI intends to push forward harder than ever for a better future for our Nation's towboat operators and shippers of agriculture and energy products, steel, aggregate materials, and inputs to manufacturing.

Learn more at <https://waterwayscouncil.org/>



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The Day the Manual Was Useless: Training for When Procedures Break Down

By Heather Combs, CEO, Ripple Operations

Every mariner has trained

extensively on procedures. Manuals are written carefully, checklists are reviewed, and drills are conducted to ensure compliance. Global regulatory bodies have mandated these high standards for decades, yet marine disasters, often stemming from unforeseen circumstances, still occur. The undeniable reality remains: at sea, predictable scenarios are often superseded by dynamic conditions. Equipment behaves unexpectedly. Weather shifts faster than predicted. Systems interact in ways no manual fully anticipates. In those moments, the most dangerous assumption is that the procedure alone will save the day. This article focuses on an often overlooked training challenge: preparing mariners for situations where procedures fall short and judgment must take over.

When Reality Outpaces the Manual

Procedures are designed to standardize responses and reduce risk. They are essential. However, they are developed based on known scenarios and expected behaviors. When something happens that does not fit neatly into the official documentation, hesitation can creep in. Crews may freeze, unsure whether deviating from established protocol is allowed, even when conditions demand it.

Training must acknowledge this reality. Not every emergency unfolds as designed, and not every failure mode is documented. Effective training prepares mariners to recognize when procedures no longer match the situation and how to transition safely from scripted response to informed decision making.

The Risk of Overtraining to the Script

One unintended consequence of procedure heavy train-

ing is overreliance. Mariners may become conditioned to follow steps without fully understanding why those steps exist. When a step cannot be executed due to equipment failure, time pressure, or environmental factors, the absence of deeper understanding becomes a liability.

Training should reinforce the intent behind procedures, not just the steps themselves. This requires moving beyond simple memorization to fostering a deeper understanding of system mechanics and risk mitigation. Why is this valve closed first? Why does this particular alarm matter? Why is this specific sequence critical? When mariners understand the purpose behind the protocol, they can adapt responsibly when the script no longer applies.

Judgment Is a Skill That Can Be Trained

Judgment is often described as something learned only through experience. While experience is invaluable, critical judgment can, in fact, be deliberately trained. This training uses scenario-based exercises that introduce ambiguity, incomplete information, or conflicting signals to help mariners practice decision-making under high uncertainty.

These scenarios should not always have a single correct answer. Instead, they must encourage discussion, rigorous risk assessment, and justification of the decisions made. Training officers can guide this process by asking key debriefing questions: What options did you consider? What risks did you weigh? What information mattered most? This approach builds confidence in critical thinking, not just compliance.

Learning from Other High Risk Industries

The practice of decision-making under stress is well-re-

Column

Training Tips for Ships

fined in other sectors. Consider the approach of aviation: Pilots operate using rigorous checklists, but their training is equally extensive in handling abnormal and unexpected situations. When a deviation occurs outside standard procedures, pilots are drilled to execute a critical decision framework: stabilize the situation first, then diagnose the underlying issue, and finally, act. The checklist supports this process, but it never supersedes judgment.

Maritime training can adopt this proven model. Teach crews to prioritize safety of life, immediately stabilize conditions, and only then adapt procedures as needed. Emphasizing clear decision frameworks rather than rigid steps prepares mariners for situations the guidance never imagined.

Drills That Allow Safe Failure

Many drills are designed to go right. Everyone knows the scenario, the outcome is predictable, and success is expected. To train adaptability, some drills should allow controlled failure. Equipment might be unavailable. A key crew member might be simulated as incapacitated. Communications might be delayed.

The goal is not to embarrass or catch mistakes, but to practice recovery. Post drill discussions should focus on how decisions were made, what signals were noticed, and what alternatives existed. These conversations are where the most valuable learning occurs.

Creating Psychological Safety to Deviate When Needed

Mariners must believe they are allowed to think. If training implicitly teaches that deviation from procedure is punishable, crews may hesitate in critical moments. Training leaders should clearly communicate that informed deviation, when documented and justified, is sometimes the safest choice.

This does not mean abandoning standards. It means teaching when adherence matters most and when flexibility is required. Encouraging open discussion about past situations where procedures did not fit builds trust and reinforces sound judgment.

Preparing for the Inevitable Unknown

No organization can write a procedure for every possible failure. Training that only prepares crews for known scenarios leaves a dangerous gap. By incorporating uncertainty, decision making, and adaptive thinking into training programs, maritime organizations strengthen their crew's ability to respond when it matters most.

The day the manual is useless is not a failure of preparation. It is a test of whether training went beyond the page. When mariners are trained to understand systems, think critically, and act responsibly under pressure, they are prepared not just to follow procedures, but to protect lives when procedures fall short.

Thank you for reading, and until next time, sail safely.

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U.S. Offshore Energy 2026 Outlook: Building Momentum in the Gulf of America

By Erik Milito, President, National Ocean Industries Association (NOIA)

The Gulf of America

is back and the momentum is unmistakable. After two years without federal lease sales, the December 10, 2025, Gulf of America lease sale, Big Beautiful Gulf 1, marks a turning point for the U.S. offshore energy sector. With \$300 million in winning bids and companies spending an average of \$1.6 million per lease block, up from \$1.2 million per block in the December 2023 sale, America's offshore industry is signaling its readiness to invest, innovate, and grow.

This sale is more than a one-off event; it represents a restart of the predictable leasing cadence that previously delivered two Gulf of America lease sales per year. Restoring this rhythm is essential. Offshore oil and gas projects are complex, multi-billion-dollar undertakings with timelines spanning 20 to 30 years. Predictable leasing allows companies to plan strategically, invest in technology and infrastructure, and maintain the highly skilled workforce that has kept the

Gulf among the world's most productive offshore basins.

The Gulf of America is not just a source of energy; it is a strategic platform for U.S. energy leadership. Its world-class reserves, advanced subsea and offshore technology, and deepwater engineering expertise uniquely position it to deliver secure, lower-carbon energy to the U.S. and its allies. Gulf-produced oil has a carbon intensity 46% lower than the global average, displacing higher-emission imports while supporting energy security and environmental stewardship.

Beyond oil and gas, the Gulf anchors emerging energy sectors. Offshore wind, carbon capture, subsea minerals, and next-generation exploration all rely on the engineering expertise, supply chains, and infrastructure developed around traditional offshore energy. This synergy makes the Gulf a versatile energy hub capable of sustaining industrial leadership across multiple sectors for decades to come.

The economic impact is substantial. In 2024, Gulf of America oil and gas operations supported roughly 428,000

jobs across the U.S., generated \$35.9 billion in economic activity, and produced \$7 billion in federal revenue. These positions span more than 200 occupations, from subsea engineers to data analysts to welders, with wages averaging nearly 30% above the national average.

Predictable offshore activity supports not only operators but also thousands of additional workers in fabrication yards, ports, service companies, and supply chains that depend on a steady flow of projects.

The impact extends well beyond individual operators. Consistent offshore activity sustains local suppliers, fabrication yards, and service providers, supporting thousands of additional jobs nationwide. When Gulf Coast companies can rely on long-term projects enabled by federal lease sales, they are able to invest in advanced technology, workforce training, and infrastructure, strengthening the region's energy cluster and keeping it globally competitive. This chain reaction ensures the Gulf of America remains the cornerstone of America's offshore energy industry, delivering lasting benefits to communities, families, and local economies for generations.

The 24-month leasing gap underscored just how disruptive unpredictability can be. Delayed projects, frozen capital, and workforce reductions highlighted the importance of consistent federal leasing. With the December 10 sale, and the potential for the next Gulf of America lease sale in March 2026, the industry is poised to regain momentum and maintain it for years to come.

Permitting certainty is the next frontier. The bipartisan Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act promises transparent processes, clear timelines, and litigation reform. With predictable permitting, companies can commit capital, retain skilled workers, and deploy new technologies with confidence. Combined with regular lease sales, the SPEED Act would ensure long-term stability, continued innovation, and expanded economic impact across the Gulf.

Global energy demand is accelerating. Population growth, electrification, AI-driven data centers, and industrial expansion all require secure, reliable, and affordable energy. Gulf offshore projects meet domestic needs while supporting international markets, reinforcing U.S. energy leadership and providing allies with dependable, lower-carbon energy.

The Gulf is also a proving ground for technology. AI-

driven operations, autonomous inspections, predictive maintenance, and advanced subsea robotics are becoming standard. These innovations improve efficiency, reduce environmental impacts, and set global benchmarks for offshore production. Predictable leasing and permitting are essential to sustaining these technological advances.

Domestic supply chains and industrial capacity depend on consistent project pipelines. Fabrication yards, shipbuilding, port operations, and specialized service providers require long-term project visibility to invest and expand. Regular federal leasing ensures that this expertise remains in the U.S., maintaining American leadership in offshore energy.

Workforce development is equally critical. High-paying offshore energy jobs support families and communities, while apprenticeships and training programs prepare the next generation of engineers, technicians, and mariners. Predictable leasing and permitting keep these workforce pipelines robust, supporting generational career growth, regional resilience, and sustained industry leadership.

Production coming online today reflects decisions made years ago. Wood Mackenzie estimates that long-planned deepwater projects will add 300,000 barrels per day in 2025 and another 250,000 in 2026. These volumes are vital to offset onshore declines and reinforce U.S. energy security. None of this happens without consistent lease sales and permitting clarity.

With the December 10 lease sale and the 29 additional sales mandated under the One Big Beautiful Bill, the Gulf of America is poised to continue anchoring the U.S. offshore energy economy. Momentum built in 2025 can extend into 2026 and beyond, especially with SPEED Act reforms in place. Companies and workers will have the confidence to invest, innovate, and compete globally.

The Gulf of America demonstrates how strategic energy policy, technical expertise, and a skilled workforce combine to deliver secure, affordable, and reliable energy while supporting high-paying jobs, strengthening industrial capacity, and driving long-term economic growth. Predictable leases and permitting keep investment in America, the workforce employed, and the nation energy secure.

The time for sustained policy, regular leasing, and permitting certainty is here. With the Gulf of America ready to propel U.S. energy forward, America can embrace energy dominance, economic growth, and a resilient offshore workforce for decades to come.

Insights

Captain Steve Jones, President, PVA

Captain Steve Jones is President of the Passenger Vessel Association for 2025. As his term comes to a close in February at the PVA Annual Convention at MariTrends 2026 in Covington, KY, Captain Jones has achieved several long-sought-after successes during his term and set in motion other important association undertakings intended to deliver noteworthy benefits to PVA members in the coming year and beyond.



JONES

Captain Jones has been with the Gateway Clipper Fleet since 1987. The Gateway Clipper Fleet, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, sails five classic riverboat-style vessels offering a variety of sightseeing, dining, and private event cruises. He currently holds the position of Captain/Port Operations with a 1600 Ton Masters License/Inland Waters and a Master of Towing Vessels/Inland Waters and Western Rivers.

Captain Jones has been an active member of the Passenger Vessel Association since 2008. He has been a member of the PVA Board of Directors since 2018, serving as Secretary- Treasurer and Vice President. Captain Jones also was the Chairperson of the PVA Regulatory Committee

from 2018-2025 and served on the PVA Safety and Security Committee from 2008-2017. He played an active role in the development of Flagship, which is PVA's Safety Management System and was the Chairperson of PVA Rivers Region from 2013-2025.

Captain Jones is involved in many Western Pennsylvania charities devoting many hours raising money for the American Cancer Society, The Mario Lemieux Foundation, and the Western Pennsylvania Chapter of the ALS Association. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration/ Finance from Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh.

The Gateway Clipper Fleet began in 1958, when Pittsburgh entrepreneur John E. Connelly launched a single-



“One enduring, yet important, priority in 2026 will be to continue our work to eliminate unnecessary federal regulatory burdens on PVA members. In early 2025, PVA quickly responded to a direct request from the new Trump Administration to identify burdensome regulations that should be eliminated. PVA submitted a list of ten regulations which contained everything from eliminating TWIC and TWIC readers for passenger vessel operators to extending the five-year drydock interval regulation to changing the required interval to service Inflatable Buoyant Apparatus to once every two years or more.”

deck, 89-passenger riverboat to showcase the city's three rivers. Today, the company has grown to become one of the largest inland riverboat fleets in the country with five vessels including the Empress, Princess, Duchess, Three Rivers Queen and Countess. The family business is celebrating more than 65 years on the Pittsburgh waterfront.

Heading into 2026, what are PVA's Priorities for its membership?

The U.S. passenger vessel industry is well positioned as it enters 2026. A solid 2025 business climate allowed U.S. passenger vessel operators to finish seasonal operations in stronger than expected financial positions; promoting optimism for overall business operations in the coming year. As a result of this positive situation many operators were in a position to make needed capital improvements in vessels and facilities. The dinner boat and excursion vessel markets have experienced steady growth since COVID and are expected to continue on a conservative, positive trajectory. The ferry industry in most urban markets has rebounded and is constructing new vessels to meet expected demand. In addition, there appears to be a significant amount of refurbishing of passenger vessels occurring nationwide. Nonetheless, there will be challenges relating to increasing operating costs, and absorbing certain cost increases related to continuing tariffs, yet the industry generally expects ridership and group travel numbers to increase in most markets.

There are several issues topping the list of PVA priori-

ties going into 2026. These issues include regulatory relief, legislative oversight and funding programs, critical drug testing program changes, mariner licensing improvements, cyber security training, and expansion of illegal charters enforcement to name just a few.

What about 'burdensome' regulations?

One enduring, yet important, priority in 2026 will be to continue our work to eliminate unnecessary federal regulatory burdens on PVA members. In early 2025, PVA quickly responded to a direct request from the new Trump Administration to identify burdensome regulations that should be eliminated. PVA submitted a list of ten regulations which contained everything from eliminating TWIC and TWIC readers for passenger vessel operators to extending the five-year drydock interval regulation to changing the required interval to service Inflatable Buoyant Apparatus to once every two years or more.

New Cybersecurity rules for all of maritime loom large in 2026. How do they, and the requirements to train and document, impact PVA member?

In December, PVA released a new Cybersecurity Training Program to assist PVA members meet the Coast Guard's regulatory cybersecurity training requirement by January 12, 2026. This 11th hour Coast Guard deadline was of concern to many PVA members who were struggling to come up with their own cybersecurity training in time to

Insights

Captain Steve Jones, President, PVA

meet this looming deadline. To assist its members, PVA quickly assembled a working group, from PVA's Safety and Security Committee, which swung into action. This group promptly developed an excellent PVA Cybersecurity Training Program that PVA members could easily implement to not only meet the deadline but also that would fully meet the Coast Guard's regulatory requirements. The PVA Cybersecurity Training Program can be accessed via the PVA Member Resource section at, www.passengervessel.com

Discuss if you will PVA's partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard.

PVA's affiliation with the Coast Guard, from a regulatory and vessel inspection standpoint, spans more than 50 years.

This impressive relationship has evolved and progressed as our two organizations have expanded in size and breadth of business and professional involvements. While the passenger vessel industry is generally considered to be small-scale by international standards, more than 6,000 passenger vessels currently fall under Coast Guard regulatory authority. These vessels are located in virtually every port in the nation and are diverse in their activities and physical characteristics. Because of this diversity there was a need to come together to promote safety by discussing important passenger vessel issues in an open, non-regulatory forum. In 1996,

a charter agreement was signed that established today's PVA/Coast Guard Quality Partnership (QP). Held twice a year, these meetings involve PVA and Coast Guard leaders. This past fall, RADM Wayne Arguin briefed PVA leaders on the Coast Guard's Force Design 2028 initiative which is taking steps to modernize the Coast Guard to improve capabilities and readiness. This was clearly an important topic to discuss as it impacts every aspect of our industry. Other issues covered during the QP included PVA's deregulatory efforts, mariner credentialing issues, cybersecurity regulations, illegal charters, slips, trips, and falls reporting, firefighter training, and safety management systems updates.

That our two organizations can meet twice a year to have open discussions about issues of common concern in a non-regulatory environment allows us to work together to solve problems before they become serious. The benefits to PVA members of this type of collaboration are immeasurable.

Illegal Charters have been a problem for passenger vessel owner operators for years. Are we making any headway?

PVA has raised safety concerns about illegal charter operators with the Coast Guard and Congress for many years. While Coast Guard enforcement has increased in many ports there still remains room for much improvement. PVA members who participated in the 2025 PVA Congressional Fly-In played a key role in advocating for the need for greater enforcement when they raised the issue of illegal charters in every Congressional office they visited, speaking directly with Members of Congress and staff about the dangers illegal charter operations pose to the general public. PVA's Congressional Fly-In message was so impactful that the Chairman and the Ranking Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee sent a letter to Government Accountability Office (GAO) requesting a careful review of the threats from illegal charter operations. As a result, GAO will conduct a study to define the scale of the problem and highlight where enforcement resources should be focused and support evidence-based recommendations to Congress for fixing the problem.

The forthcoming GAO study establishes a critical milestone in combating the growing problem of illegal charter operations in the United States. It will focus necessary Congressional attention on the need for broader enforcement to protect the safety of the American public.



L to R: Captain Steve Jones, PVA President, 2025 and RADM Wayne Arguin confer during the 2025 Fall PVA/Coast Guard Quality Partnership Meeting in Washington D.C.

Insights

Captain Steve Jones, President, PVA

What about PVA support for small U.S. shipyards?

PVA's legislative agenda will include advocating for full and sustained funding for MARAD's Small Shipyard Grant Program, which plays a critical role in maintaining domestic shipbuilding and repair capacity. Continued investment supports U.S. shipyards that build, repair, and maintain passenger vessels, strengthens the maritime workforce, and reinforces national maritime industrial base priorities.

Funding season in Washington, DC is always an adventure. What's happening in Surface Transportation Reauthorization?

PVA will work with Congress to ensure robust and predictable funding for ferry programs in upcoming surface transportation authorization legislation. Full funding is essential to support vessel construction, fleet modernization, terminal upgrades, and reliable ferry service for communities that depend on waterborne transportation.

Finding and keeping mariners across all of maritime is a pervasive issue. What's being done to remove Barriers to Mariner Credentialing?

Unlike other sectors of the maritime community, passenger vessel operators and their employees have been struggling with current Coast Guard rules relating as to what qualifies as sea service and the accrual of service time aboard both small and large passenger vessels. This confusion has stifled the ability of employees as they seek mariner credentials while serving aboard passenger vessels due to short sailing durations—some cruises are as short as one hour—and a lack of clarity about what qualifies as actual sea service. In a letter sent to the Commandant of the Coast Guard in August, PVA urged the Coast Guard to make immediate policy clarifications and changes to give half-day credit for at least four hours on board a passenger vessel and consider all activities aboard the vessel, whether underway or dockside, to be considered as sea service.

These changes will help employees of PVA members seeking mariner licenses and will help to remove misunderstanding and barriers in the mariner credentialing program as well as helping to increase the domestic maritime workforce.

Speaking of mariners, what's the Future for oral fluid drug testing?

Andrew Sargis, of Wendella Sightseeing Boats, Chicago,

IL, who is PVA's incoming PVA President for 2026 has for several years strenuously argued that oral fluid drug testing is a viable and cost-effective alternative to traditional drug and alcohol testing methods. Unfortunately, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has yet to approve laboratories to analyze test results, which is a major barrier to adoption. In July, PVA sent a letter to HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. urging him to take the necessary steps that would approve laboratories and allow adoption of oral fluid testing as an accepted alternative. The flexibility afforded by oral fluid testing and the projected lower costs will benefit both vessel operators and crew. Every collection directly observed will eliminate the need for private rooms and same-gender collectors. The net effect is to improve compliance with the national drug testing program and, of course, safety.

Passenger vessel safety is pervasive and ongoing. What is PVA doing for its members in this regard?

The passenger vessel industry carries tremendous responsibility for the safety of its passengers and crew. While regulations and technological advancements play crucial roles, a strong safety culture is arguably the most vital ingredient in ensuring safe operations and preventing maritime casualties. As operators we pride ourselves on having a superior safety record and for working tirelessly to ensure that we promote continuous improvement. PVA is equally committed to promoting safety and has developed an ever-expanding library of crew training and safety programs for PVA members to use directly in their companies to enhance their risk management programs. In addition, PVA has developed FLAGSHIP which is a voluntary Safety Management System for PVA members to use in taking their risk management programs to the next level. The Coast Guard has recognized Flagship as an acceptable method for developing and implementing a company-specific safety management system.

PVA Annual Convention at MariTrends 2026, February 22-25, Covington, KY

The PVA Annual Convention at MariTrends 2026 is scheduled February 22-25 in Covington, KY. More than 60 education sessions, featuring approximately 90 professional speakers will be featured. The MariTrends 2026 exhibit floor will showcase the products and services of approximately 100 companies. www.passengervessel.com

Feature

Fire Island Ferries

Fire Island Ferries

FIRE ISLAND FERRIES:

*Built for the Fourth
Generation & Beyond*

Feature

Fire Island Ferries



Tim Mooney is the third-generation family member at the helm of the iconic Fire Island Ferries. While the company's primary focus has been moving people to and fro, from the Long Island, NY mainland to the Fire Island barrier communities and beaches, the business has evolved and grown since its start in 1948 via acquisition and organic growth. Mooney discuss the assets, the people and the priorities to safely, efficiently keep his cumulative operation of moving about one million people annually in good order.

By Greg Trauthwein

There are ferry operators, and then there are ferry operators whose names are inseparable from the place they serve. Fire Island Ferries falls squarely into the latter category. Since 1948, the company has been a significant marine artery connecting Long Island's South Shore to the car-free communities of Fire Island's western end, moving residents, summer visitors, tradespeople, freight and just about everything else that keeps island life running.

Today, that legacy is carried forward by Tim Mooney, third-generation owner and operator, who joined the business full-time in 2004. Under Mooney's leadership, Fire Island Ferries has quietly evolved into a diversified marine transportation and services company, while staying fiercely focused on reliability, safety and a fleet strategy built around building quality boats from the start, maintaining and repowering them as needed to keep a steady stream of passengers – nearly 1 million per year by Mooney's count – flowing steadily between Long Island and Fire Island.

All in the Family

Mooney's path into the family business wasn't straight, clear or pre-ordained. He didn't grow up dreaming of running a ferry company, but a confluence of interest and circumstance led to his leadership of the family business.

Mooney grew up sailing, as a teen immersed in racing and instructing at Bay Shore Yacht Club, working summers as a sailing instructor. When his father suggested it was time to come work for the family ferry business — weekends included — Mooney chose a different route, opting instead to work for a sailmaking company through high school before heading off to college. The direction of his career changed in 2004, when his father began thinking about stepping back. "He said he wanted to go to Florida more and play some golf," Mooney recalls with a laugh, "and he asked if I was interested in coming in." The timing was right, so Mooney joined the business and never looked back. Two decades later, the company is now seeing its own generational transition, with two of Mooney's four children already involved in the business. "I'm pretty happy; I've got both an exit strategy and continuity."

By the Numbers: A Seasonal Powerhouse

Fire Island Ferries' footprint is larger and more complex

Feature

Fire Island Ferries

than most may realize. The company serves eight Fire Island communities on the western end of the island, operating year-round ferry service, a full-length water taxi operation that runs from end to end of Fire Island and out to Captree, and a growing marine services division supporting dock construction, tug-and-barge work and waterfront infrastructure projects.

All told, the company operates roughly “40 floating assets,” including ferries, water taxis, tugs and barges. During peak summer months, staffing swells to approximately 350 employees across operations; from captains and deckhands to ticketing staff, parking attendants and valets at Bay Shore terminals. While Fire Island Ferries’ passenger traffic have returned to pre-COVID levels and remained remarkably consistent over time, the business model, however, is anything but predictable. “Good weather, good business. Bad weather, bad business,” Mooney says. “Simple formula, hard to execute.”

“If it ain’t broke, don’t break it”

Rather than continually chasing newbuilds, Fire Island Ferries’ current capital strategy centers on repowering its existing fleet, many of which have already proven their durability for decades.

The company’s workhorse passenger vessels are typically 85 feet long, 22 feet wide, drawing just 3.5 to 4 feet, the latter a critical parameter in working on the thin waters of the Great South Bay. The ferries are triple-screw vessels, a deliberate design choice that prioritizes redundancy and maneuverability. Fully laden, they burn approximately 38 gallons per hour, remarkably efficient given the operating profile.

At the heart of the current investment cycle is the replacement of legacy Detroit Diesel engines with newer John Deere Tier 3 engines. The drivers behind the decision were both practical and philosophical.

“They’re American-made: that mattered to me,” Mooney says. Equally important, the engines were near plug-and-



Isle of Fire during construction at Blount Boats in Warren, RI.

Blount Boats

Feature

Fire Island Ferries

play replacements for Detroit 1271s and Series 60s, allowing Fire Island Ferries to retain existing transmissions and controls while achieving cleaner emissions, improved fuel efficiency and long-term serviceability.

The result: extended vessel life without sacrificing reliability. “These boats are in great shape,” Mooney says. “We can repower them and get another 10, 20 years out of them.”

That philosophy reflects the pedigree of the builders behind the fleet. Over the decades, Fire Island Ferries has worked with Blount Boats, Gladding-Hearn, Derecktor, Gulf Craft, Lyman-Morse, Munson and Miller Marine, yards known for producing rugged, purpose-built vessels.

Everybody has built a great boat for us. And I actually joked with the Blount people, saying, “Part of your problem is you build boats that are too good, so they’re around for 30 or 40 years, and we can repower them and get another 10, 20 years out of them,” which is a compliment to them. But these vessels, as a matter of fact, the Fire Island Miss, which

is one of the steel hulls, was built in 1976, and she’s still running strong. One of our freight boats was built in 1974, so they’ve been around a long time, and they’ve been pulling their weight. My philosophy: if it ain’t broke, don’t break it.”

Navigating Thin Water, Day and Night

Operating in the Great South Bay is challenging with narrow channels, shallow waters and traffic density that can be intense during peak season. The tradeoff, Mooney notes, is that while groundings happen, rocks don’t. “I’ll take thin water with no rocks over deep water with rocks any day,” noting that if a captain strays from the route and touches bottom, they may “bend a wheel or a rudder, but they won’t put a hole in the boat!”

Technology has transformed the operation over time. Mooney remembers navigating before radar, timing runs with stopwatches and compass bearings. The introduction of radar was a step change; GPS was revolutionary.



Blount Boats

Feature

Fire Island Ferries

Today, every vessel is equipped with GPS systems and private tracking so that the Fire Island Ferry team has a continuous live view on the fleet and its whereabouts, allowing the company to monitor speed, enforce geofencing, and enhance situational awareness across the fleet. Night and fog operations remain demanding, and Fire Island Ferries' captain apprenticeship program reflects that reality, typically lasting a year or more even after licensing.

Developing a Loyal Workforce

Unlike many maritime operators, Fire Island Ferries does not struggle to attract labor. Seasonal demand, local roots, and one critical advantage — everyone goes home every night — make the company a magnet for young workers.

Roughly two-thirds of the summer workforce is under 24. Many captains began working for the company in high school, earned licenses during college, and return seasonally before moving up. Applications are voluminous and fill many binders, Mooney says, with the company often finding ample crew to ensure smooth operations through family and peer networks: "We've found that good kids usually have good friends."

Beyond staffing, Mooney sees the operation as a training ground for life skills. "You watch kids come in at 16, staring at their feet," he says. "Within weeks, they're communicating, dealing with adults, solving problems. That matters."

Regulation, Reality and Scale

Fire Island Ferries has long been active within the Passenger Vessel Association, working alongside regulators to ensure rules reflect operational reality. Mooney acknowledges the necessity of safety-driven regulation, from fire prevention to lifesaving systems, while cautioning against one-size-fits-all mandates.

One case of overreach was when the USCG Vessel General Permit environmental regulations entered force. "Some of these things are impractical based on scale," said Mooney, noting that "things that work on big ships, tugs and ocean going vessels and that have organizations with big staffs don't necessarily translate down into our operation, or even smaller operations."

On balance though, he credits the Coast Guard with understanding maritime operations, and balancing rules and regulations that make sense from a safety as well as business reality perspective.

"They're not shooting from the hip," said Mooney. "(Many of them) have been out in the field for a long time; they know what we're up against, so they represent us very well. They're just a function of what the legislation says they have to do, and they try to give us an opportunity to mitigate some of those challenges."

Past regulatory responses — such as those following the dive boat Conception tragedy — have had real impacts, but he credits the Coast Guard with understanding the fleet it regulates. "Safety is number one," he says. "And most of the time, the Coast Guard tempers requirements with reality."

The big regulatory challenge today says Mooney are complying with the new Coast Guard cybersecurity rules. He notes the limited digital exposure of his passenger vessels helps to effectively insulate the vessels themselves. "If you can figure out how to hack into a 1271, I'll be pretty impressed," he said.

Beyond regulation, the biggest challenges facing Fire Island Ferries are largely outside its control. Rapid increases in minimum wage have cascaded through payroll structures. Healthcare costs continue to rise — costs the company absorbs fully for employees. Waterfront property insurance has become increasingly difficult to secure. Weather remains the ultimate variable.

Fuel, at least, is predictable. Mooney hedges early, locking in pricing for the summer season. And when the weather cooperates, the system performs. On July 4 last year, Fire Island Ferries moved 26,000 passengers in a single day, the biggest passenger haul day in company history.

Steady Ahead

There are no flashy announcements planned for 2026, Mooney concedes: No new ferries. No radical reinvention.

Instead, Fire Island Ferries will continue repowering vessels, expanding its marine services arm, refining digital marketing efforts, and most importantly, doing what it has done for nearly eight decades: moving people safely, efficiently and reliably across the bay.

For Mooney, that continuity is the point. Fire Island's proximity to New York City makes it unique — a barrier island that feels worlds away. "You're an hour from JFK," he says, "and suddenly everything changes."

So does the pace of the business. The boats may get new engines. The technology may evolve. But the mission remains the same — steady, proven, and built to last to the fourth generation and beyond.

Feature Fire Island Ferries



**The view from
Atlantique, one
of the Fire Island
communities
served by Fire
Island Ferries.**

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Feature

U.S. Shipbuilding Deals

Seaside LNG

U.S. SHIPBUILDING:

FIT FOR REFIT

The U.S. commercial shipbuilding industry is due for a refit, a refurbishment, or maybe a rebuild- depending on who, and when, you ask.

By Barry Parker

Late 2024 saw the introduction of a potential groundbreaker, the Ships for America Act, in the waning days of the 118th Congress. The bill, with the objective of revitalizing U.S. construction of ocean going commercial vessels, was reintroduced into the 119th Congress as S1541, and has seen bi-partisan support. Around the same time, and shortly after taking office in early 2025, the Trump administration issued an Executive Order, dubbed “Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance”, which had a renewal of U.S. shipbuilding, both military and commercial, as one key tenet. As industry participants were awaiting the Administration’s

promised Maritime Action Plan, Brent Sadler, in a Heritage Foundation commentary, wrote (in September 2025), “Like a sailboat stuck in a flat calm, the nation’s maritime revival is adrift, needing a breeze to regain momentum.”

Numerous pathways to achieving this industry-reviving objective have been proposed, with U.S. – based industry experts, naval leaders, think-tanks (from across the political spectrum- with the Heritage Foundation being decidedly right-leaning) and academics all weighing in on what the correct strategy might be. The successes of Asian yards, in recent decades, and the continued presence of European stalwarts in vessel construction, are well known. Coopera-

tion, defined in numerous ways, between overseas yards with shipbuilders in the U.S., is an obvious pathway.

(ICE)Breaking the Path

While domestically there is perpetual grumbling among U.S. shipyards that external cooperation is not needed, the icebreaker design and construction market is a prime example highlighting the value of international partnerships.

National security concerns surrounding ice-breakers continues to loom large. A November, 2025 Executive Action memo from the White House allowing construction of up to four Arctic Security Cutters in foreign yards, signed by the President, stated that, “The United States Coast Guard’s fleet of icebreakers and Arctic-capable vessels remains insufficient to meet current operational demands and presents a national security risk.”

With construction of up to 11 vessels hoped for under this program, the remaining seven vessels would be built from a U.S. yard. Earlier in 2025, U.S. stalwart Bollinger had announced a partnership for delivering Arctic Security Cutters to the Coast Guard, in conjunction with Canadian builder Seaspan (actually tied to U.S. investors The Washington Companies) and Finland’s Rauma Marine Constructions and engineering specialist Aker Arctic. Bollinger, presently building a Polar Security Cutter for the USCG, stressed the importance of using proven designs, with Bollinger President/CEO Ben Bordelon, President and CEO emphasizing: “Speculative designs can derail programs, delay delivery and devastate shipyards.”

As 2025 drew to a close, the U.S. Coast Guard formalized the partnership between the U.S. and Finland with the announcement of the award of two contracts to build up to

six Arctic Security Cutter (ASC) icebreakers, with contracts awarded to Rauma Marine Constructions Oy (RMC) of Rauma, Finland, and Bollinger Shipyards Lockport, L.L.C. of Lockport, Louisiana. The dearth of meaningful icebreaker capacity has been a b2b news lead for years, fast-tracked to mainstream media and consciousness in 2025 when President Trump retook the White House and prioritized shipbuilding. The Arctic Security Cutters ordered will be designed to defend U.S. sovereignty, secure critical shipping lanes, protect energy and mineral resources, and counter adversaries’ strong and growing presence in the Arctic region.

“America has been an Arctic nation for more than 150 years, and we’re finally acting like it under President Trump,” said Secretary Kristi Noem when announcing the deal. “Our adversaries continue to look to grow their presence in the Arctic, equipping the Coast Guard with Arctic Security Cutters will help reassert American maritime dominance there.”

The contract with Rauma Marine Constructions Oy includes up to two ASCs to be built in Finland, with delivery of the first vessel expected in 2028. The contract with Bollinger Shipyards Lockport, L.L.C. includes up to four ASCs to be built in the United States, with delivery of the first domestically built cutter expected in 2029.

“Due to our fast delivery time, we are the most affordable option on the market,” RMC CEO Mika Nieminen was quoted by Reuters, calling the deal a historic milestone. “Finnish shipyards build the world’s best icebreakers and largest cruise ships. Securing this icebreaker order is a great thing for Finland and our entire maritime industry,” said Finnish Minister of Economic Affairs Sakari Puisto in the same report.



Ice-breaker USCG STORIS

Feature

U.S. Shipbuilding Deals

Philadelphia to the Fore

The major event in 2025 was the announcement that Hanwha Group, which had bought the Philly Shipyard from its Norwegian linked owners in late 2024 for \$100 million, had plans to invest up to \$5 billion into the facility. In announcing the deal (at a time coinciding with the christening of the NMSV training vessel State of Maine, Hanwha (which was previously known as Daewoo) said: “The \$5 billion program will be dedicated to the installation of two additional docks, and three quays to increase capacity. Hanwha is also reviewing the build-out of a new block assembly facility. Through this expansion, Hanwha aims to increase Philly Shipyard’s annual production volume from less than two vessels to up to 20.”

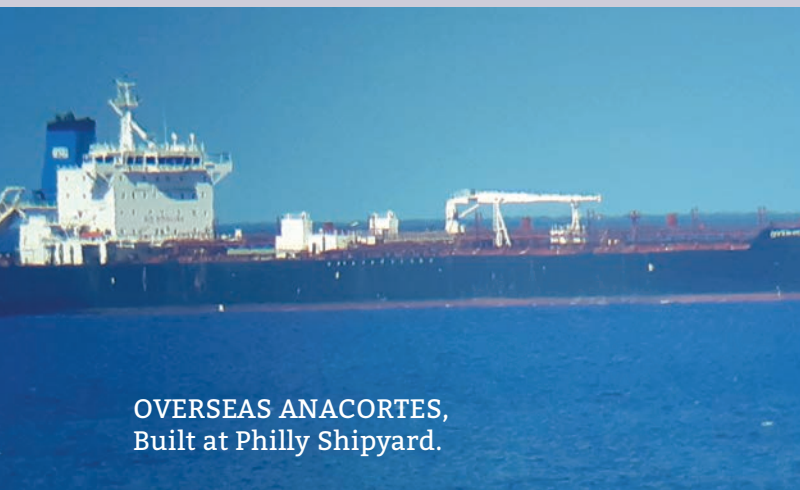
At Marine Money’s 2025 annual week-long conference, held in New York in June, David Kim, who had led the integration of the Philadelphia facility into Hanwha in his role as CEO of Hanwha Philly Yard, provided insights into Hanwha’s plans for the yard, along with a broader perspective on its place in the broader U.S. maritime development seascape. Possible synergies between commercial and military shipbuilding loom large in any such discussion. Indeed, Kim from Hanwha Philly, spent a good portion of his Marine Money appearance talking about Naval shipbuilding. Kim’s remarks, along with those at the same conference from his colleague, Ryan Lynch, highlighting the potential for significant construction of LNG tankers going forward if the SHIPS Act reaches its full potential, said that through its Philadelphia presence, it “...can help

advance United States maritime dominance.” He also talked about “the transfer of Hanwha’s capabilities...” to the Philadelphia yard, which has built crude carriers (for Exxon-Mobil affiliate SeaRiver Maritime) and MR product tankers (notably for operation by OSG), and more recently training vessels for maritime academies. The yard has an ongoing newbuild program underway for long-time customer Matson, presently building three 3,600 teu “Aloha Class” container vessels set for delivery in 2027 – 2028. It previously delivered two similar vessels, including Daniel K Inouye, delivered in 2018. In late 2025, Hanwha Shipping (a different company within Hanwha) announced an intention to build ten Jones Act Qualified MR tankers at the Philly Yard, with deliveries in the late 2020’s.

At the Marine Money December, 2025 conference in New Orleans, Tom Anderson, President, U.S. Shipbuilding, Hanwha Defense USA, Inc., framing Hanwha’s move into the U.S. said: “We have a lot of work to do in the States to get our shipbuilding machine up and running...”

Charles M. Salmon, Director of Business Development, for Hanwha Shipping, stressed that when company executives gather, “...we talk about how do we support the resurgence of shipbuilding capacity within the United States.” Salmon also pointed to non-partisan “political tailwinds” focused on national security that are expected to drive demand for U.S. built vessels. In speaking about the ten-ship tanker order, he stressed the increased efficiencies from series production.

Perhaps most interesting has been the on-again, off-



OVERSEAS ANACORTES,
Built at Philly Shipyard.

Barry Parker



ALOHA class container
vessel DANIEL K INOUE.

Matson

Feature

U.S. Shipbuilding Deals

again debate of if, how and when Hanwha Philly could participate in the program to build – in whole or part – U.S. nuclear-powered submarines. The latest twist came late in the year when Alex Wong, global chief strategy officer at Hanwha Group, was reported to say that Hanwha's Philly Shipyard has the capability of building a nuclear-powered submarine for the U.S. Navy. "The U.S. government's commitment to nuclear-powered submarine capability, its own and of the allies is very strong," Wong said during the Hanwha's media day at the shipyard in Philadelphia on Monday. "We stand ready to fulfil the ability to build those submarines here in Philly when the governments are ready."

Seoul pledged to invest \$150 billion in the U.S. shipbuilding sector in a trade deal signed last month to lower the U.S. tariffs on imports of Korean automobiles to 15% from 25%.

According to a Reuters report, the company is hiring talent with expertise in a Virginia-class submarine, as they see strong interest from Washington in expanding the U.S. submarine industrial base for such designs.

More from South Korea

In October 2025, another Korean yard, HD Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI), the world's leading commercial shipbuilder having delivered more than 2,400 deep sea vessels since its formation in the early 1980s, announced the formation a strategic alliance with Huntington Ingalls Industries (HII) now exclusively engaged in defense relat-

ed vessel construction and repairs.

HII was formed in 2011 when two legacy players, Newport News Shipbuilding, and Ingalls Shipbuilding (in Pascagoula, Mississippi), both with commercial vessel newbuilds in their histories, combined. Their Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), signed at a high-level conference in South Korea, related to cooperation for both naval and commercial vessel construction. In a press release regarding the MOA, HII said: "HII is a global, all-domain defense provider. HII's mission is to deliver the world's most powerful ships and all-domain solutions in service of the nation, creating the advantage for our customers to protect peace and freedom around the world." During its heyday, the Newport News yard had built vessels including five MR tankers delivered in the late 1990's and still operating in the Fairwater and Keystone fleets. The Ingalls yard, primarily active in building military vessels, had also built drilling rigs.

Another deal announced in 2025 saw Davie, the Canadian shipbuilder with a specialization in ice-breaking vessels, announce that it would be acquiring two facilities in Texas from ship-repair stalwart Gulf Copper. Davie's plans include an investment in the \$1 billion magnitude to upgrade existing facilities to create what industry observers have described as an "American Icebreaker Factory" at the Gulf Copper shipyards in Galveston and Port Arthur. The transaction comes at a time that the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has struggled to maintain a fleet of ice-capable cutters, and ice-breakers-recently taking the unprecedented



Hanwha=



Barry Parker

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U.S. Shipbuilding Deals



Hyundai and HII
MOU signing
ceremony.

ed step of converting an Edison Chouest-owned oil service vessel (albeit built for work in Arctic waters), into an ice-breaker at Tampa Ship, and then at an old Halter yard (renamed Mississippi Shipbuilding) in Pascagoula. The DP2 vessel, renamed USCG STORIS, is to be based in Alaska after transit up to Juneau in Summer, 2025.

As LNG has emerged an alternative fuel for cruise and, increasingly, deep sea cargo vessels serving U.S. ports, LNG bunkering barges have also been the subject of cooperation between yards in the States and foreign entities. In early December, 2025, Conrad Shipyard (which delivered the first U.S. LNG bunkering barge, the 2,200-cu.-m. CLEAN JACKSONVILLE, in 2018) announced that it had signed an MOU with Samsung Heavy Industries (SHI), the third member of South Korea's "Big Three" shipbuilding triumvirate that: "...formalizes a collaborative framework to jointly explore opportunities in the rapidly expanding U.S. LNG bunkering market." According to a jointly-issued release, "Under the MOU, Conrad and SHI will work together to evaluate and pursue technical, commercial, and market-based initiatives that support the design, construction, and deployment of LNG bunkering vessels tailored for U.S. regulatory and operational requirements. The MOU is intended to combine SHI's global expertise in advanced LNG technologies with Conrad's proven LNG shipbuilding capabilities and domestic market access."

The 2025 version of the SHIPS Act will continue to twist and turn on its course through Capitol Hill committees. At a late October hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, which is considering S 1541, Dr. Sal Mercogliano, a well-known industry expert and maritime historian with a 21st century social media presence, told Committee members, "As an active participant and observer in the U.S. maritime industry, I have witnessed its long decline. The SHIPS Act is the most significant maritime reform act since the Merchant Marine Act of 1970 ... This legislation represents a critical step towards transforming the industry from a purely naval power into a true maritime power with a revitalized commercial sector."



Barry Parker

Offshore Influencers: Not New for Shipbuilding

Non-U.S. shipbuilders have previously invested in U.S. yards, and the results have been mixed. One great success story has been the efforts of Fincantieri, investing in yards building and repairing both military and commercial vessels, mainly in the Great Lakes. In 2009, the Italian builder closed on a deal (along with minority partner Lockheed Martin) to purchase Manitowoc Marine Group, renamed as Fincantieri Marine Group (FMG), with a storied history building vessels for the military.

At the same time, at the beginning of 2009, Fincantieri acquired Bay Shipbuilding, a yard at Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, which under different incarnations had been building and repairing commercial and fishing vessels at facilities since the early 1900s, with an interlude in military construction during World War II. In recent years, newbuilding activity at the yard has included the Laker MARK W BARKER, the articulated tug barge (ATB) MICHIGAN TRADER (for VanEnkevort), a pair of ATB's for Kirby Corporation, and LNG barges for Crowley (the 12,00-cu.-m. PROGRESS) and Polaris New Energy (5,500-cu.-m. CLEAN EVERGLADES).

Another successful foray into the U.S. market occurred in the late 1990s, when Austal, a stock-listed defense contractor and naval shipbuilder in Australia, entered the U.S. market with the development of manufacturing capabilities in Mobile, Alabama. With continued investment since then from sources tied to Australia, and a focus on building vessels for the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard, Austal USA continues to expand. In mid-December, 2025, reports emerged that Hanwha was increasing an ownership stake in Austal shares; up to 19.9%.

A different shipbuilding story has seen a recent transition, with a new chapter set to begin. Starting in the early 1990s, Singapore's Keppel Offshore (merged into Sembcorp in 2023 and rebranded as Seatrrium) had a decades long relationship with Brownsville, Texas AmFELS yard, most recently building containerships for PASHA's Hawaii service, after years of building for the offshore oil segment. In mid-2025, following completion of the Jones Act compliant WTIV CHARYBDIS, Seatrrium divested the Brownsville facility, with a sale to the Turkish Karpowership.

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Tech Feature Floating Data Centers

All images courtesy EBDG

Floating Data Centers:

A New Maritime Frontier for a Data-Hungry World

By Greg Trauthwein

As global demand for data storage and processing accelerates — driven by cloud computing, streaming media, and the explosive growth of artificial intelligence — the physical footprint of data centers has become a growing challenge. Land-based facilities face mounting constraints: limited space, water scarcity, grid congestion, long permitting timelines and rising community opposition. Against that backdrop, a once-niche concept is moving rapidly into the mainstream conversation: floating data centers.

For maritime designers, shipyards, and offshore infrastructure specialists, floating data centers represent a convergence of digital demand and marine engineering, one that could evolve into a significant new market segment over the coming decade.

Few firms have deeper firsthand experience in this emerging space than Elliott Bay Design Group (EBDG). The Seattle-based naval architecture and marine engineering firm helped design and support construction of what is widely regarded as the world's first operational floating data center, an installation in Stockton, California that has been operating successfully for several years.

"That first project gave us real insight into what works, what doesn't, and where the market could go," said Mike Complita, Principal in Charge and Vice President of Strategic Expansion at EBDG. "At the time, it was a bit ahead of the market. Now, with AI and data growth, the interest has come back in a big way."

By the Numbers: Elliott Bay Design Group

Today, EBDG offers the industry its expertise from an internal crew of 70+, a number that has grown steadily in recent years alongside a strong market for specialized marine design services. Historically, about half of the firm's work has been focused on passenger and vehicle ferries, with the

remaining half spread across a diverse mix of projects.

"It's that other 50% where we get to work on some really wild and interesting things," Complita said. "Floating data centers definitely fall into that category."

The Case for Floating Data Centers

At the core of the floating data center concept is one primary advantage: access to cooling water. Traditional land-based data centers consume enormous volumes of fresh-water for cooling, often drawn from rivers, aquifers, or municipal systems, and substantially lost to evaporation. In contrast, floating data centers use surrounding water bodies as a closed-loop cooling medium.

"You've got an essentially unlimited source of cooling water that you're not consuming," Complita explained. "That's a huge advantage in a world where freshwater is becoming increasingly precious."

Environmental concerns around thermal discharge are often raised, but real-world data from the Stockton installation suggests those fears may be overstated. Studies conducted prior to deployment—and validated during operation—found that temperature changes in the surrounding water were negligible within just a short distance of the hull.

Beyond cooling, floating platforms offer additional benefits:

- **Rapid deployment:** Floating data centers can be designed, built, and deployed in roughly two to three years, compared with five to eight years for large land-based facilities.

- **Mobility and flexibility:** Built on barge platforms, they can be relocated, expanded, or redeployed as demand shifts.

- **Reduced land use:** No need to clear forests, rezone land, or build massive new concrete structures.

- **Repurposing existing assets:** The Stockton project reused a 1970s-era barge hull, minimizing new environmental impact.

"That reuse aspect was intentional," Complita said. "In-

stead of creating a new footprint, we were able to repurpose something that already existed.”

The Biggest Challenge

While cooling is a natural advantage offshore, power generation remains the most significant technical and economic hurdle.

Modern data centers are extraordinarily power-hungry. Even relatively small installations require 10–12MW, while current market inquiries are clustering around 30–80MW, with AI-focused facilities pushing into the 100–300MW range.

“To put that in perspective, that’s far more power than most ships use just to operate,” Complita said. “The amount of onboard generation, fuel storage, and redundancy required is enormous.”

For fully autonomous floating data centers — those not tied into shore power — the space required for generators, fuel, exhaust systems, and redundancy can exceed the footprint of the data center itself. Fuel logistics also become a major operational consideration, particularly when continuous uptime is non-negotiable. “These facilities can’t just shut down and go to a shipyard for maintenance,” Complita noted. “Everything has to be designed with redundancy so operations continue uninterrupted.”

In the U.S., floating data centers tethered to shore and carrying no passengers are not Coast Guard-inspected vessels. However, most owners are choosing to pursue voluntary class certification through organizations such as ABS or DNV.

“Class societies are starting to develop rule sets specifically for floating data centers,” Complita said. “That’s important for insurance, financing, and long-term asset management.”

While classification requirements differ from those of traditional ships, owners should still expect periodic inspection, maintenance planning, and lifecycle management considerations more akin to offshore infrastructure than conventional barges.

Designing for Data, Not Cargo

From a naval architecture perspective, floating data centers may resemble barges, but their design priorities are fundamentally different. The cooling system is the most critical and complex element, operating at a scale far beyond typical marine applications. Intake systems must minimize environmental impact, avoid harming marine life, and prevent debris accumulation, all while handling massive water flows.

EBDG’s Stockton design incorporated low-flow intake velocities and sophisticated, proprietary screening systems to ensure fish and marine organisms could safely swim away from intakes.

Another emerging concern is motion sensitivity. While protected harbors pose little risk, offshore deployments in-



“You have an essentially unlimited source of cooling water that you’re not consuming. That’s a huge advantage in a world where freshwater is becoming increasingly precious.”

Mike Complita,
Principal in Charge and Vice President of
Strategic Expansion at EBDG

roduce vessel motions that can affect servers, cooling systems, and power generation equipment.

“As we look at more exposed or offshore applications, motion control becomes a serious design consideration,” Complita said.

From Prototype to Scale

The Stockton floating data center, operating in the 10–12MW range, served as a functional prototype. Today’s market interest is dramatically larger.

“We’re seeing baseline requests at 30 megawatts, most in the 50 to 80 range,” Complita said. “Once AI comes into play, that jumps even higher.”

At those scales, floating data centers are no longer single platforms but modular fleets — multiple barges operating together, offering scalability unmatched by land-based construction.

“That scalability is another big advantage,” Complita said. “You don’t have to build everything at once. You can grow as demand grows.”

While floating data centers remain a small slice of the global data infrastructure today, momentum is clearly building. What was once an experimental concept is now drawing serious interest from major players in both the technology and maritime sectors.

“For a long time, this was a curiosity,” Complita said. “Now it’s something companies are looking at strategically to get ahead of their competitors.”

For shipyards, designers, and marine equipment suppliers, floating data centers could represent an interesting opportunity: a high-value, technology-driven market that leverages core maritime expertise while opening the door to a rapidly expanding digital economy.

As data demand continues to surge, the question may no longer be whether floating data centers make sense, but how quickly the maritime industry is ready to deliver them.

Vessels

C&C Marine and Repair delivered the M/V Al Sloss to Canal Barge Company, the first vessel in a four-boat newbuild series currently under construction for the New Orleans-based operator. The 2,600-horsepower, 87- x 34-ft. towboat was designed by C&C Marine and Repair's in-house engineering team and built on an accelerated schedule, with delivery completed in approximately six months.

"This project marks the first new-construction towboat we've ever built for Canal Barge Company, and we wanted to put our best foot forward," said Tony Cibilich, Owner of C&C Marine and Repair. M/V Al Sloss is powered by two Mitsubishi S12-R main engines, supplied by Laborde Products, and is equipped with two FPT generator sets. The propulsion package includes Reintjes WAF 665 reduction gears, provided by Karl Senner, LLC. Eagle Control Systems, Inc. furnished the vessel's steering, alarm, and monitoring systems. Accommodations aboard the M/V Al Sloss include eight berths, outfitted with a soft-core joiner system supplied by Kern Martin to enhance comfort and improve fire protection. The vessel's navigation and communications suite, supplied by GMENI Marine Electronics and Supply, includes Furuno radars, AIS, a satellite compass, bridge alarm system, loudhailer, and Standard Horizon

M/V Al Sloss Delivered to Canal Barge



C&C Marine

VHF communications, along with supporting bridge instrumentation and sensors. In addition, the towboat is equipped with two Carlisle & Finch 1,000-watt searchlights, two Wintech 40-ton winches, and a Wintech 5-ton vertical capstan.

M/V Al Sloss Main Particulars

Owner	Canal Barge Company
Builder	C&C Marine and Repair
Length	87 ft.
Breadth	34 ft.
Power	2,600 hp
Engines	(2) Mitsubishi S12-R mains
Engine Supplier	Laborde Products
Gears	Reintjes WAF 665 gears
Gear Supplier	Karl Senner, LLC
Radar	Furuno
VHF	Standard Horizon
Marine Electronics Supplier	GMENI Marine Electronics
Searchlights	Carlisle & Finch
Winches	Wintech
Berths	8

Seaspan Inks Deal with Bollinger, Rauma for USCG ASC Program



Seaspan

The quest to rebuild the U.S. icebreaking fleet continues to move at lightening speed, with Seaspan Shipyards (Seaspan) signing agreements with Bollinger Shipyards (Bollinger) and Rauma Marine Constructions Oy (Rauma) to provide its Multi-Purpose Icebreaker (MPI) design and associated supply chain packages to enable rapid construction and delivery of up to six vessels for the U.S. Coast Guard's Arctic Security Cutter (ASC) program.

Rauma will build up to two vessels in Finland with delivery expected in 2028 under the contracts formally announced by the U.S. Coast Guard last week. Bollinger will construct up to four cutters in the U.S.; the first U.S.-built vessel is expected in 2029.

Seaspan's MPI design ... originally designed for the Canadian Coast Guard's (CCG) long-range, multi-mission operations in extreme Arctic conditions ... was developed in partnership with Aker Arctic Technology Inc. of Finland (Aker) and under Canada's National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS), is ready for production enabling construction on the ASC program to begin immediately.

Design and engineering of the MPI was completed almost entirely in Canada, and the supply list to date includes: BCS Automation, Techsol Marine, Sperry, Advantec, Mackay Marine, Glamox, Northrop Grumman, Kongsberg, L3, Siemens, ABB and D.R. Benton.

Arctic Security Cutters Main Particulars

Length, o.a.	328 ft.
Breadth, molded	67 ft.
Design Waterline/Draft	21 ft.
Power Plant	Diesel Electric, Variable speed with DC-Bus
Installed Power	10,100 kW
Displacement	9,000 tons
Max speed (ice)	4 knots in 1m ice
Range	12,000 NM
Power	7,200 kW
Complement	85
Gross Tonnage	7,606
Classification	Lloyd's Register Polar Class PC4

Magnet Defense Acquires Metal Shark

Magnet Defense LLC completed its acquisition of Metal Shark, bringing together autonomous systems, artificial intelligence and established U.S. shipbuilding capacity to accelerate delivery of unmanned surface vessels (USVs) for national security missions. The combination positions the newly integrated company as a supplier of AI-enabled USVs for U.S. and allied military customers, with Metal Shark's Louisiana shipyards serving as production hubs supporting fleet operations and missile defense missions, including requirements tied to the U.S. "Golden Fleet" initiative.

Magnet Defense said the transaction marks a shift from prototype development to scalable, industrial-rate production. By pairing its software-defined autonomy stack and modular vessel designs with Metal Shark's shipbuilding infrastructure and workforce, the company aims to deliver autonomous maritime platforms at greater speed and volume.

The shipbuilder operates two manufacturing facilities in Louisiana totaling more than 125,000 sq. ft. across 40 acres, supported by an experienced production workforce and in-house engineering resources—assets that now provide Magnet Defense with immediate production depth and execution capacity.



Ribcraft Debuts Electric RIB



Ribcraft

Ribcraft unveiled the PRO 480 powered by the RAD 40 electric outboard, a UK-built demonstrator that strengthens Ribcraft's next-generation electric RHIB portfolio for professional, commercial and government operators. Built on the trademarked Ribcraft Deep-V Hull, the Ribcraft PRO 480 sports its trademarked Ribcraft Deep-V Hull, heavy-duty Hypalon tubes, robust composite structure,

and mission-specific bespoke architecture. The RAD 40 delivers 40 kW continuous power with digital drive-by-wire control enabling precise maneuvering in tight or tactical environments. Quiet operation reduced acoustic footprint during wildlife, SAR, or tactical missions. AC/DC fast-charging compatibility supporting flexible deployment and turnaround times.

Ribcraft PRO 480 Specification:

- Overall Length: 4.8m
- Overall Beam: 2.1 m
- Tube Diameter: 460 mm
- Commercial-Grade Construction
- FS Double Tandem Jockey Seat Console
- Fitted with RAD 40 Electric Outboard
- RAD 21 kWh Battery
- Electric propulsion capability

Vessels

Eastern Shipbuilding Group (ESG) launched the first of the four Saltchuk escort tugs, marking substantial progress on this significant fleet renewal program. “We are proud to advance this important project for Saltchuk Marine and look forward to continued progress as we move toward delivering these high-quality escort tugs,” said Joey D’Isernia, CEO of Eastern Shipbuilding Group, Inc. “These four vessels set a new maritime standard that will positively impact the industry by meeting new rigorous environmental requirements,” said Jason Childs, Saltchuk Marine’s President and CEO.

The four escort tugs are part of a long-term fleet renewal initiative for Saltchuk Marine, to be built at ESG’s facilities in Allanton and Port St. Joe, Florida. Upon delivery, they will support critical ship assist and escort operations across the U.S. West Coast, Hawaii, and Alaska.

Main Particulars

Owner.....	Saltchuk
Type.....	Ship Assist/Escort Tug
Length (o.a.).....	84'-0" (excluding fenders)
Breadth (molded).....	42'-0"
Depth, (molded).....	14'-0"
Draft, navigation.....	18'-7"
Accommodation.....	8 persons
Speed, ahead.....	12 knots
Bollard Pull, minimum.....	95 Short Tons (86.2 MT)
Main Engines.....	Caterpillar 3516E, EPA Tier 4, 3500 hp (2610 kW) @ 1,800 rpm
Thrusters.....	Schottel RudderPropeller SRP 510
Hawser Winch.....	Markey Machine DEPGF-52, 75HP, Single Drum Class II Winch

ESG Launches Saltchuk Escort Tug



Eastern Shipbuilding Group

Ocean Infinity Completes Armada Fleet Update



Ocean Infinity

Ocean Infinity reached a milestone with the delivery of the final vessel in its 14-vessel Armada fleet, featuring advanced underwater robotic systems capable of a wide range of data collection tasks. Over the past five years, Ocean Infinity has built and deployed a fleet of lean crewed vessels.

This latest delivery completes the 86-m class of Armada ships, following the successful introduction of the 78-meter class in 2023. Twelve vessels are now in operation, with the remaining two following close behind, pushing the

boundaries of robotics and technology at sea.

Each vessel is mobilized with a tailored suite of equipment, including advanced underwater robotic systems, enabling a wide range of data collection tasks. From geophysical surveys to geotechnical investigations, these capabilities support complex offshore projects globally from the United States to Europe and the Asia Pacific, delivering high quality data and driving innovation in subsea operations.

“Completing the Armada 86-m class marks an extraordinary moment – five years ago we said we’d build a fleet of fourteen ships, designed unconventionally because speed to capability mattered – and we’ve done it, despite the many challenges along the way. What started out as a bold ambition is now a reality. These vessels are not a concept or an R&D project – they are operating today, transforming the way offshore work is done by focusing on software and technology first,” said Oliver Plunkett, Chief Executive Officer.

Products

1 VETUS Maxwell



1. Complete Thruster Systems

Thrusters can take the stress out of docking by giving you sideways control of the movement and position of the bow and the stern of your boat. A control panel allows you to push the bow and/or stern sideways, to resist the force of a crosswind and cross-current, while you are maneuvering in close quarters. VETUS offers a complete thruster control systems.

<https://webshop.vetus.com/en/products>

2 Caterpillar C32B

The Caterpillar C32B for inland waterway applications increases time before overhaul (TBO) by up to 50%, specifically 15,000 hours for top-end and 30,000 hours for major overhauls compared to its predecessor. The C32B also offers a higher power density than the C32, providing operators more horsepower in the same package size as the previous C32 model. This makes the C32B ideal for repower applications with space constraints. C32B configurations include:

- For new vessel builds requiring maximum power and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions compliance, the C32B EPA Tier 4 delivers ratings of 1,000, 1,200, 1,300 and 1,450 hp. This configuration meets the strin-

3 Caterpillar



4 Denso

gent requirements while providing robust performance.

- The C32B EPA Tier 3, rated at 800 and 1,000 hp, is suited for existing vessel engine replacements and repowers. It allows operators to update towboats with the latest technology while maintaining Tier 3 compliance.

3. CG-RAPTOR

The U.S. Coast Guard unveiled a rapid-response approach that identifies, prototypes and delivers breakthrough technologies to meet urgent operational needs and drives accelerated transition to programs. The Office of Rapid Response and Prototyping (CG-RAPTOR) is accelerating the “idea-to-operations” cycle, rolling out solutions within 30, 60, and 90 days through collaboration with operators, industry leaders and subject matter experts. In the past 150 days, CG-RAPTOR has debuted unmanned systems, personnel management tools, secure communications platforms and real-time readiness tracking.

4. Denso SeaShield

Denso offers SeaShield Series 2000HD, a anti-corrosion protection system designed to safeguard marine structures. This heavy-duty, multi-layered system

3 U.S. Coast Guard



5 Hansen Protection

combines Denso’s petrolatum tape technology, with more than 50 years of successful performance, with a robust High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) outer cover. This system is specifically engineered to encapsulate and protect various marine structures, including dock piles, riser pipes, and exposed piping in splash and intertidal zones.

5. Hansen Protection

Hansen Protection secured a multi-year contract to supply life-protection equipment to Lufttransport, Norway’s largest and fastest-growing offshore helicopter operator. As the offshore helicopter market undergoes rapid expansion, driven by both oil and gas and offshore wind, operators face unprecedented demands for efficiency, reliability, quality and above all, safety.

Lufttransport is on track for a major expansion, growing its fleet to 18 helicopters by the end of 2026.

The contract is for three years with an option to extend, and will deliver a comprehensive suite of personal protective equipment, including immersion suits, lifejackets, and rescue swimmer equipment. All servicing and maintenance will be conducted within Norway.

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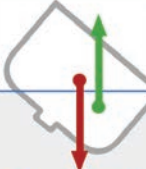
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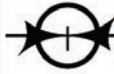
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2026 Editorial Calendar

January 2026

Ad close: January 2, 2026

Passenger Vessels: Ferries & Expedition Cruise

- Shipyard Reviews
- Marine Electronics: Navigation & Weather Routing
- Maritime Communications

EVENTS

- **IPF 2026** – New York, NY
- **PVA Maritrends** – Covington, KY
- **CMA Shipping** – Hilton Stamford, CT, USA

February 2026

Ad close: January 30, 2026

Maritime Power

E-Magazine Edition

Multi-platform electronic magazine featuring interviews, company profiles, video, and custom ad enhancements.

- **Tech In Focus:** Hybrid & Electrification – Alternative Fuels to Batteries

March 2026

Ad close: February 13, 2026

Inland & Energy Ports

- Dredging Technology
- Combat Craft Design & Construction
- Offshore Service Vessels

EVENTS

- **Port of the Future 2026** – Hyatt Baytown Houston
- **Sea-Air-Space** – National Harbor, MD, USA
- **OTC 2026** – NRG park, Houston, TX, USA

April 2026

Ad close: March 30, 2026

Maritime Workforce Development

E-Magazine Edition

Multi-platform electronic magazine featuring interviews, company profiles, video, and custom ad enhancements.

- **Training & Education:** Maritime Schools, Simulation Centers & E-Learning

May 2026

Ad close: April 14, 2026

Inland Waterway Ops: Towboats & Barges

- Shipyard Reviews
- Marine Electronics: Navigation & Weather Routing
- Maritime Communications

EVENTS

- **Inland Marine Expo 2026** – Nashville, TN
- **Mari-Tech 2026** – Victoria, BC
- **Seawork** – Southampton, UK

June 2026

Ad close: May 29, 2026

The Green Marine Edition

E-Magazine Edition

Multi-platform electronic magazine featuring interviews, company profiles, video, and custom ad enhancements.

- **Tech In Focus:** Digitalization Tools for Efficiency, Fuel Economy
- **Green Marine** at the Quebec City Convention Centre

July 2026

Ad close: June 17, 2026

Dredging: The Leadership Edition

- Boatbuilding, Repair & Maintenance
- Marine Salvage
- Deck Machinery & Cranes

EVENTS

- **World Dredging Congress & Exhibition** – Montreal, Canada
- **MACC 2026**

August 2026

Ad close: July 31, 2026

Inland Waterways

E-Magazine Edition

Multi-platform electronic magazine featuring interviews, company profiles, video, and custom ad enhancements.

- **Tech In Focus:** Coatings & Corrosion Control

September 2026

Ad close: August 19, 2026

Naval Architecture: Boat Design

- U.S. Coast Guard Shipbuilding
- Floating Power
- Propulsion: Alternative Fuels & Hybrid Technology

EVENTS

- **SNAME 2026**
- **Electric & Hybrid Marine World Expo North America**

October 2026

Ad close: September 30, 2026

Police, Fire, Patrol & Pilot Boats

E-Magazine Edition

Multi-platform electronic magazine featuring interviews, company profiles, video, and custom ad enhancements.

- **Tech In Focus:** Waterjets, Thrusters & Propellers

November 2026

Ad close: October 14, 2026

Workboat Edition

- Great Boats of 2026
- U.S. Offshore Energy
- Shipyard Equipment: Cutting, Welding, Bending & Shaping

EVENTS

- **Intl. Workboat Show 2026** – December – New Orleans, LA

December 2026

Ad close: November 30, 2026

Power & Propulsion Technology

E-Magazine Edition

Multi-platform electronic magazine featuring interviews, company profiles, video, and custom ad enhancements.

- **Tech In Focus:** Fuels & Lubricants

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