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Ocean and Coastal Towing California Steel

Tug Technology:

Barge, Skegs and more



The 8,200 hp **Corbin Foss** has added a bit of muscle to Foss Maritime's deep water towing fleet. Photo courtesy of Foss Maritime.

Ocean & Coastal Towing

By Jim Shaw

The ocean and coastal towing industry continues to evolve as new equipment is brought into play, operators expand their operations internationally and several changes of ownership take place. Articulated tug/barge (ATB) combinations have proven to be dependable work units and more are on order for West Coast deployment. At the same time, some operators have elected to stay with traditional towed barges, but with the latest designs giving more economical performance at greater speeds. Tug construction has not been to the same level as in the past, but a few new units are showing up, and a number of older boats are being re-powered.

In Washington D.C., Congress is examining the possibility of a new inspection program that would cover all towing vessels, as well as new requirements in the areas of worker safety, crew endurance and vessel operating procedures. Members of American Waterways Operators (AWO), the trade association of the domestic tug and barge industry, are already planning for this eventuality. In

the meantime, the towing business is growing and new opportunities are opening up in the long-distance sector, particularly in the Western Pacific.

Offshore Upswing

Oil exploration in Russia's Far East has generated a significant number of tows over the past several years and the work seems to be expanding. Earlier this year, Crowley's Energy and Marine Services Group, as the main subcontractor to a joint venture involving Bechtel and Enka of Turkey, completed the transportation, loading and seafastening of the first cargo for the Lunskeye Bay project on Russia's Sakhalin Island.

Crowley used its barge *Isla del Sol*, which was already in the Far East following work in the Indian Ocean, for the transport of heavy lift and oversize cargo from Masan, Korea and Hitachi, Japan to Lunskeye Bay, one of several areas being developed by Sakhalin Energy Investment Company (SEIC) a consortium led by Royal Dutch Shell.

Crowley's main subcon-



Western Towboat's **Gulf Titan** is seen here in Late June on its way to a launching. Photo courtesy of Western Towboat

tractors in the move were Panalpina, which provides freight forwarding and customs clearance internationally, and Mammoet Heavy Lift, a European specialist in the loading and discharge of heavy ro/ro cargos. The pieces transported by Crowley, and off-loaded by Mammoet, weighed up to 350 tons.

Besides the *Isla del Sol*, Crowley's barge *420* and the tug *Guardian* were involved in the project, as was Barge *240-1* and the tugs *Sea Viking*, *Point Thompson*, *Sioux* and *Belaya Kuropatka*.

Worldwide Certification

Seattle's Foss Maritime has also been involved in the Western Pacific, and its twin ocean-going tugs *Lauren Foss* and *Corbin Foss* are now certified under worldwide safety and quality standards, with an International Management Code (ISM) certification made official for the *Lauren Foss* on February 9 and for the *Corbin* on March 10.

The 150-foot, 7,200 HP twin tugs previously held temporary certification, which allowed the *Lauren Foss* to operate in the Sakhalin Islands last year. Compliance with the standards, conceived mainly for full-sized ships, is required for vessels exceeding 500 tons operating in foreign waters and is also required for tugs towing large ships. "This allows us to participate in areas of business that we previously couldn't," said Mike Sutton, Director of Safety and Quality Assurance for Foss, who oversaw the certification process. "We are looking to international projects to grow certain business lines and we couldn't do that without vessels like the *Corbin* and *Lauren*," Sutton said.

Foss is also seeking ISM certification for its enhanced tractor tugs *Garth Foss* and *Lindsey Foss*, which are sometimes used to escort tankers in Canadian waters. The company plans to eventually obtain certification of its entire fleet. "We want to show our customers that Foss has taken the steps necessary to assure that when we're out there pushing on their ships or moving their oil, or sailing internationally, that our safety and quality assurance programs are key elements of our business culture that have been vetted and certified by an independent third party," Sutton stressed.



Island Tug & Barge's *Island Crown* has been re-engined with new Cummins KTA 38s rated at 500 hp at 1,600 rpm and 900hp at 1,800 rpm. Photo by kevinmillerphoto.com, courtesy of Island Tug & Barge.

Yard Work

Besides ISM certification, Foss has also been busy rebuilding several of its tugs and preparing for this season's loading operations in Alaska's Chukchi Sea. In mid-June a Foss fleet of four boats, the *Iver Foss*, *Sandra Foss*, *Stacey Foss* and *Jeffrey Foss*, moved the self-unloading barges *Noatak* and *Kivalina* northward to open up the company's 15th season handling ore for Alaska's Red Dog Mine. The *Noatak* and *Kivalina* are used to carry zinc and lead ore concentrate from shallow-water load-out facilities to bulk carriers anchored in deeper water. This season's tonnage is expected to be similar to last year's, in the range of 1.35 million metric tons, before the fleet returns to Seattle in early November.

Prior to the northbound sailing, the tug *Jeffrey Foss* was drydocked in Seattle for maintenance and minor repairs. Two other Foss boats, the *Benjamin Foss* and *David Foss*, have been undergoing a more substantial overhaul program at the Foss facility to extend their service lives by about 15 years. Under the program, the boats' twin Caterpillar D-398 engines are being pulled and replaced with re-

manufactured engines. The vessels are also receiving new marine sanitation systems and other upgrades, including some steel renewal.

The *Benjamin* was in the Foss yard in April and August for completion while the *David* should be finished up by January. Both 24-year-old tugs were built by Main Ironworks of Houma, Louisiana and are usually employed towing chip barges between Shelton and Tacoma and Everett. On occasion, the boats are also used to tow Navy oil barges and wood chip barges down from Canada.

Canada's own Island Tug & Barge has also re-powered one of its boats, with the 78 foot *Island Crown*, ex-*Seaspan Defender*, fitted with new Cummins KTA 38MO engines. The KTA 38s have two ratings, 500 hp at 1600 rpm and 800 hp at 1800 rpm, which allows the British Columbia firm to fine tune the boat's operations to meet local requirements (Canadian regulations state that a 3rd class engineer is required above 1000 hp total). The KTA 38s are also equipped with Cummins' new Centinel and Eliminator systems, which reduce oil change intervals to 4,500 hours. The *Island Crown* was originally built to a Robert

Allan design in 1974 as the *Gulf Julia* and was last employed in the Seaspan fleet on the West Coast.

New Equipment

Among new equipment recently completed on the coast, Crowley's petroleum services group has positioned the 76ft shallow-draft *Avik* (See *Pacific Maritime Magazine*, August 2004) northward to serve in the company's oil transportation and distribution fleet in Alaska. The Caterpillar-powered tug was designed by Crowley's Vessel Management Services team and built by Dakota Creek Industries at Anacortes. Dakota Creek has also recently completed the 180 foot combination tank and deck barge *180-1* for Crowley, the first double-hull tank barge constructed specifically for Alaska service. The new unit features a dual anchor system, coated cargo tanks, a pedestal-mounted deck crane, portable cargo ramps and onboard oil spill response equipment. It has been designed to operate in either a push mode or as a conventional towed unit.

At Portland, Gunderson has completed the 360 foot by 100 foot deck barge *Sitka Provider* for Alaska Marine Lines, which, like the previous members of its class, features NautiCAN Hydro-lift skags and a container capacity of about 800 TEUs. Gunderson has also



Classic Dunlap towing units *Snohomish* and *Suiattle* remain active in the Pacific Northwest. Photo by Jim Shaw.

delivered the 80,000-barrel capacity tank barge *Alsea Bay*, the 65,000-barrel *Hilo Bay* and 100,000-barrel *Sunset Bay* to Sause Bros, which outfits the units at its own yard in Coos Bay. All three barges will be used by divisions of ChevronTexaco to serve Pacific markets, with the 373-foot, 13,500 dwt *Alsea Bay* already in service for ChevronTexaco's Global Lubricants

carrying base lubricant oils from San Francisco Bay to Oregon and California destinations.

The *Hilo Bay* is being used by ChevronTexaco's North America Products division, for the inter-island transport of fuel products in Hawaii, while ChevronTexaco's Fuel and Marine Marketing division will use the *Sunset Bay* to ship fuel oils between various West Coast ports. ChevronTexaco will also employ two new double-hulled bunker barges built by Zidell for Foss Maritime. These 35,000-barrel capacity units – *FDH 35-1* and *FDH 35-2* – will begin service in November and January supplying fuel to ships in and around San Francisco Bay. Gunderson will begin building a fifth barge for Sause, the 80,000 barrel *Drakes Bay*, shortly, and will deliver the first of two 380 foot by 96 foot container barges to Naknek Barge Lines, a subsidiary of Northland Services, in October. The second Naknek unit will follow in March.

Navy Tows

The US Navy is continuing to furnish significant towing business to West Coast operators. Since moving the aircraft carriers *USS Constellation* and *USS Midway* along the coast between Puget Sound and San Diego, Foss has provided assistance in the movement of several other Navy vessels, most



Portland-based Gunderson Marine has been turning out a large number of tank and deck barges for West Coast operators, including four double-hulled units for Coos Bay, Oregon-based Sause Bros. Photo courtesy of Gunderson Marine.

destined for the scrapyard. This past winter the tugs *Sidney Foss* and *Drew Foss* were employed to move the obsolete combatants *USS England*, *USS Gridley* and *USS Roark* from the West Coast to Brownsville, Texas for breaking, while two Kidd Class destroyers, originally built for Iran, were moved from Bremerton to Charleston, South Carolina for refitting and export to Taiwan. Taking advantage of the positioning of its tugs, Foss employed the *Sidney Foss* to move the 533 foot *England* from the Navy's inactive ship facility in Suisun Bay to the Atlantic entrance of the Panama Canal. The retired cruiser was then picked up by the *Lauren Foss*, which had just finished delivering the destroyer *Chandler* to Charleston, and was taken on to Brownsville for disposal. This allowed the *Sidney Foss* to return to Suisun Bay for another 533-foot cruiser, the *Gridley*, which was delivered to the wreckers at Brownsville in March. Also making a trans-Panama tow was the *Drew Foss*, which towed the 437-foot frigate *Roark* to the same Texas port in February.

Cleaning Up

Both Foss and Crowley have been involved in the clean-up business of late, with Foss' *Iver Foss* moving the ramp barge *Beach Bear* among the Hawaiian islands, to collect scrap and spent ordnance from government installations, while Crowley has been involved in a similar venture at Johnston Island. Two Crowley barges were used for the latter project, with the barge *Alaska* making two trips from Johnston Island to the Columbia River, handling dirt and other debris, while *Barge 400* was used to move 5,100 tons of scrap metal and other material off the island before returning to Seattle in mid-July. According to the government, Johnson Island is now free of all remnants of human habitation and is being overseen by the Department of Fish and Game as a bird sanctuary after 70 years of service as a US military installation.

Changes of Ownership

A number of tug and barge lines have changed ownership recently, with Australia's Adsteam selling its 50 percent interest in Seattle-based Northland Holdings to local investors while the Gulf Coast's Osprey Line and the East



Crowley's *Barge 420* was used earlier this year to move a heavy-lift project cargo between South Korea and Russia's Sakhalin Island. Photo courtesy Crowley Marine Services.

Coast's K Corp are also coming under new ownership. Adsteam is retaining its interest in Northland's fuel business but only until it can be sold.

Northland was founded in 1977 by a group of Pacific Northwest investors and was sold to Booth Creek Holdings, owned by George Gillett, in 1997. In 2000, Adsteam joined Booth Creek as the majority co-owner by purchasing a controlling interest in the company. Northland operates a common carrier and contract barge freight service using about 30 tugs and barges between Seattle and destinations in Alaska and Hawaii.

On the Gulf Coast, Kirby Corporation has purchased a one-third interest in Osprey Line LLC for \$4.2 million with the remaining two-thirds interest held by Cooper/T. Smith Corporation and Richard L. Couch. Osprey, formed in 2000, operates a barge feeder service for containers between Houston, New Orleans and Baton Rouge, as well as several ports located above Baton Rouge on the Mississippi River.

Revenues for Osprey in 2003 were \$11.7 million and the company has continued to expand. Joe Pyne, Kirby's President and CEO, said container-on-barge services represented a "significant future growth opportunity" for Kirby, and projected that it will develop into a "key component" of the US transportation system.

On the East Coast, Jacksonville, Florida-based Trailer Bridge Inc has entered into a definitive agreement to purchase 100 percent of the stock of

Kadampanattu Corporation (K Corp) for \$32 million. K Corp is wholly owned by the Estate of Malcom P. McLean, Trailer Bridge's founder. Completion of the transaction is subject to Trailer Bridge obtaining sufficient financing and the consent of various parties. K Corp currently owns two 736 foot triple-deck ro/ro barges with a capacity of 405 53 foot trailers. These vessels were built in 1984, lengthened in 1996, and are operated under charter to Trailer Bridge, which maintains a regular series of sailings between East Coast ports and San Juan, Puerto Rico.