Mat-Su Borough picks Marcon to market Susitna - Marine Log

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SEPTEMBER 17, 2012 — Marcon International, Inc. of Coupeville, Washington, has been selected by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough in Alaska to market the SWATH (Small Waterplane Area Twin Hull) Expeditionary Craft ferry Susitna for sale (see earlier story).

Though the Matanuska-Susitna Borough has not been able to put the Susitna into its original intended service, Marcon says that the vessel's unique combination of capabilities may make it "a good candidate to operate year-round providing ro-ro ferry services for high-value cargoes and/or passengers in remote areas; supporting oilfield, mining or windfarm projects; or simply accessing challenging shallow draft construction or other projects sites worldwide."

Marcon notes that Susitna was developed by Guido Perla & Associates of Seattle, Washington from a concept created by Lockheed Martin. The vessel is designed to operate as a ferry in the difficult Alaskan waters of Cook Inlet while being assessed by the U.S. Office of Naval Research (ONR) to determine potential effectiveness as a multi-purpose expeditionary/amphibious cargo and troop transport. M/V Susitna embodies five new technologies. Among them is the fact that it is the world's first icebreaking SWATH with 2 inch thick ice knives capable of handling thin ice < 1 ft; and the world's first ship able to make the transition from a high speed catamaran/JSWATH hull to a shallow landing barge type — and back again.

The 63.96 m (208.8 ft) LOA x 18.29 m (60.0 ft) x 4.2m (14.1') draft, steel-hull vessel was built by the Alaska Ship & Drydock, Inc. shipyard in the City of Ketchikan, Alaska in 2010. The high speed craft is powered by four MTU 12V4000 4-stroke diesels developing a total of 9,464 BHP at 2,000 RPM, each in their own engine rooms, driving four Wartsila WLD-810 axial flow waterjets. With her advanced variable draft design, Susitna can operate at speeds up to a maximum of 18 kn in ice-free areas in the catamaran mode with a 16 kn cruising speed at design draft. During ice navigation with a navigational draft of 4.8 m (15.75 ft), her cruising speed is about 2-6 kn depending on actual ice conditions. While performing shallow draft operations, speed is 5 kn at a draft of 1.4 m (4.5 ft).

Maneuverability is enhanced by the vessel's two mid-body North American 1,600 HP, 360 degree steerable thrusters. Susitna's range is about 1,600 nm at 10 kn and 800 nm at 16 kn. Ship's power is provided by two 350 kW Marathon generators powered by MTU S60 diesels.

The 970 long ton displacement Expeditionary Craft (E-Craft) is capable of carrying 35 tons cargo consisting of 20 standard vehicles or one tractor-trailer rig on a 501 sq.m clear deck and up to 129 passengers, or military payloads up to one M1A1 tank without passengers. Accommodations are provided for a crew of five.

Marcon says that Susitna's design concept is similar to the U.S. Navy's current fleet of high speed catamaran vessels, except that Susitna has the ability to transform herself from deep water to shallow draft and back again. While underway, the vessel can operate in at high speed in catamaran mode or as a SWATH providing additional stability in high seas. The center aluminum, 160 ft x 35 ft vertical lift cargo deck can be hydraulically raised and lowered about 21 ft so that she can also work as a shallow-draft landing craft capable of both maneuvering in shallow water and with the cargo deck lowered driving up on the beach to discharge over a 9.4 m (30.75 ft) hydraulic, articulating bow ramp.

Designed as a commercial ferry in addition to being a test platform E-Craft, the "Susitna" was built to meet all U.S. Coast Guard and ABS standards including the notation ABS +A1, (E) HSC Ro-Ro Passenger Craft, SWATH, Alaska Cook Inlet, AMS, Ice Class, A-0, ACCU, SOLAS and MARPOL.

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