

### Efficacious acquisition

By Bruce Buls, Technical Editor



It seems like the news about many government procurements is all about disputes, excuses, budget blowouts and failed equipment. Examples that leap to mind include the Coast Guard's National Security Cutter/Deepwater program, the Navy's DDG-1000 destroyer program and the Littoral Combat Ships.

But there is also good news.

The Coast Guard's Response Boat-Medium (RB-M) program is now producing boats that are not only on schedule and on budget, they're fantastic vessels. So far, everybody loves them. OK, maybe the competing companies that failed to get the lucrative contract and who dragged the process through procedural mud don't love them, but everyone who's been part of getting these new 45-footers up and running is very happy.

This group includes the Coast Guard and the two boatbuilders who combined their strengths and skills to secure the contract: Marinette Marine in Wisconsin and Kvichak Marine in Washington state. Keith Whittemore, president of Seattle-based Kvichak, said the partnership is a "match made in heaven." The reason? "We know how to do this, we're the aluminum boatbuilder, and Marinette is the defense contractor that has brought a ton to the table with experience and resources to manage a contract of this magnitude. We would not have gotten this project without Marinette and Marinette would not have gotten this contract without us. That's how partnerships should work."

The Coast Guard has told the builders that they want 250 of the 45-footers, which should cost about \$600 million. Kvichak will build 125 in the Seattle area, and Marinette will build the other 125 at their new aluminum shop in Green Bay, Wis. The first two production boats are now being put through the paces at two different Coast Guard stations – one on the East Coast and one on the West Coast. The reviews have been enthusiastic.

For more details and some photos of the boats, check out our feature story in the September issue of *WorkBoat* magazine.

Want to share feedback with other readers?

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