



KETCHIKAN DAILY NEWS

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ASD to build new longliner

By SCOTT BOWLEN
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Alaska Ship & Drydock has received its first order to build a new fishing vessel at the Ketchikan Shipyard.

ASD signed a contract Friday with the Petersburg-based Alaska Longline Co. for the construction of a 136-foot factory longline fishing boat to be delivered in 2013.

The as-yet-unnamed vessel will have the latest Mustad Autoline baiting system, in addition to an onboard processing and freezing system, according to the announcement.

"I am really pleased that ASD got the contract to build our new vessel," John Winther, president and managing owner of Alaska Longline Co., said in a prepared announcement Tuesday.

Alaska Longline currently operates five vessels that harvest Pacific cod, sablefish and turbot in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska.

Winther has a long involvement in Alaska commercial fisheries, and served from July 2003 to January 2011 as a director of the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority that owns the Ketchikan Shipyard.

The shipyard is operated by the Ketchikan-based ASD.

"I got to know them pretty well, and I've had a couple of boats in there for repairs," Winther told the Daily News. "They're one of the most modern small yards that I've seen in the Northwest."

He said he's watched ASD "develop into first-class company with great and talented personnel, and with the skills necessary to perform vessel repair and construction of the highest quality.

"I really look forward to working with them as partners on this project." Winther said in the announcement.

ASD President Randy Johnson said the company is "really proud" that Alaska Longline Company awarded the contract to ASD.

The contract is especially meaningful to ASD because the "Bering Sea fishing industry is an extremely competitive market dominated by companies that make decisions based on quality, reliability and price," according to Doug Ward, ASD's director of shipyard development.

"To be selected by one of the top fishing companies in the business is a real credit to the shipbuilding skills our workforce has acquired over the years, and will help position Ketchikan as a center for Alaska's marine industries," Ward said in an email to the Daily News.

Alaska Longline's new boat will be ASD's first fishing vessel "newbuild" — and ASD's first vessel to be built in the Ketchikan Shipyard's new ship assembly hall, which is expected to be completed in June.

The Alaska Longline boat will be the fifth new-build project in ASD's history, following the Ketchikan Gateway Borough airport ferries Oral Freeman (completed in 2001) and Ken Eichner 2 (2011); the fuel barge Chevron Legacy (2009); and the naval research vessel/ferry Susitna (2010).

According to Tuesday's announcement, the new fishing vessel will be one of the first to be built after the American Fisheries Act was modified in 2010 to allow Bering Sea vessel owners to replace or rebuild their fleets.

The changes are anticipated to result in "hundreds of millions of dollars" in shipbuilding and conversion work for West Coast shipyards during the next 10 to 15 years, according to the announcement.

"We know that other Bering Sea fishing companies are planning new vessels," said Johnson, highlighting the possibility that some of those companies might be interested in having the construction or conversion work done in Ketchikan.

Alaska Longline Company currently operates the vessels Bering Prowler, Ocean Prowler, Prowler, Kjevolja and Zenith.

The company started as Prowler Fisheries in 1986 with one boat, according to Winther.

That first boat, Prowler, was a converted king crab/longliner freezer boat Prowler Fisheries converted into a Pacific cod fishing boat, according to Pacific Fishing Magazine. It was joined by the converted boats Ocean Prowler in 1988, and the Bering Prowler in 1998, according to Pacific Fishing.

Winther said Prowler bought Jubilee Fisheries in 2009.

The acquisition included the Jubilee boats Zenith and Kjevolja, and resulted in a change of the company name from Prowler Fisheries to Alaska Longline Co.

"We just decided to change the name when we bought this other company," Winther said.

The new vessel will replace two of the company's existing boats, said Winther, who didn't name two boats to be replaced.

According to the announcement, Alaska Longline is a Community Development Quota partner with the Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association. That's one of the six regional CDQ groups in Western Alaska that receive harvest allocations of Pacific cod, pollock, crab and other species in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Island fisheries.

The Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association has a 25-percent ownership stake in Alaska Longline Company.

"As an Alaska-based company whose focus is on community development, we are very happy to see ASD and the community of Ketchikan land this contract," Aleutian Pribilof's CEO Larry Cotter said in the announcement. "Given the dedication of ASD, its employees and the city and borough of Ketchikan, we're confident this will be the first of many commercial fishing construction projects."

Alaska Longline's new boat is being designed by Jensen Maritime Consultants.

The Seattle-based subsidiary of Crowley Maritime Corp. has designed a similar vessel, the 124-foot factory longline boat Bering Leader that was built in 2005 by Florida's Patti Shipyard for Alaskan Leader Fisheries.