

Chouest announces new series of diesel electric OSVs

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The Edison Chouest Offshore family of companies, representing the most diverse and dynamic marine transportation operation in the world, today announced plans to design and build a series of a dozen 300-ft., 5,300 DWT deepwater diesel-electric offshore supply vessels.

"Since 2003, the core of our newbuild program has been a series of 42 new generation, 4,750 DWT deepwater 280-ft. offshore supply vessels," said Gary Chouest. "Those vessels revolutionized the industry and have performed remarkably well for our many customers in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico and in Brazil."

But with the 280-ft. series winding down (30 currently in operation, another 12 under construction and scheduled for completion by the second quarter 2010), Chouest boldly sought a different and even more diverse option for its customers.

"Our diesel-electric design complies with all new emissions standards and IMO regulations. This flexible design represents an efficient means of propulsion, resulting in improved fuel efficiency, increased control and lower maintenance costs," said Gary Chouest.

The current Chouest 280-ft. supply vessels feature two CAT diesel engines, rated at 7,200 HP. The new 300-ft. design will feature four 1,700 kW generators providing power to two 2,500 kW variable speed electric motors. A total of four 1,050 kW tunnel thrusters are featured, two at the bow and two at the stern.

The new design features an increased length of 20 feet over the current series, while the beam remains at 60 ft. and the depth increases from 24 to 26 ft. The deadweight tonnage increases from 4,750 LT to 5,300 LT, and the deck cargo capacity increases from 10,000 to 11,000 sq. ft.

Tank capacities also increase in several instances: Liquid mud capacity increases from 13,000 barrels to 16,000, and rig water available onboard increases from 105,000 gallons to a staggering 571,000 gallons. The new design also features increased tankage opportunities for specialized chemical products.

"This new clean design also provides the necessary flexibility for subsea support for our many customers," noted Dino Chouest. He refers to Chouest affiliate C-Innovation (C-I), headquartered in Mandeville, LA. Established in January 2007, the company provides innovative ROV solutions, parts redundancy, training and safety.

"From its inception, C-I has had a strategic fit in extending the Chouest services spectrum to the subsea arena, while complementing and increasing capabilities of Chouest vessels and adding customer value in an integrated ROV/vessel solution," added Dino Chouest. C-I has already contracted and installed over 20 highly specialized Schilling UltraHeavy Work-Class (UHD) ROV systems to a growing customer base.

Gary Chouest stated that all necessary equipment for the first six diesel-electric vessels has been ordered, with equipment for the second half of the new OSV fleet currently being negotiated. His intention is that steel will be cut for the first vessel in the series by September 1, 2009. Ten of the new diesel-electric OSVs will be constructed at Chouest's U.S.-based shipyards, while the remaining two will be constructed at the Chouest-owned Navship yard in Navegantes, Brazil.

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