

Successful shipment from renovated barge slip in Satsop

Local News

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SATSOP — The eight huge steel tanks that were successfully — and impressively — loaded and barged four at a time down the Chehalis River Tuesday and Wednesday open up a myriad of possibilities for fabricator Brown-Minneapolis Tank-Northwest as well as Satsop Development Park, which recently renovated its barge slip to make the shipment possible.

“This means that instead of just bragging to future and existing customers what we can do, now we can actually show them what our capabilities are,” said Rollie Irwin, vice president of manufacturing for Brown-Minneapolis Tank — Northwest, (BMT-NW).

Irwin said he never doubted the shipment would go well. “The only surprise for anyone was just how fast and how smooth it went,” he said.

“I want to thank my team here at BMT and compliment all the local contractors — Snell Crane out of Olympia, Graham Hay Trucking out of Shelton and Quigg Bros. of Aberdeen, as well as Samson Tug and Barge of Seattle — for all their help in making the process go so smoothly.”

The last time the barge slip had been used was 15 years ago, when WPPSS (the Washington Public Power Supply System) shipped out a few oversized components of the dismantled nuclear plant — one that was never finished, fueled or fired. Now, in an inspiring reversal, the same barge slip has become a symbol of success for BMT-NW and Satsop Development Park.

“One of the main reasons we moved to Satsop was having this kind of water access,” said Irwin, who says his business has grown since completing the move to Satsop Development Park in April of 2009. The immense scale of the former twin-turbine building, the robust infrastructure built for a nuclear reactor, and now the renovated barge slip have allowed BMT-NW to build bigger tanks and bid on larger and different projects, he said.

“Having the barge slip operational is the last piece of the puzzle that completes the picture for BMT and for Satsop Park,” he said.

Each of the eight tanks is 22-foot outside diameter by 20 feet high and holds 50,000 gallons. They are on their way to Alaska Village Electric Cooperative for a bulk storage plant in Chevak, a village about halfway between Anchorage and Nome on the Bering Sea, where they will be used to store diesel fuel, Irwin said.

“The renovated barge slip was key to BMT’s decision to locate at the Satsop Development Park,” said Tami Garrow, CEO of the Grays Harbor Public Development Authority, which manages the Park. “We are thrilled to see the facility restored and actively used. It opens up all kinds of new business opportunities for both BMT and for the Park.”

The barge slip is 60 feet wide and 300 feet long and can accommodate barges up to 400 feet. It is designed for full access around the slip and is easily accessible to large cranes and heavy equipment. In addition, the road to the barge slip was built to accommodate the huge components of a nuclear power plant, so it has an amazing 900-ton capacity. (A typical highway has a 22-ton capacity.)

“Just knowing that BMT can now ship oversized tanks and specialized products by water that can’t be moved by truck or rail has made a huge difference for his business, Irwin said.

“Last year we garnered about \$11 million in revenue; this year our goal is \$12 to 14 million in revenue. Had we not found Satsop we would still be a \$7- to \$8-million-a-year company,” he said.

“We are one of the largest steel fabricators on the West Coast, and have the largest overhead crane lifting capacity. I don’t know of another fabrication shop in the U.S. that can lift a million pounds — 500 tons — but we can!” Irwin said. “We have done three large projects since moving here that we could have never considered before,” he said.

Satsop Development Park is a 1,700-acre mixed-use business and technology park located in scenic Grays Harbor County in Southwest Washington just 30 minutes from Olympia and the I-5 corridor. It is home to more than 30 businesses, offers 440 acres of developed, pad-ready land and buildings supported by super-sized infrastructure and surrounded by 1,200 acres of sustainable managed forestland.

The Park is managed by the Grays Harbor Public Development Authority, a public corporation whose

mission is to create new jobs and investment for the region. More information on Satsop Development Park can be found at www.Satsop.com.

Background and Fun Facts

Satsop Development Park's barge slip

- From 1978 to 1981 the Satsop Park Haul Road (and a portion of Minkler Road) was built to accommodate the immense weight of components of the nuclear power plants to be constructed. The road was built and tested to nearly a 900-ton capacity (1.8 million pounds!). An average state highway has a 22-ton capacity.

- Major components brought up the river to the barge slip in 1981 included:

- four steam generators at 750 tons each

- two reactor vessels at 400 tons each

- two pressurizers at 100 tons each.

- In 1981, when the nuclear reactor vessels were brought up the six-mile road from the barge slip to the nuclear reactor plant, they were driven at a half a mile an hour, taking 12 hours to go the six miles.

- After WPPSS decided in 1993 not to keep as an option pursuing the completion of the Satsop Nuclear Plant, it began deconstructing portions of the facility. Some of the bigger components such as the diesel generators and the main electrical transformers were broken into pieces and trucked away.

- In 1995 WPPSS sold the two transformers to an electric utility in Oregon. The transformers were transported to the barge slip and then barged down the Chehalis River, comprising the last major shipment from there.

- For many years the barge slip became so overgrown that many fishermen didn't even realize it was there.

- In 2007 Pacific International Engineering conducted a study for Grays Harbor Public Development Authority to determine if it was viable to renovate the slip. The conclusion was the structure was in very good condition.

- After the appropriate permits were granted, the Grays Harbor Public Development Authority hired Rognlin's Inc. of Aberdeen, to renovate the barge slip and remove sediments to return it to its original design depth. The work took about a month and was completed in mid July of 2009.

- The project cost about \$450,000. The Public Development Authority funded \$150,000. The remaining \$300,000 was funded by Grays Harbor County's Distressed Area Capital Fund. This fund comes out of a portion of the state's share of locally collected sales tax -- .09 percent. The fund is used for public infrastructure projects that support economic development.