

OPC Program Heats Up

In February, BIW was selected by the U.S. Coast Guard to advance to Phase I of the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) program.

BIW was one of three shipyards chosen from a field of eight competitors to continue design work on this next-generation cutter program. At the end of the 18-month Phase I period, BIW and the other two competitors, Bollinger Shipyards of Lockport, Louisiana and Eastern Shipbuilding of Panama City, Florida, will compete for the contract to design and build the first nine to 11 ships of a planned 25-ship class.

The frigate-sized OPC is well aligned with BIW's capabilities, experience and work load and fits well into the later part of this decade when construction is scheduled.

Rather than conducting one competition for a design and shipbuilder, the Coast Guard chose a tiered, Phase I and Phase II approach. The concept design phase, now complete, focused on technical design and shipyard capability. During the upcoming Phase I preliminary and contract design period, BIW and the other competing shipyards will mature their design, demonstrate compliance to requirements and mitigate risk.

Following Contract Design Review, each team will develop proposals for detail design and construction which will include fixed price ship construction costs. The Phase II downselect competition is heavily focused on cost.

Doug Nelson (D79), OPC Capture Manager, described the competition for Phase II as challenging. "While our competition



Rendering of the BIW Team's OPC design.

may propose building a ship that is larger and more complex than they have previously taken on, they are both very competitive in the area of cost."

He continued, "We clearly bring a great deal of capability and experience to the table, but will need to maximize our affordability. Much rests on how we perform on our DDG work because our performance in the mid-2015 timeframe will largely determine how we'll bid for the OPC construction. Winning Phase II will be an all hands effort. The contributions of every mechanic working today to build ships for fewer hours will be every bit as important in positioning us to succeed as the work our team will do to mature the preliminary and contract design."

Doug cautioned that the Coast Guard's recent downselect decision suggests that they are satisfied with the technical design of each competitor, as well as their capabilities and facilities, whether existing or planned. "The intent of the Phase I downselect was to find three designs and shipyards that fully meet the Coast Guard's

needs. They've done that, so for Phase II, that only leaves cost. Affordability will be critical to the success of the OPC Program."

The BIW team is expected to grow somewhat from the existing core team that developed the concept design and proposal. Engineering, design and planning work will take place in Bath, with support from our partners, L-3 Communications in New Jersey, and Navantia in Spain.

Scott Blackburn (D71), Director LCS and Program Development, said, "BIW is excited about this contract. It offers potential for great work and an expanded customer base. While the OPC program is very important for our future, it is critical to the strategic needs of the Coast Guard which plans to replace much of its existing fleet of medium endurance cutters. Some of these cutters were built in the 1960's and will have been in service nearly 60 years when the first OPC is available. This is an outstanding opportunity to deliver a Bath-built OPC class to the USCG."



A Bath-built Coast Guard cutter sailed for 76 years. The USCGS *Perseus*, left, built for the USCG was launched in April 1932. The cutter was transferred to the Navy during WWII, then returned to USCG service as a patrol craft until decommissioned in 1959. *Perseus* was sold to Circle Line Cruises in NYC where as *Circle Line XV*, it sailed another 49 years, including service as a rescue boat on September 11, 2001. Sister ship USCGS *Calypso* launched several months earlier, mirrored the *Perseus'* path of military and civilian service and was phased out of the Circle Line fleet in 2008, also after 76 years on the water.