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ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY SYSTEM CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Page 82

JUNEAU ACCESS

Page 38

AVIATION

ECONOMIC ENGINE & RURAL COMMUNITY LIFELINE

Page 52





GLOBAL DIVING & SALVAGE INC. By MATT SULLIVAN

Going beyond the beck and call — underwater

Operating on land in Alaska already poses a unique set of challenges, be they the extreme winters or isolated locations. Now imagine those underwater.

Meeting those challenges is the expertise of Global Diving & Salvage Inc., which provides marine construction, casualty response and offshore support. The company got its start in 1980 in the waters of Puget Sound, and since then, operations have expanded across the Pacific Northwest, California, the Gulf of Mexico and here in Alaska.

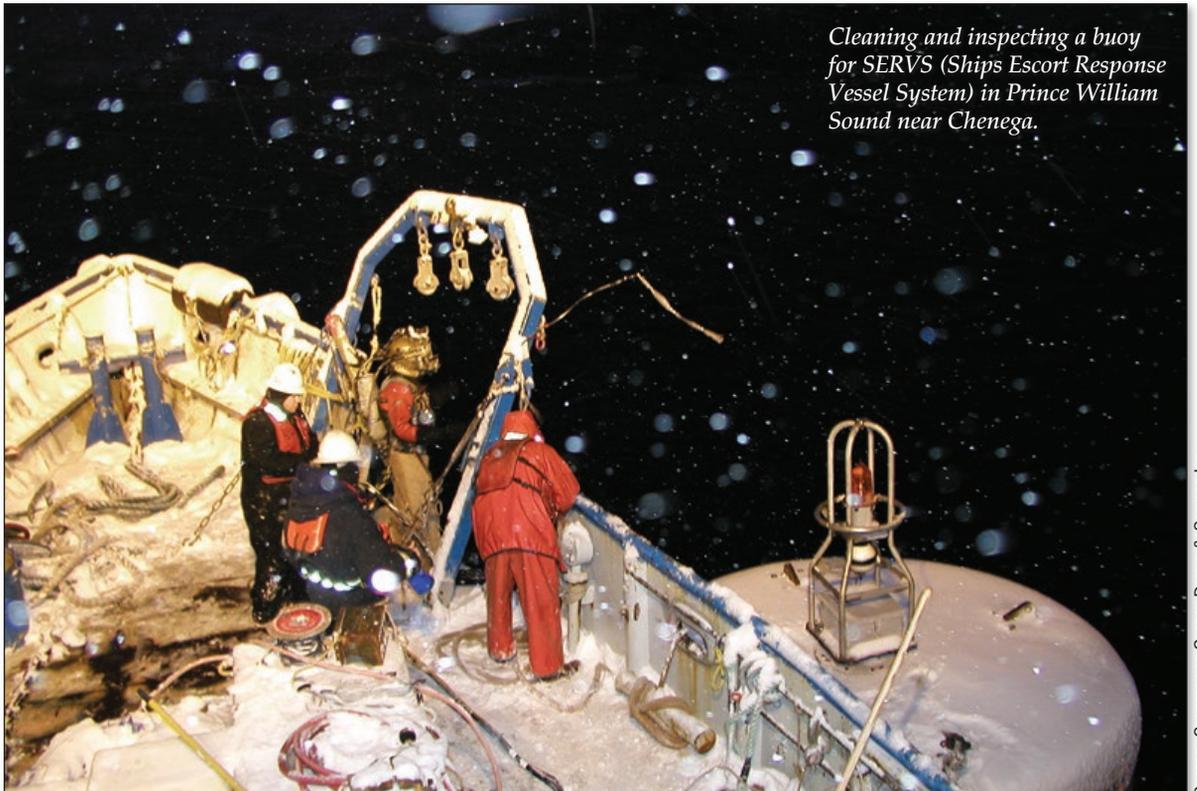
Though the company has actually been working in the state since the '80s, Global solidified its local presence in 2009 with the purchase of Offshore Divers. With that purchase, Alaska gained a diving and salvage company equipped with a logistics team and resources that span the continent.

"Our most common work in the state is work performed in support of the oil and gas industry,"



Divers install new messenger wire under the iced-over Kvichak River in Western Alaska.

explained Deirdre Gross, General Manager of the Alaska Region. "We perform inspections of structures and pipelines, installation of cathodic protection, salvage, emergency marine response and



Cleaning and inspecting a buoy for SERVS (Ships Escort Response Vessel System) in Prince William Sound near Chenega.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF GLOBAL DIVING & SALVAGE INC.

marine construction.” Those energy clients include Hilcorp, Alyeska, Furie and Kenai Drilling. Global’s 16 Alaska-based divers also provide support for construction companies completing dock work throughout the state.

“The market is always changing up here,” explained John Juettner, Global’s Diving Operations Manager in Alaska. “In years past the diving season was seven to eight months a year, now we’re conducting dive operations all 12 months.”

That busy schedule includes salvage jobs from the Aleutians to the North Slope to Prince William Sound. The remote locations can require ingenuity. For example a dive team was dispatched a site located outside Igiugig, in western Alaska, a four-man dive team ventured under the ice covering the Kvichak River to pull a messenger cable for Leducor Technologies Services. Strobe lights were inserted into holes in the ice to mark the cable’s path for the divers.

“Each project has a site-specific safety plan developed for the project,” Juettner said. “The purpose of that plan is to outlay the unique details of each site.” While some of the work is inherently hazardous — underwater cutting for example — the dangers aren’t always relegated to the sea. “We may have a job where one of the problems being remote is wildlife issues, such as bears,” Juettner added. “We did a job in Kodiak just the other day where we had a bear come through the project.”

Working in Cook Inlet also means diving in low to no visibility — also known as “blackwater,” which is the result of the inlet’s high concentration of silt and a rapid current. That’s familiar territory for Global’s divers, and it was the backdrop for one of the more intricate jobs Global has taken on in recent years when it responded to a mechanical failure on the Christy Lee oil platform in March 2012. The failure caused the north fender of the platform, which raised and lowered with the tide, to plunge into 80 feet of blackwater.

The platform is owned by Hilcorp, and, given the monetary stakes, Global’s breadth of resources proved invaluable, according to Pete LaPella, Hilcorp’s subsea/pipeline coordinator.

“I called up their vice president (of Casualty Response), told him what I needed, and he started making things



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TELECOMMUNICATIONS AT WORK THROUGHOUT ALASKA



A temporary fender is installed on the Christy Lee oil platform in Cook Inlet.

happen from Alaska to Seattle to the Gulf of Mexico," LaPella said. "I was the overall project manager, and Global had the lead in the salvage. Not just the salvage, but they also, while they were trying to figure out how to salvage this thing from the sea floor, privately put a plan in place to allow us to put a temporary floating dock in to allow the tankers to come in and out."

The plan involved installing a Flexi-float sectional barges that would compensate for the absence of a 96-foot long, 30-foot wide, 8-foot tall, 175-ton fender. The temporary fender needed to be in place before the next scheduled tanker arrived 17 days later. Global had it ready in 14.

"We didn't have to shut in oil production in Cook Inlet, which is huge," LaPella said. "That was kind of

beyond the expectation — we didn't know what could possibly be done."

Having previously located the damaged fender using sonar equipment, Global's divers returned to the site in July to retrieve it. Working with subcontractor Pacific Pile & Marine, the team pulled the fender from the sea floor and barged it to Nikiski for repairs. The temporary system was disassembled, and with the repaired fender reattached, the Christy Lee has been up and running at full speed since October 2012.

But even with these resources at their disposal, Juettner said Global benefits greatly from its AGC membership.

"The support we receive being an AGC member, we find invaluable," he said. "Working through the AGC allows us the ability to negotiate our rates with different labor groups, offering an even playing field in our industry. They also keep us up to date on the latest regulations, provide training assistance, and allow for a unified voice from the contracting community." 

Matt Sullivan is a writer and editor who lives in Anchorage.



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