

Coast Guard Working Toward Recapitalizing WCC Fleet

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The Coast Guard plans to release its fifth request for information (RFI) to industry in the coming months, as they continue to gather information on how best to recapitalize their dated waterways commerce cutter (WCC) fleet.

“This aging fleet, it is extremely important to our nation’s economy,” Aileen Sedmak, manager of the WCC program, said during a floor presentation at the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space exposition May 7.

The 35-ship fleet consists of three cutter types, an inland construction tender, a river buoy tender and an inland buoy tender. They primarily operate along the Mississippi River and Great Lakes region. The ships average 50 years of age and are responsible to making sure \$4.6 trillion for the nation’s economy per year is able to move freely in the inland waters.

In February, the service released an RFI asking for industry to gather information about the state of the market and current industrial capabilities to support pile-driving systems for the WCC program.

Sedmark said the recapitalization program is currently in the analyze-select phase, which includes collaborating with the Navy’s Naval Sea Systems Command to analyze needs and requirements.

"We are doing our due diligence," she said.

The acquisition program will cost over \$1 billion, and the exact number of cutters needed remains uncertain. Sedmark said they would like to have initial operational capability in fiscal 2024 and full operational capability by fiscal 2030.

"This is a very critical mission right now," she said.

Issues with the cutters currently include additional maintenance requirements and lost operational time because of it.

Industry representatives at the presentation asked a series of questions on production timelines, how many cutters may be in the fleet and additional requirements that may be needed on the cutters.

Sedmark said she was uncertain when a request for proposal would be issued or how many exact ships would be requested.