

Marinette Marine launches second research ship this year

Advertisement

Updated: Saturday, 13 Oct 2012, 9:52 PM CDT
Published : Saturday, 13 Oct 2012, 1:46 PM CDT

- Kelly Schlicht, FOX 11 News

MARINETTE - Another research boat makes a big splash at a Marinette shipyard.

It's the second research ship to launch from Marinette Marine Company this year.

The Research Vessel Sikuliaq will head for Alaska early next year.

"It's always incredibly exciting as the ship goes down the ways and rolls back nicely in the water," said Marinette Marine President Chuck Goddard.

A soggy crowd at Marinette Marine's shipyard cheered on Saturday, as the R/V Sikuliaq hit the chilly waters with a splash.

"We have been working on this for four decades," said Brian Rogers, chancellor of the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Researchers with the University of Alaska Fairbanks said they've worked with the National Science Foundation since 1973 to make the Sikuliaq happen.

Federal stimulus dollars funded the nearly \$140 million contract with Marinette Marine that brought this ship to fruition.

"To see this ship on the water is just wonderful," said Rogers.

Those who constructed this vessel said it has particular technology specific to the Arctic. It actually can cut through layers of new ice.

The ship's name, Sikuliaq, is therefore fitting. It means "young sea ice" in a native Alaskan language.

"It has the ability to go through three feet of new ice in places we have not been able to go before on longer voyages, host scientists, nearly two dozen scientists on board," said Rogers.

The Sikuliaq will benefit Arctic science research. But first it helped the workers at Marinette Marine. It was constructed while work had stalled on Navy contracts for combat ships.

"This program provided jobs and got us to sustain this wonderful workforce that we have here," said Goddard.

Marinette Marine also launched a fisheries research boat in June. And with multiple contracts now secured for future Littoral Combat Ships, Marinette Marine expects launches like this one twice a year for several years.

The Sikuliaq will spend the next year traveling from the Great Lakes, around the continent and through the Panama Canal. It will dock in Seward, Alaska, and its first research mission will begin in 2014.