

PHILADELPHIA BUSINESS JOURNAL

JUNE 13-19, 2008

VOL. 27, NO. 17

Hydro-Marine Construction thrives above, below water

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SPECIAL TO THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

HAINESPORT — One of the most important details to know about Hydro-Marine Construction Co. Inc. is that it's not a stand-alone entity.



Number 7

The Burlington County company is part of a troika of firms, with each specializing in a different aspect of marine construction and all three building on the work of the others.

The first-born company of Bill and Janet Castle's small conglomerate was W.J. Castle P.E. & Associates, a marine structural engineering firm they formed in 1983.

Hydro-Marine Construction Co. Inc. came along in 1997. Two years later, they created Simplified Bridge Systems Inc., which specializes in the custom design and prefabrication of small to midsize bridges for private and public agencies.



Janet Castle

Altogether, the group of companies operate as The Castle Group, and if one division of the group has been successful, as Hydro-Marine has, it owes at least part of the credit to the other companies in the troika.

That's because Hydro-Marine's growth secret is synergy.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HYDRO-MARINE

Hydro-Marine's handiwork includes the dismantling of a damaged fender timber system under the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge.



Steel pile reinforcement dock repair.



Cutting a rebar at Beesleys Point Bridge.

"We were doing a lot of inspections, underwater evaluations and marine structure designs with our original company," Janet Castle said. "We were

contracting out a lot of work [and] we figured, why not form our own marine construction company and have our own people do the work? We tried

HYDRO-MARINE: For efficiency, the company works in concert with two sister firms

as hard as we could to get as many contracts as we could. Small contracts opened the door to bigger contracts and here we are.”

‘What we can offer a client is a form of one-stop shopping.’

Janet Castle
The Castle Group

Last year, Hydro-Marine reported revenue of \$2.6 million, compared with \$958,000 in 2005 — an increase of 172.1 percent — and profits of more than 15 percent. It landed a place at No. 7 on this

year’s list of South Jersey’s 25 fastest-growing private companies.

Janet feels the combination of three companies puts Hydro-Marine and The Castle Group ahead of the competition.

“What we can offer a client is a form of one-stop shopping,” she said. “We can offer divers, engineers, designers. Hydro-Marine has its special projects, but it can always get an assist from the other two companies.”

Hydro-Marine is finishing up on a dock-and-pile-repair project for Chester-based manufacturer Kimberly Clark Corp. that began last year.

“Having it all in one spot — the engineers, divers, designers, everything you need — is a big plus,” said Michael Dellaquilla, project engineer for dock and pile repairs for Kimberly Clark. “Their people are easy to work with. They do excellent work on the site and get the job done. It is a plus not to have to work with multiple contractors on a project.”

He said that even though Hydro-Marine wasn’t a large firm, the combination of other Castle Group companies make it very efficient. “We are about done with the project they have been working on, but I wouldn’t hesitate to consider using them again,” said Dellaquilla.

Hydro-Marine’s signature is all over the Greater Delaware Valley and beyond. One might walk by the firm’s work, walk over it, drive past it, watch a train travel past it or look out a window at it.

For instance, the company removed debris around the partially collapsed Pier 34 in Philadelphia and dismantled a damaged fender timber system

under the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge.

Hydro-Marine has also been involved in projects around Penn’s Landing in Philadelphia, as well as the anchors for a new walkway on Fish House Cove along the Delaware River in Pennsauken, N.J.

Currently the company is doing a lot of projects in the Delaware River.

“We seem to be doing a lot of work with bulkheads these days,” said Janet. “We are working with clients on projects that include replacing some wood bulkheads with composite material. It will be interesting to see how the economics with these materials work out.”

Hydro-Marine replaced the bulkhead at the Bay Head Yacht Club, repaired the abutment of an Amtrak Bridge in Philadelphia and conducted inspection and repair recommendations at the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge over the Hudson River in upstate New York, where strong currents and poor visibility underwater required use of the firm’s special 30-foot diving boat.

Bill and Janet believe infrastructure repair will be an area with future growth for them. Hydro-Marine has already performed substantial contract work for Connectiv Power Delivery of New Jersey. Over a three-year period it has repaired four breaks to Connectiv’s armored submarine cables. It performed similar repairs for Jersey Central Power & Light when a submarine power cable broke south of the Route 37 Bridge in Atlantic County. That project extended over a five-week period and involved reburying of 900 feet of new submarine cable.



Bulkheads, such as this one at Bay Head Yacht Club, are one of Hydro-Marine’s project mainstays.

UP CLOSE

COMPANY: Hydro-Marine Construction Co. Inc.

LOCATION: 1345 Route 38, Hainesport, N.J. 08036

TOP EXECUTIVE: Bill and Janet Castle, co-founders

DESCRIPTION: Marine construction and infrastructure repair

FOUNDED: 1997

STARTUP CAPITAL: \$2,500

PROFITABILITY: More than 15 percent.

REVENUE GROWTH 2005-2007: 172.1 percent