

Customer Success - Webber Marine

Based in Cordova Alaska, Bill Webber is a man for all seasons. During the spring and summer months he is a commercial salmon fisherman and during the fall and winter he is a high-end boat builder. This serial entrepreneur is the owner and proprietor of both Gulkana Seafoods Direct and Webber Marine.

Webber is at home on a boat in more ways than one. He has been involved in commercial salmon fishing for 37 years, and has operated his own boat since he was 11 years old. As a commercial fisherman, Webber sells his catch direct to customers in the U.S. domestic marketplace. For 37 years he has fished on the Copper River Delta, which is a well-managed and sustainable fishery that has helped to keep the small nearby fishing community prosperous.

His fishing exploits have landed him on the pages of some of the most respected local fishing publications including Alaska Fisherman's Journal (July 2004), The Fisherman's News (July 2004), and most recently on the cover of Pacific Fishing Magazine (Aug. 2004). He was also sponsored to attend Slow Foods Terra Madre event in Turin, Italy in October 2004 representing the Alaskan salmon industry.

When the fishing season ends, Webber moves ashore to his 6800 square foot shop, where he works as a custom boat designer and builder. He typically builds one large boat (in the \$200,000 - \$300,000 price range) per year. It all began in the early 1980's when Webber decided to use his down time to build a boat for himself. Word of his boat building abilities spread quickly in this small close-knit community. It wasn't long before his neighbors started submitting requests for similar boats. Webber Marine was launched. In the early years, most of his boats were constructed using fiberglass, but he has been constructing his boats almost exclusively in aluminum since 1989.

In order to further his progression from hobby into a successful business operator, Webber evaluated many tools and eventually purchased CADKEY (now KeyCreator) as his computer-aided design solution. "In a small community like Cordova, a company's reputation for quality is paramount, so we were very thorough when it was time to select a CAD tool," stated Webber. "We found that KeyCreator offered the power to build large vessels, the flexibility to integrate with other CAD tools and, most importantly, offered a way to deliver the quality workmanship that our customers demand. We were fortunate enough to find all of that in one tool."

For his most recent project in 2004, Webber constructed a 37-foot workboat for the U.S. Forest Service Cordova Ranger District. This project was his most challenging project to date. It was not only the largest boat he ever built, but also it was also his first non-commercial vessel and his first "cabin forward" boat. (Previously he had specialized in rear cabin boats, which are specifically designed to take advantage of the region's unique fishing environment.) These boats are referred to as "Bow Pickers" as the fisherman sets and picks his net from the bow of the boat instead of the stern.

Webber's project slate for 2005 brings him back to custom designing a new 34' x 12' commercial fishing boat for a local Cordova fisherman. This boat is some what of a departure from the fishing boat builds from the past four years, that being the boats have been twin jet powered vessels and the new design for 2005 is a single jet drive. A big single jet drive. This boat will be propelled by 14" Doen jet from Australia. The engine selection will come later in the year as many of the engine companies are expanding their engine line-up into IMO Tier II compliancy. As many of the engine companies provide CAD data to designer/builders today, Bill has modeled three different engine options for this new build and his customer is still evaluating engine options. This new boat will be built or welded up in the 1st quarter of 2005 and completed in the 4th quarter.

"When you get a complicated project, you need to have the right CAD tool. If you do you can't help but feel well-prepared and capable," said Bill Webber. "We put a lot of faith in our software and in turn our customers have a lot of confidence in us and really appreciate the design and fore thought that is put into each one of our boats from the prospective view of a fisherman/builder."