Dredge Edward S. "Ned" Reed

New Orleans, Louisiana

It's a dirty job, but somebody's got to do it. A tough, hardy little powerhouse, the Dredge Edward S. "Ned" Reed works up and down the Mississippi River on the east bank to provide access to the cruise terminals, where up to 5,000 people per cruise are likely to see him hard at work adjacent the River Walk of New Orleans.

In order for freight containers and cruise lines to have access to the Port of New Orleans, the Port Authority must maintain reliable depths at each of the wharves. The Mississippi leaves a natural accumulating deposit of sand and silt on the east side of the river that, if not removed on a regular basis, would make that side of the river inoperable. The Port had previously been contracting the dredge work, but discovered the costs had become insurmountable.

Replacing the A. Robert Bleakley Dredge, Dredge Reed was christened in 2010 after the post-Katrina years showed a marked increase in freight and cruise line traffic,as well as greater opportunities for commerce and wharf accessibility. The manufacturer was tasked to build the Reed, a bigger, more powerful dredge to meet the challenge of the job.

The Mississippi River, dubbed the "Big Muddy," has a high salt content at the mouth of the river is full of rough sand. That, paired with the abrasion of fast moving water, make an extremely harsh and corrosive environment. Hot-dip galvanized (HDG) steel is the only corrosion protection system strong enough to withstand the abuses of life on the Big Muddy. With zinc-iron alloy layers of up to 250 DPN hardness protecting the steel beneath, the durable zinc coating is more difficult to penetrate than the substrate steel it protects. Such strength is required on a watercraft that will continually be exposed to rough handling, moisture, and chemicals in its day-to-day operations.

New to galvanizing, the manufacturer worked closely with the galvanizer to ensure all steel would galvanize successfully and on time. The dredge had to be ready for its christening in August, so communication and turnaround time of the galvanized elements were critical. As hot-dip galvanizing is an indoor, factory controlled process, the galvanizer was able to provide a customized turnaround to met production schedules. All stairs, ladders, walkways, work platforms, and handrails of the dredge were galvanized, totaling 10 tons. Upon completion of the project, the manufacturer was so impressed with the quality of galvanized steel, he rewrote their specifications to include HDG.

Use of galvanized steel on the dredge is having an impact on the entire workboat market operating on America's rivers and waterways. Owner/operators and government agencies are searching for durable, cost-effective methods of corrosion protection in this harsh, abrasive environment, and galvanized steel is the ideal solution.

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