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Steven King - TIGER roars at Quonset, marine activity flourishes

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The \$22.3 million federal Department of Transportation TIGER grant - awarded to Quonset Point in 2010 - was widely seen as having the potential to be a catalyst for significant economic development initiatives at Quonset Point. Now, that potential is being realized.

In securing the TIGER grant, U.S. senator Jack Reed and the entire R.I. Congressional delegation envisioned it as a powerful tool to establish Quonset a national leader in renewable energy manufacturing and a participant in the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) Marine Highway Northeast Corridor. The project is on track for completion in 2012.

The implementation of the grant is going full throttle and major infrastructure assets are being added to what is already there. Quonset is already home to robust rail traffic, especially through the auto import business...but this work will allow for more kinds of activity. The port rail work is creating a spur to an existing warehouse facility and improving access to on-dock rail as well as to the existing spur servicing the Seafreeze, Ltd. fish processing and export business.

With the TIGER grant work as an exciting backdrop and harbinger of good things to come in the future, business in the present seems to be defying the odds of a sluggish economy. The marine-based businesses at Quonset point are bustling.

Mill Creek Marine's new dry stack storage facility and marina at Quonset is open for business. The one-stop service center is the areas only factory authorized service center for the six major outboards and inboards. From repowering and fiberglass repairs to electronics and accessory installation, Mill Creek Marine offers a full scope of technical and mechanical services. Each client's boat is stored inside a fully enclosed, insulated, secure building. When a client wants to take their boat out, they simply call the marina. The boat will be in the water, ready to go when they arrive.

The summer season is off to a terrific start for Vineyard Fast Ferry. Traveling from the Ocean State, via Quonset Point, to Martha's Vineyard has never been faster - or more comfortable. Reaching speeds in excess of 33 knots (or 40 mph), The Millennium is a state-of-the-art catamaran featuring first class amenities, including a full-service bar, plush-cushioned interior seating and air conditioning.

Quonset Point is also the home of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Okeanos Explorer vessel. The research vessel is berthed at Pier One in the Port of Davisville, adjacent to an 8,280 s/f building that houses the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations.

Another marine business that continues to prosper is Seafreeze, Ltd., the largest producer of sea frozen fish on the East Coast.

The company supplies sea frozen and land frozen fish to a worldwide range of markets, including bait products to domestic and international fleets. Seafreeze has two large freezer trawlers, plus a

cold storage and trawler service facility for its own boats as well as other freezer trawlers. Its facility, with both deepwater port and rail access, is the most modern of its kind in the region.

Long recognized for its excellence in marine construction, the Quonset Point-based Specialty Diving Services, Inc., also specializes in commercial diving, marine structure rehabilitation, and new heavy marine construction. Established in 1985 when Nicholas Tanionos and Ronald Archambault formed a partnership to start a commercial diving company, SDS, Inc. acts as both a general contractor and a subcontractor. The start-up operation has now grown into a thriving business employing more than 50 workers at Quonset Point.

The Quonset Business Park is home to some 168 companies, employing 8,000 people. Over the past five years, 2,700 new jobs have been created there. It is estimated that an additional 500 to 800 new jobs will be created as a direct result of the TIGER grant.

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