

Ecoshield – a hard option for US inland waterways

Shallow inland waterways in the US present unique challenges for shipping. Brown waters, packed with sand, silt and other debris, create additional stress on hull coatings and corrosion and cavitation on ship hulls. In such circumstances, a hard coating is often a better option than one offering linear polishing.

ZF Marine Krimpen, a manufacturer of azimuth thrusters, many of which are supplied to US-based customers, has

coated a number of these with Hydrex's Ecoshield to reduce wear-and-tear. 'We were looking to improve the protection of the thruster's underwater components against damages due to the debris common in shallow draught inland waterways, particularly the Mississippi, as well as to prevent damage due to cavitation and corrosion,' said Frank van der Vegt, area sales manager Commercial Craft Thruster Systems at ZF Marine.

applications such as harbour tugs and passenger vessels.'

Ecoshield is already a common choice for ship rudders with 400 reference installations, but Hydrex has noted a marked increase in applications for tunnel thrusters and gearboxes. After a series of patch tests proved successful ZF Marine began applying the hard-coating to all underwater areas of the thruster. Since then, Ecoshield has been applied to the ZF 1000hp azimuth thrusters installed on 12 tow and pushboats operating in US waters.

According to Hof, the company is also seeing increasing interest from original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). 'Ecoshield safeguards propulsion systems and steering gear against cavitation and corrosion damage throughout the vessel's service life, which can increase significantly the operational life of rudders and thrusters. We have Ecoshield-coated rudders and thrusters that have not needed recoating after more than five years operating in some of the harshest marine environments.'

'We offer the Ecoshield-coated thruster as an option, but it is a very good solution for increasing the life of thruster installations aboard tugs and pushboats operating in shallow waters,' said van der Vegt. 'They are less prone to damage, reducing maintenance and operational costs. We see these benefits not only with the towboat application, but also other

Hard coatings gain ground on azimuth thrusters

