

[Festive Pontoon Boat Transforms Into Effective Work Space](#)

Pontoon boats aren't for partying and puttering around the lake anymore. These unique vessels have earned a reputation as some of the most versatile and rugged work boats. Boats that easily adapt to various and sometimes dangerous tasks including fire fighting, commercial recreation, wildlife protection, marina construction, fish and game research and management, and marine demolition or construction.

Pontoon boats, particularly Chinook Boats from Metalite Industries, have earned respect because design specifications can be tailored to payload capacity, work environment and weight demands. Width, length and buoyancy can all be modified to meet working requirements. And bow and stern shapes can be adjusted to allow for the best utilization of surface space and work requirements.

In short, each pontoon boat user starts off with a platform that is designed and honored for its durability and flotation stability. But the end product requires the customization of everything from riggings, cleats, tie-downs, steering and enclosures - cabins, tarps or canopies to make this boat yours. All based on the simple or complex nature of the enterprise.

Ken Hagman's firm, Copper Bay Construction, has been a fixture on Idaho's Priest Lake since 1977. He ties the increased use of his pontoon boats to the demand for greater longevity of marine construction. "We're using more aluminum framing and composite decking. Because of that, transporting equipment and materials to the site has become much more critical over the years."

One line of Hagman's work is to remove damaged boat lifts and replace them with fresh new equipment. Hagman wanted to make the job more efficient, so he went looking for a large high-speed pontoon boat that could readily move and install heavy machinery. He chose a Chinook Pontoon Boat that was built to his customization and spec by Metalite Industries, a subsidiary of NewMax Incorporated. The 12 x 32-foot pontoon boat has an enormous 15,000-lb capacity and carries a gantry crane that can lift and position 8,000 to 12,000-lb boat lifts. The speed and size of his new boat saves him time and labor costs. "With it being 12 feet wide, which is extremely wide for its size, it allows us to deliver and set boat lifts with a two-man crew. As opposed to the old method, a slow moving boat that needed four people to jockey and set the lift in place."

In fact, Hagman calculated that since he purchased the Chinook Pontoon Boat five years ago, half the cost has been retrieved in labor savings along. Even further savings have been calculated in as fuel costs rise. the boat's four-stroke engines operate at one-third the cost of powering the large and heavy semi-displacement work boat Copper Bay previously used.

"We've been very impressed with the performance of the boat. It's common to travel fifteen miles over water to get to a job site. Most work boats are semi-displacement vessels that plow through the water at a slow pace. The Chinook Pontoon work boats incorporate an angular, flat pontoon design that has a higher displacement and better surface planning capability. The design provides better hydro-dynamics to allow the vessel to plane on the water's surface, where it can move quickly and more efficiently. We specifically wanted this boat so it would save money in labor costs by getting people to the job faster. We've had a lot of competitors, some who come from five hundred miles away, looking at the boat for design ideas for their operations," he said.

Hagman's Copper Bay Construction crew is working on replacing Priest Lake's oldest marina. A new breakwater will be installed and a hundred boat slips will be replaced. Full attention will be given to the on-shore construction of a bar and restaurant when the marine aspects of the project are completed in latter part of 2008.

Hagman had his Chinook Pontoon Boat built with aluminum ramps that attach to the front of his boat. This allows the crew to transport and disembark mini excavators easily. The machinery is needed for the on-shore work that must be done during the winter months, when Priest, a reservoir lake, water level is lowered. Snow many arrive in early November and remain on the ground as late as April. Nevertheless, The pontoon boats are still working hard in the water year round.

Though Hagman keeps his people and boats busy throughout the year, when the season allows he's not averse to a little fun. "In the summer, we throw an annual crew party for our twenty-five employees. We turn the pontoon into a floating party barge. We festoon it out and cruise around the lake, waving at everybody. We've had in excess of 30 people on that boat," he said.

About the Author

Chinook Boats is the premiere manufacturer of [pontoon boats](#) and [work boats](#) for a many different uses. Each boat is custom designed and built of top quality materials to meet the the customer's needs. Chinook also builds leisure craft pontoon boats.