



Business

Marine equipment makes waves at three-day Ocean TechExpo

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James Rall, of Hydroacoustics Inc., of New York, explains uses for the Proteus ROV roaming ocean vehicle, used for exploration with cameras and lights. The ROV is controlled by a joystick.

The Providence Journal / Steve Szydowski

PROVIDENCE — Jason Cedro clicked on a computer mouse at the Rhode Island Convention Center yesterday and on the screen appeared a live, gull's-eye view of Narragansett Bay, from a camera perched miles to the south at Beavertail State Park, in Jamestown.

He clicked again to order the camera, by wireless connection, to pan the Bay, then focus more closely on a power boat motoring across the water beneath a blue sky.

From the same screen, Cedro was also able to obtain a live view of the Bay's activity from Prudence Island, another from the area around the Pell Bridge in Newport.

Cedro is sales manager for Smiths Detection — LiveWave, a Middletown company that provides electronic detection and other security services mainly to government agencies in the United States.

His company was among 70 businesses and other exhibitors displaying their products and services at the three-day

Ocean TechExpo, which opened yesterday.

The business-to-business trade show is, in effect, a marketplace at which technology companies and others show their products and services to scientists, engineers and technical directors. The expo is sponsored by Marine Technology Reporter, a magazine published by New Wave Media, a marine publishing company based in New York.

It is the first time the annual show has been held in Providence, said publisher John C. O'Malley. "This area of the country is a hub for marine technology, and Providence, we felt, was the ideal location for this exposition," he said at the Rhode Island Convention Center as the show got under way.

The expo was established "so that companies and organizations can get exposure to the latest technology serving the marine industry," O'Malley said.

The show also allows Rhode Island's marine technology companies and related organizations a chance to exhibit their work, said John Riendeau, business development manager for defense and homeland security at the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation.

Among them is Smiths Detection, which is part of the global technology business Smiths Group PLC, based in the United Kingdom. And one of the company's projects is the remote video-surveillance and communications system now in place in southern portions of Narragansett Bay.

The project is the result of an \$856,000 grant that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security awarded to the state in 2005. "It was a pilot project by the Department of Homeland Security, which wanted to see a wireless communications system demonstrated on water," Riendeau said.

The Middletown branch of Smiths Detection, which has 20 employees, won the state contract to install and implement the system — the "Rhode Island Port Security Wireless Communications Network" — which became fully operational last year, according to Riendeau and Cedro.

The system is used mainly by the state Department of Environmental Management, but also by the Coast Guard, the Rhode Island State Police and other law-enforcement organizations, Cedro and Riendeau said.

Among other things, the system is used to monitor commercial shipping activity on the Bay, Riendeau said. It was also used as a security tool during the recent Tall Ships festival in Newport, he said.

Cedro said he hoped to expand the network's capacity over time. It is possible, for example, that the system's reach could one day be extended to northern portions of the Bay, Riendeau said.

The expo is geared to businesses, not consumers, said O'Malley and Rob Howard, the show director. By the time the event ends tomorrow, they said, up to 1,300 people from 25 countries will have attended.

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