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HYSUCAT USA

IN THE MAKING: Hysucat USA will initially produce four designs at its facility in Bath: 25- and (pictured) 30-foot Sport Fishers and 23- and 28-foot Rigid Inflatable boats (RIB). The facility is being rehabilitated through a North Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority.

New boatbuilding operation moves ahead with grant

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BATH — A state Building Reuse grant has cemented plans to establish a new boat-building company in Beaufort County.

The \$158,000 North Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority grant to Hysucat USA was announced this week by Gov. Pat McCrory. One of 17 grants totaling \$4.9 million statewide, the money will be used to support the rehabilitation and reuse of a 20,000-square-foot building that was formerly a Flanders Filters facility, but has been vacant for over a decade, according to Beaufort County Economic Development Director Marty Johnson. The building is located on N.C. Highway 92 East, just east of Bath, in the Highway 92 East Industrial Park.

The Bath facility is now home to Hysucat's U.S. boatbuilding operation; its European operations are being relocated from South Africa to Turkey, Johnson said. The company will be producing a 25- and 30-foot center console Sport Fisher, and 23- and 28-foot Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB). With fiberglass hulls and hydrofoil systems, the boats are marketed as delivering higher speed with less horsepower, stable rides and efficient fuel consumption for recreational, military/law enforcement and commercial use, according to the Hysucat website.

Johnson said Bath as a location of operations came to Hysucat through its operations manager Ken Comfort, who lives in Bath.

Johnson said upgrades to the circa-1960 building include roofing, lighting, flooring and painting. Hysucat's initial operations will include 14 new jobs.

"One of the reasons why we're here is because the waterway is right here," Comfort said. "The labor force is awesome in the area, and we're centrally located for my dealer network, up and down the East Coast."

"I think it's a very good thing. It uses an existing building; it employs people who have existing boatbuilding skills in the area; it's located in the east part of county that needs the jobs, so I think it hits a number of things," Johnson said. "There are plans to expand productions and build a 40-foot boat in mid-2017, if all goes well. And that could lead to the creation of additional jobs."

The Mid-East Commission produced the RIA grant application and Hysucat will match the \$158,000 and more, for a total capital investment of \$381,500.