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N.S. company lands federal contract

Deal allows Great Village firm to improve its boat-detection system

By **MICHAEL GORMAN**
Truro Bureau

As a Great Village company continues to expand its horizons, a new federal government contract will see it help make Canada's marine borders a little

bit smaller.

It was announced Monday that **Ocean Sonics and Instrument Concepts**, based in the Colchester County community, won a \$297,000 contract through the Canadian Innovation Commercialization Program.

The contract will see advancements with the company's icListen device used to detect and notify border security staff of boating activity and transmit data to off-site locations.

Desirée Stockermans, operations manager for Ocean Sonics

and Instrument Concepts, said the contract is the company's first business dealing with the federal government and facilitates the ability to develop a new product.

The icListen incorporates a hydrophone that detects sound

underwater while newly developed software is able to determine and categorize the size of a detected boat. The company also developed a special buoy that keeps the device upright at the bottom of the ocean and a radio system at the surface that transmits the collected data.

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Contract

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In the past, customers have mainly used the icListen to examine interactions between human sound and mammals, such as whales, and to monitor mammal sounds. Such information is useful for plotting shipping lanes or recording the sounds of animals rarely heard or seen by humans. The device is capable of sending data via text message to a cellphone.

The boat traffic monitoring aspect is new for the company.

"This program got us into a whole new market," said Stockermans, who expects more business diversity to come both through government and the private sector.

"We actually sent a shipment of these to Vancouver that (arrived Monday)," she said.

"They're going to deploy them out near Vancouver and we already have several government departments and environmental monitoring companies that are going to come out and watch a demonstration of it and we've already sold units to a company in Europe, as well."

The contract also means good things for the company's ability to grow.

"We're looking at hiring more people, and I think a lot of that comes from this program."

At the moment, the company employs seven people full time and two part time. Stockermans said they're hiring a new person this week and looking to hire someone for accounting and advertising, and someone for marketing, too.

"After that, it will be back to engineers and computer science people."

That's exactly the point of the program.

In a news release announcing the contact, Public Works and Government Services Minister Rona Ambrose said "kick-starting Canadian businesses to get their innovative products and services from the lab to the marketplace" via government contracts can help companies expand and break into new markets.

"We understand that helping our businesses expand and succeed directly benefits our workers and our families by creating jobs and prosperity."

(mgorman@herald.ca)