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Propulsion Report > With Jim Barron

BANKS IS BACK

It has been a long time since we heard anything from the marine side of California-based Gale Banks Engineering (bankspower.com), best known for its power-boosting aftermarket equipment for diesel- and gasoline-powered vehicles. Back in the 1960s and '70s, Banks' high-performance marine engines had set numerous records. Now, some 30 years later, Banks is returning to the water in a big way with a hopped-up version of the General Motors 6.6L (403-cid) V-8 Duramax 6600 diesel.

The Duramax 6600 diesel has a stock rating of 368 hp in the heavy-duty Chevy Silverado and GMC Sierra pickups, but currently Banks is pulling 1200 ponies from this engine in drag-racing applications. However, the Banks Marine Sequential Super-Turbo diesel is somewhat more tame than the drag-racing version, though no less spectacular in its design.

Debuted in Orlando, Fla., in late 2009, this marinized diesel features a powerful sixth-generation Eaton TVS supercharger topping off twin, water-cooled turbochargers.

According to Banks, this combines the best of two boost systems for lightning-like throttle response (even out of the hole) and the broadest possible powerband on the water. The systems are seamlessly controlled by



■ Much of the technology that the Banks Engineering race team used to set various diesel drag-racing records is being brought to the water in the form of the company's new marine diesel V-8, the Sequential Super-Turbo engine.

Banks/Bosch electronics.

The Banks Super-Turbo Diesel easily cranks out in excess of 600 hp at 3800 rpm, and the horsepower can be boosted to 1000 with the addition of a nitrous-oxide system.

By way of comparison, Volvo Penta also employs a combination supercharger/turbocharger on some of its diesels, although Volvo's system is far less radical than the Banks package.

The Banks engine also has water-cooled manifolds and risers, and Bosch common-rail direct injection. The Gale Banks marinized version is the only GM factory-authorized marine iteration of this engine available.

Though pricing was not released, the Banks Marine Sequential Super-Turbo

diesel likely will be cost prohibitive for most readers. But as with a Lamborghini, you can't help but stop and admire this exotic and elite marine diesel.

What's more, it is through such performance-inspired development that improvements trickle down to stock, factory engines. I will keep my eye on this one.

OTHER POWER PLAYS

I recently had the chance to attend IBEX (International BoatBuilders' Exhibition and Conference), a trade show in Miami for the boat-building industry, and several items caught my eye.

In the propulsion realm, both Honda and Suzuki displayed their new 60-hp models. A test of the new Suzuki 60 ("Lean, Mean

Suzu") appeared in the January 2010 issue, and a test of the Honda 60 will be featured later this year.

Also at IBEX, MerCruiser displayed its 8.2L (502-cid) big-block V-8 (which we covered in a previous issue), and confirmed that the 8.1L (496-cid) block was being discontinued, as GM will no longer be building the big-block. The 8.2L has been around for several years and has been used primarily in commercial vehicles.

Merc also reported that it buys just the basic 8.2L block from GM and adds the external components, such as heads, manifolds and internal components from suppliers such as Edelbrock and others. Besides the basic block, the engine is essentially manufactured and assembled at the MerCruiser plant in Stillwater, Okla.

To continue supplying big-block V-8s, Volvo Penta has made arrangements to stockpile sufficient 8.1L blocks to see it through the 2010 model year. In addition, the new Volvo Penta OceanX drive won an Innovation Award from the National Marine Manufacturers Association for its advanced corrosion-resistant coating and the inclusion of sensors in the gearcase and bellows areas to warn of water intrusion. ⚡

Senior Technical Field Editor Jim Barron is our cornerstone freelance contributor. Learn more about Jim at TrailerBoats.com.