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Heidenreich dipping its toes into aframax sector

Connecticut-based Heidenreich Marine (Heidmar) has left a big footprint on the Atlantic Basin panamax market with its Star Tankers pool. It now appears to be dipping a big toe into aframaxes. Heidmar is operating three aframaxes belonging to George Economou's Drytank of Greece, a Star pool member, and is scheduled to add a fourth in March. They are separate from the five aframaxes under the control of its US Gulf lightering subsidiary, Heidenreich Lightering Services Inc (HLSI). "We've become more interested in the aframax market and it's an area where we are probably going to do more," said Heidmar boss Per Heidenreich. "It obviously is more relevant now because of our lightering business but we also have an interest in non-lightering aframaxes because we think they complement our panamax business." He added: "The two markets follow each other pretty closely. A number of our Star members also own aframaxes." Heidmar operates Drytank's 96,000-dwt Tsunami (built 1992) and Pink Sands (built 1993) and is in the process of taking delivery of the 97,000-dwt Corcovado (built 1990) out of drydocking in Asia. It is scheduled to take in the 97,000-dwt Tamara (built 1990) in March. It has used the latter two previously as lightering tankers. Heidenreich says Heidmar could operate an aframax "mini-pool" with as few as five or six ships. "But if you're getting into contract business, it would obviously need to be larger than that," he said. Heidmar has assembled a fleet of some 40 panamaxes through Star, easily the largest market share in the Atlantic Basin. It has faced more of a struggle in the products sector but now has the Dorado Tankers pool up to 20. It has no separate name for its aframax dealings, simply marketing them under Heidmar. HLSI is the newest player in the Houston lightering scene and still by far the smallest but it aims to win market share from established players American Eagle Tankers (AET) and Skaugen PetroTrans.