Heartland Fabrication

Brownsville, Pennsylvania · Monongahela River, Mile 57.5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heartland Fabrication Announces Multi-Year Investment to Modernize Its Brownsville, PA Shipyard and Add ~150+ Skilled Jobs in Fayette County, PA

Plant capacity expansion strengthens American-made barge manufacturing capability to help meet the replacement needs of an aging inland hopper barge fleet

BROWNSVILLE, PA — September 21, 2026 — Heartland Fabrication, LLC today announced a phased, multi-year capital investment of approximately $60 million to modernize and expand its shipyard on the Monongahela River in Brownsville, Pennsylvania. The program will add an estimated 150+ new skilled manufacturing positions in Fayette County, PA and increase the shipyard's annual production capability from 180 inland hopper barges per year today to as many as 280 per year once the work is complete.

Construction and equipment installation will proceed in phases through the end of 2027, with the full 280-barge annual capability available beginning in 2028. Actual annual production will continue to be set by customer demand, steel pricing, and market conditions, just as it is today.

"This investment is about capability and about people — having a modern American shipyard ready to replace the barges this country is going to lose to age over the next decade, and having the skilled craftspeople here in Brownsville, PA to build them," said Brian Mueller, Owner and Chief Executive Officer of Heartland Companies, Inc. "For over 20 years, we have built to the needs of our customers and the inland hopper barge market."

Responding to an Aging Inland Fleet

The U.S. inland hopper barge fleet is the oldest on record. Industry data indicates the average covered hopper is nearly 19 years old against a typical 30-year service life, and that retirements are expected to run at approximately 800 to 1,000 barges per year over the next five years as vessels built during the construction booms of the late 1990's and 2000's reach the end of their useful lives.

Heartland Fabrication is one of two builders of inland hopper barges in the United States. Two other inland hopper barge shipyards closed in 2017 and 2018, removing a substantial share of the nation's historical barge-building capability. The Brownsville, PA investment is intended to help the industry keep pace with anticipated replacement demand.

"This is the largest investment in the facility, equipment, and our workforce in the history of the Company," said Ted Stilgenbauer, President and Chief Operating Officer of Heartland Fabrication. "We build to order. What this does is make sure that when an operator needs to replace a 30-year-

old hopper barge, there is an American shipyard with the people, the equipment, and the ability to produce the highest quality barges in America."

Skilled Jobs and On-Site Training in Fayette County, PA

Heartland Fabrication currently employs approximately 410 skilled workers in Brownsville, PA. The expansion is expected to add ~150+ additional positions across the full range of shipyard trades, including welders, fitters, machine operators, fabricators, industrial painters, crane operators, material handlers, quality control inspectors, and production supervision.

The company trains its workforce on site. New hires enter a structured eight-week curriculum delivered by three full-time instructors, followed by continued investment in advanced certification and skills development as employees progress in their careers.

- ~150+ new positions in Brownsville, PA and Fayette County, PA
- Eight-week structured onboarding curriculum with three full-time, on-site instructors
- Ongoing advanced training and certification as craftspeople advance
- New shipping and receiving, final weld, barge completion, and paint facilities; automated structural and robotic welding lines; steelyard and river infrastructure upgrades

American Steel. American Built.

Barges built in Brownsville, PA are constructed from American-made steel. A single hopper barge contains roughly 340 tons of steel, and the shipyard processes over 60,000 tons of domestic steel annually today. The expansion will increase that draw on American mills, supporting steel producers, fabricators, and suppliers across the region.

"The steel comes from American mills, the training happens here in Brownsville, PA, and the barges are built by American hands," Mueller said. "We believe we build the best inland hopper barges in America."

About Heartland Fabrication, LLC

Heartland Fabrication, LLC operates a barge manufacturing facility in Brownsville, Pennsylvania, on the Monongahela River at Mile 57.5. Acquired in 2005 and rebuilt over two decades with more than $50 million of investment, the yard produced 182 barges in 2025 and employs approximately 410 skilled workers today. Heartland Fabrication is part of Heartland Companies, Inc., a vertically integrated inland marine organization that builds, owns, leases, and operates barges on the U.S. inland waterway system.

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