CLAIMS:

~~*What is claimed is:*~~

1. A support member for supporting one or more elongated members, comprising:

a body having a longitudinal centerline and a latitudinal centerline; and

at least four coplanar support arms extending from the body, wherein each support arm comprises at least one curved side surface extending from a distal end thereof to the longitudinal centerline of the body or to the latitudinal centerline of the body, and wherein at least one curved surface of at least one support arm has a length that is at least twice as long as at least one other curved surface of at least one other support arm.

2. The support member of claim 1, wherein a first set of opposed curved surfaces and a second set of opposed curved surfaces are disposed about the body.

3. The support member of claim 2, wherein the first set of curved surfaces comprises one curved surface that is circular and one curved surface that is elliptical, parabolic, circular, or any combination thereof.

4. The support member of claim 1, wherein the body is monolithic or comprises two or more components.

5. The support member of claim 4, wherein each component comprises at least two support arms.

6. The support member of claim 1, wherein at least one of the curved surfaces has a length that is at least three times as long as at least one other curved surface.

7. The support member of claim 1, wherein at least one of the curved surfaces has a length that is at least three times as long as at least three other curved surface.

~~8. The support member of claim 1, wherein the body has a variable thickness.~~

~~9. The support member of claim 1, wherein each support arm comprises a distal end having a~~ contact surface disposed thereon, each contact surface having at least one surface modification selected from the group consisting of protrusions, projections, protuberances, ridges, pins, rods, dimples, depressions, grooves, holes, notches, and recesses.

10. The support member of claim 1, wherein at least two curved surfaces have substantially the same length.

11. The support member of claim 1, wherein each curved surface has a curvature that is radial, circular, elliptical, parabolic, or any combination thereof.

12. A support system for supporting one or more elongated members, comprising:

at least four support members arranged with respect to one another such that an opening is formed between the support members, each support member comprising:

a body having a longitudinal centerline and a latitudinal centerline; and

at least four coplanar support arms extending from the body, wherein each support comprises at least one curved side surface extending from a distal end thereof to the longitudinal centerline of the body or to the latitudinal centerline of the body, wherein each support arm comprises a contact surface disposed at a distal end thereof, and wherein at least one curved surface of at least one support arm has a length that is at least twice as long as at least one other curved surface of at least one other support arm.

13. The support system of claim 12, further comprising a connector disposed between two adjacent support bodies.

14. The support system of claim 12, wherein the contact surfaces comprise at least one surface modification selected from the group consisting of protrusions, projections, protuberances, ridges, pins, ~~rods, dimples, depressions, grooves, holes, notches, and recesses.~~

~~15. The support system of claim 12, further comprising at least one elongated member disposed~~ within the opening and supported by at least one of the support members.

16. The support system of claim 15, wherein the at least one elongated member is supported in a horizontal position, a vertical position, or at any position between horizontal and vertical.

17. The support system of claim 15, wherein the at least one elongated member is supported on one of the curved surfaces having a length that is at least twice as long as at least one other curved surface.

18. The support system of claim 15, wherein the at least one elongated member comprises a tubular member, pipe, pipeline, conduit, cable, communication line, electrical line, open channel, duct, pole, cylinder, or rod.

19. The support system of claim 12, further comprising an elongated member disposed within the opening, wherein a perimeter of the opening is greater than an outer perimeter of the elongated member.

20. The support system of claim 12, further comprising a frame disposed about at least a portion of the support members.

21. The support system of claim 20, wherein the frame is disposed on a ship.

22. A method for supporting one or more elongated members, comprising:

arranging at least four support members adjacent one another such that an opening is formed therebetween, each support member comprising:

a body having a longitudinal centerline and a latitudinal centerline; and

at least four coplanar support arms extending from the body, wherein each support arm comprises at least one curved side surface extending from a distal end thereof to the longitudinal centerline of the body or to the latitudinal centerline of the body, wherein each support arm comprises a contact surface disposed at a distal end thereof, and wherein at least one curved surface of at least one support arm has a length that is at least twice as long as at least one other ~~curved surface of at least one other support arm; and~~

~~disposing a first elongated member within the opening.~~

23. The method of claim 22, further comprising locating a connector between any two adjacent support members.

24. The method of claim 22, further comprising locating at least three more support members about the at least four support members such that a second opening is formed between the at least three more support members; and locating a second elongated member within the second opening.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the elongated members are disposed vertically, the second elongated member is located above the first elongated member, and the weight of the first and second elongated members is transferred to the support members.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the weight of the second elongated member and the support members disposed above the first elongated member is transferred to the support members beneath the second elongated member and not to the first elongated member.

27. The method of claim 22, further comprising introducing natural gas to the first elongated member.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the support members are located on a ship and the method further comprises operating the ship.

29. The method claim 22, further comprising disposing a frame about at least a portion of the support members.

30. The method of claim 22, further comprising securing adjacent support members to one another ~~with a connecting member.~~

Claims:

1. A support member for supporting one or more elongated members, comprising:

a body having a longitudinal centerline and a latitudinal centerline, wherein the body comprises at least four coplanar support arms extending therefrom, wherein a first set of opposing curved side surfaces and a second set of opposing curved side surfaces are disposed about the body, wherein a first curved side surface in the first set extends from a distal end of one of the support arms to the longitudinal centerline of the body or to the latitudinal centerline of the body, wherein the first curved side surface in the first set is an arc that follows a circular curve, wherein a second curved side surface in the first set is an arc that follows an elliptical curve having a major radius and a minor radius that are not equal to one another, and wherein the first curved side surface in the first set has a length that is at least twice as long as a first curved side surface in the second set.

2. The support member of claim 1, wherein each of the curved side surfaces in the second set comprises an arc that follows an elliptical curve, a circular curve, or a combination thereof.

3. The support member of claim 1, wherein the body is monolithic or comprises two or more components.

4. The support member of claim 1, wherein the distal end of each support arm comprises a contact surface disposed thereon, each contact surface having at least one surface modification selected from the group consisting of: protrusions and recesses.

5. The support member of claim 1, wherein at least two curved side surfaces have substantially the same length.

6. The support member of claim 1, wherein the distal end of each support arm is located at a terminal end of each support arm relative to the longitudinal centerline of the body or the latitudinal centerline of the body.

7. The support member of claim 1, wherein each of the curved side surfaces in the second set is an arc that follows a circular curve.

8. The support member of claim 1, wherein a radius of the arc that follows the circular curve is less than the major radius of the arc that follows the elliptical curve.

9. The support member of claim 1, wherein the first curved side surface in the second set is an arc that follows a circular curve or an elliptical curve, and wherein a radius of the arc that follows the circular curve or a major radius of the arc that follows the elliptical curve of the first curved side surface in the second set is less than a radius of the arc that follows the circular curve of the first curved side surface in the first set.

10. The support member of claim 1, wherein the first and second curved side surfaces in the first set are opposed to one another about the longitudinal centerline, and wherein the first curved side surface and a second curved side surface in the second set are opposed to one another about the latitudinal centerline.

11. The support member of claim 1, further comprising a conductive member disposed on the body, wherein the body is made of one or more non-metallic materials.

12. The support member of claim 1, further comprising a coating disposed on the body, wherein the coating comprises one or more antifouling agents.

13. The support member of claim 1, wherein the body is monolithic.

14. The support member of claim 1, wherein:

the body is monolithic, wherein the first curved side surface in the first set and the second curved side surface in the first set are opposed to one another about the longitudinal centerline,

the first curved side surface in the second set and the second curved side surface in the second set are opposed to one another about the latitudinal centerline,

the first curved side surface in the second set and a second curved side surface in the second set are each an arc that follows a circular curve, and

the first curved side surface in the second set and the second curved side surface in the second set have substantially the same length.

15. The support member of claim 14, further comprising a conductive member disposed on the body, wherein the body is made of one or more non-metallic materials.