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Title: Air Safety Investigator
Division: Aviation Safety, Eastern Region

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Subject: ERA25LA382, Pilot Interview

Contact: [REDACTED]

I interviewed the owner/pilot of N594BA by telephone on this date. The pilot reported that while enroute from Gulf Shores, AL to Destin, FL in his ICON A5 amphibious airplane he ran out of fuel. He had thought he had sufficient fuel to make the trip, but had a heavy passenger and unexpected headwinds. The pilot attributes the accident to their weight, the headwinds, and in his words "pilot error."

The pilot has a private pilot certificate with about 300 hours flight time. He has about 50 hours in the accident aircraft which is a light sport aircraft.

The airplane holds 20 gallons of fuel. The fuel gauges, which had always been accurate in the past, indicated that there were 8 gallons on board. The design of the fuel tank in the airplane's hull does not allow for the use of a dipstick to verify the fuel level. The pilot did not know how much fuel was unusable. The pilot planned a one hour flight to Destin, and the airplane typically burns 4GPH. With a 200lb passenger and 8 gallons of fuel, the pilot calculated that they were 10-15lbs under max gross weight, so he did not add any fuel.

During the flight, the pilot estimated a 10-12 mph headwind. About 10 miles from Destin the engine began to sputter and the pilot informed the tower that he was running out of fuel. At 500 feet on final the engine quit. They were over water so the pilot landed in the bay. The impact from the landing cracked the airplane's hull and it began to take on water. A friend in another amphibious airplane flying alongside landed and assisted in getting the airplane to a dock and in getting floats attached and the water pumped out so the airplane could be recovered and moved to storage.

(In a follow up email after this interview the pilot provided times from his logbook since the last time the fuel was topped off) The airplane was last filled to 20 gallons in O2A (Clanton AL), he flew 2.6 hours to 2RA, then 1.0 hour to KJKA (Gulf Shores AL), then 0.8 hour enroute to KDTS (Destin FL) for a total of 4.4 hours flight time before running out of fuel.