



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
Division of Spill Prevention and Response
Prevention Preparedness and Response Program
SITUATION REPORT (SITREP)

CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS SITREP ARE DENOTED IN RED

Tug *Western Mariner* Grounding Neva Strait



SITREP #: 2

SPILL #: 22119908001

DATE/TIME OF DISTRIBUTION: March 23, 2022, at 4:00 p.m.
Information current as of March 23, 2022, at 2:00 p.m.

POTENTIAL RESPONSIBLE PARTY (PRP): Western Towboat Co.

INCIDENT LOCATION: Neva Strait, approximately 18 miles northwest of Sitka (Lat/Long: 57.26982, -135.59315).

DATE/TIME OF SPILL: March 21, 2022, at 2:55 a.m.

HOW/WHEN SPILL WAS DISCOVERED AND REPORTED: On March 21, 2022, at 4:46 a.m., Western Towboat Co. reported the spill to the National Response Center. Western Towboat Co. reported that the spill occurred following the tug grounding.

TYPE/AMOUNT OF PRODUCT SPILLED: An unknown quantity of diesel was spilled. The vessel has a maximum capacity of 50,000 gallons. Western Towboat Co. estimates the amount of fuel onboard at the time of the grounding to be 45,000 gallons. The port forward fuel tank, which is a known source of the discharge, is reported to have a 13,000 gallon maximum capacity. A broken silver and rainbow sheen was observed to cover approximately four nautical miles **on the day of the grounding**.

CAUSE OF SPILL: The 83.7 ft. tug vessel, *Western Mariner*, was towing the freight barge, *Chichagof Provider*, headed south in Neva Strait outside of Sitka when a temporary steering failure onboard the *Western Mariner* caused the barge to collide with the tug. The collision pushed the tug onto the beach, resulting in the release of diesel.

SOURCE CONTROL: Source control has not been achieved. Source control actions are underway by the dive and salvage crew, Hanson Maritime, who arrived onsite at approximately 8:00 a.m. **on March 21, 2022**. All fuel manifolds are closed on the tug which will prevent fuel transfer between tanks. Response crew onsite have **completed** lightering the contents from the damaged and discharging port forward tank into an assisting fishing tender vessel. **An estimated 3,000 gallons of diesel were lightered from the port forward tank, and at this time, a small amount of fuel remains. It was identified on March 21, 2022, that fuel was entering the engine room of the vessel from an unknown source.**

On March 22, 2022, Global Diving and Salvage Inc. (Global) arrived in Sitka and completed an initial assessment of the damage to the vessel. Two sources of fuel ingress into the vessel's engine room were identified. Global

will prioritize sealing these sources today to prevent additional fuel from entering the engine room. Concurrently, Hanson Maritime will initiate actions to lighter fuel from the engine room into portable storage tanks to prevent additional release to the waters of Neva Strait.

RESPONSE ACTION: ADEC has formed a Unified Command with the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and the responsible party, Western Towboat Co.

Two layers of containment boom have been deployed around the vessel. On March 21, 2022, an oil recovery skimmer was operated within the primary layer of boom, closest to the vessel. Skimming activities recovered an estimated 850 gallons of oily water. Absorbent materials were placed between the layers of boom to passively recover diesel from the water surface. The freight barge, *Chichagof Provider*, was safely towed back to Sitka.

On the evening of March 21, 2022, the Southeast Alaska Petroleum Response Organization (SEAPRO) arrived in Sitka with the Oil Spill Response Vessel, *Neka Bay*. The *Neka Bay* is equipped with a response crew, 500 ft of containment boom, an onboard skimmer, and storage capacity for up to 55 barrels of recovered fuel. SEAPRO will be observing local areas for shoreline or wildlife impacts and is ready to deploy protective measures if needed. An additional 9,000 ft. of boom and three additional vessels of opportunity are on standby in Sitka.

In the early hours of March 22, 2022, skimming and oil recovery actions were put on hold due to rapidly deteriorating weather conditions and concern for responder safety. Poor weather conditions continued throughout the day on March 22, 2022, slowing planned response actions.

A second overflight was conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) on the morning of March 23, 2022. Observers noted broken sheening from just north of St. John Baptist Bay to near Whitestone Narrows, about 0.80 miles north of the southern entrance to Neva Strait.

RESOURCES AT RISK OR AFFECTED:

Pacific herring are currently aggregating and staging for spawning in the greater Sitka Sound area. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game conducted overflight surveys on the morning of March 21, 2022 and March 23, 2022, and did not observe any herring spawning or schooling near the sheen. No herring activity has been reported in Sitka Sound at this time. A potential herring opening may happen as soon as March 24, 2022 in Hayward Strait (Figure 1). Marine mammal and avian predators are likely aggregating in the area to prey on herring. No impacts to marine mammals or wildlife have been reported, but no dedicated wildlife surveys have been conducted at this time. Stretches of environmentally sensitive shoreline occur in the area, such as tidal flats and brackish marsh. A four nautical mile sheen was observed between the grounded vessel north to the Kane Islands in southeast Salisbury Sound on March 21, 2022, but no observations of extensively oiled shorelines have yet been reported. St. John Baptist Bay is a known salmon habitat and nursery area for juvenile sablefish. Neva Strait is a known sea cucumber habitat and commercial harvesting ground. Nearby beaches have been used historically as clam harvesting areas.

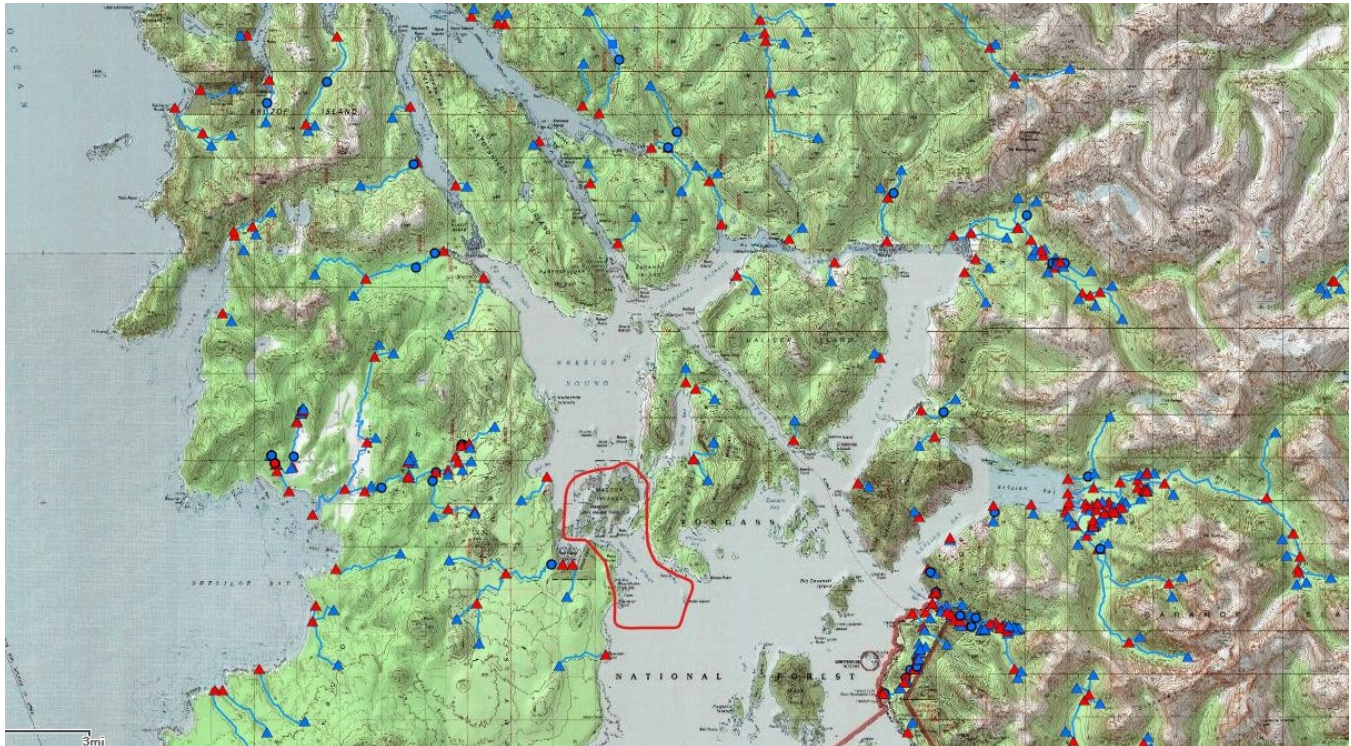


Figure 1. Potential herring opening in Hayward Strait estimated to occur on March 24th, 2022.

FUTURE PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Hanson Maritime and Global Diving & Salvage Inc. have been retained and are mobilizing to assist the vessel by plugging the fuel vents, assessing the damage, and containing the release. The damaged port forward fuel tank will be pumped out onto a fishing tender vessel.

WEATHER:

Wednesday:

Cloudy with widespread rain showers early in the morning, then numerous rain showers in the late morning and early afternoon. Scattered rain showers late in the afternoon. High of 43°F. S winds 9-14 mph. Wave height 2 ft., E swell 0 ft.

Wednesday Evening:

Mostly cloudy. Scattered rain showers early in the evening, then isolated rain showers in the late evening and early morning. Scattered rain showers early in the morning. Low of 35°F. SE winds 8-15 mph. Wave height 2 ft., E swell 0 ft.

Thursday:

Partly sunny then becoming cloudy. Scattered rain showers. High of 43°F. E winds 8-15 mph with gusts to around 29 mph, E swell 0 ft.

Tides:

Date	Day	Time	Pred	High/Low
3/23/2022	Wednesday	2:06	1.59	H
3/23/2022	Wednesday	7:41	-1.90	L
3/23/2022	Wednesday	14:42	1.59	H

3/23/2022	Wednesday	20:05	-1.31	L
3/24/2022	Thursday	3:00	1.32	H
3/24/2022	Thursday	8:23	-1.62	L
3/24/2022	Thursday	15:48	1.37	H
3/24/2022	Thursday	20:53	-0.90	L

NOAA Station PCT4211, Wyvill Reef, Neva Strait, AK

UNIFIED COMMAND AND PERSONNEL:

Incident Commander: Rich Christiansen, Western Towboat Co.

SOSC: Rachael Krajewski, ADEC

FOSC: CAPT Darwin Jensen, USCG

DATE/TIME OF THE NEXT REPORT DISTRIBUTION: As the situation warrants.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT: <https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/ppr/spill-information/response/>

Rachael Krajewski, State On-Scene Coordinator ADEC, (907) 465-6648



Figure 2. Incident Location.

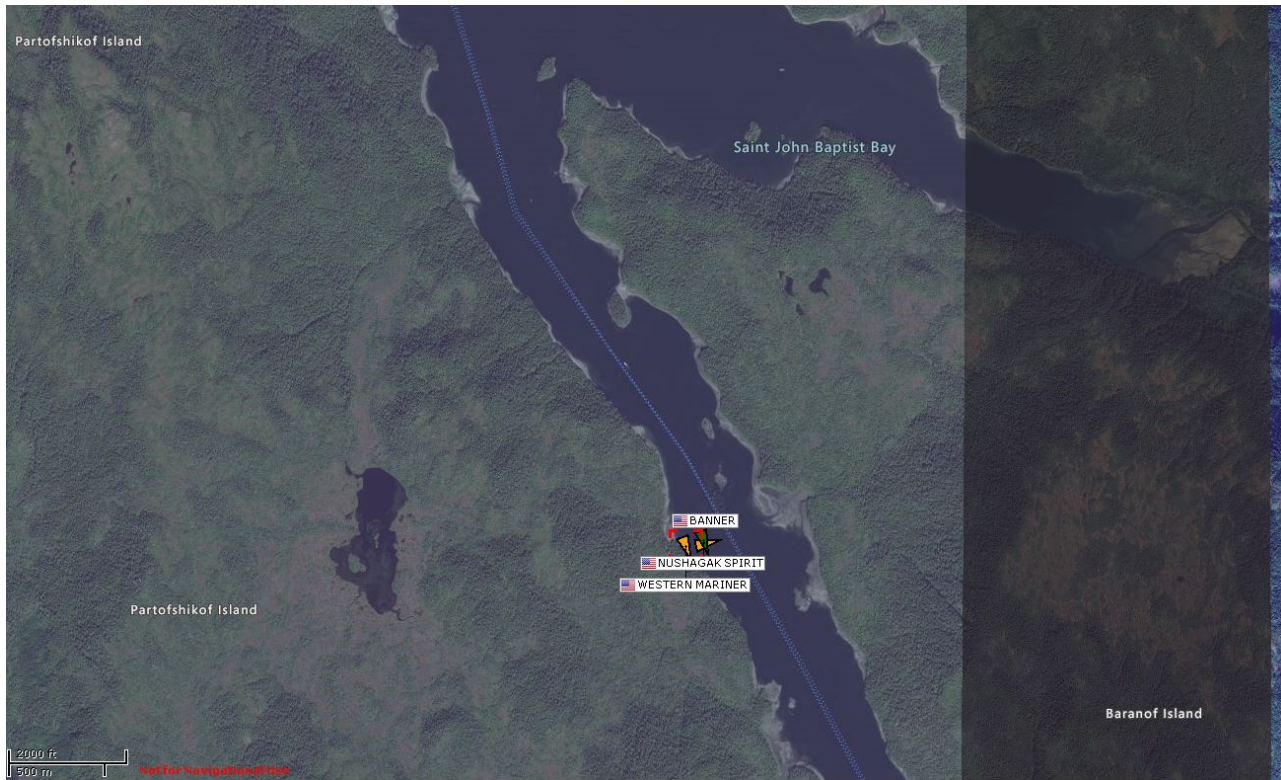


Figure 3. Incident Location.



Figure 4. Observed sheening as seen around 8:00 a.m. on March 23rd. Photo by Alaska Department of Fish & Game.



Figure 5. Observed sheening from Whitestone Narrows north through Salisbury Sound as seen around 8:00 a.m. on March 23rd. Photo by Alaska Department of Fish & Game.



Figure 6. Observed light sheening extending down the length of St. John Baptist Bay as seen around 8:00 a.m. on March 23rd. Photo by Alaska Department of Fish & Game.



Figure 7. Observed sheening ribbons extending north of Neva Strait, parallel to Salisbury Sound’s southern shoreline as seen around 8:00 a.m. on March 23rd. Photo by Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

AGENCY/STAKEHOLDER NOTIFICATION LIST: This situation report was distributed to the agencies listed on the standard distribution list, which includes the governor’s office, State Emergency Operations Center, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other state agencies. This situation report was also distributed to the following agencies and stakeholders:

AGENCY	NAME	SENT VIA	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	TELEPHONE	FAX
Western Towboat Co.	Rich Christiansen	Email	christiansen@westerntowboat.com, rich@westerntowboat.com		
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Hanson Maritime	Lee Hanson	Email	lee@hansonmaritime.com		
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