



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 #: 4

SPILL #: 22119908001

DATE/TIME OF DISTRIBUTION: March 27, 2022, at 3:00 p.m.
Information current as of March 27, 2022, at 12:00 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. Global Diving & Salvage, Inc. estimates the amount of fuel onboard at the time of the grounding to be 43,500 gallons. 32,080 gallons of clean fuel and 11,625 gallons of mixed oil and water from within the vessel were recovered. Skimming operations recovered an estimated 1,750 gallons of oily water, and 15 cubic yards of saturated absorbents have been generated. All fuel tanks aboard the *Western Mariner* have been opened, inspected, and emptied of product. An overflight on March 26, 2022, documented a weathered silver sheen isolated to Neva Strait.

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 been achieved. Since March 24, 2022, no fuel has left the *Western Mariner*, and all fuel tanks aboard the tug were emptied as of March 26. An amount of incidental lube, hydraulic, and GST oil remain onboard to support continuing work on the vessel.

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 **remain** deployed around the vessel. Absorbent materials placed between the layers of boom are passively recovering diesel from the water surface. **There is no longer enough fuel within the secondary containment to support skimming operations. Any remnant sheen within the boom configuration continues to be addressed with absorbent materials. A total of 1,750 gallons of oily water was skimmed from within the containment boom.**

On the morning of March 24, 2022, an overflight conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) observed sheen in Neva Strait, Olga Strait, and into Krestof Sound to the north end of the Magoun Islands. SEAPRO deployed boom in J-configurations approximately 500-feet to the North and South of the *Western Mariner* to collect sheen escaping the two layers of containment boom directly around the vessel. **An additional 500 ft. of boom was added to the J-hook configurations North and South of the vessel to capture escaping sheen on March 25.**

On March 25, 2022, the Western Towboat Co. crew were able to start the starboard generator on the *Western Mariner* to provide power to hydraulic systems to support upcoming efforts to refloat the vessel. Global crew continued to complete welded repairs to the hull to strengthen temporary patches used to achieve source control on March 24. Overnight, Hanson Maritime continued to monitor changes in the boom configurations and the vessel buoyancy.

On March 26, 2022, additional responders arrived on-scene as well as the landing craft *Poundstone*, which provided storage for liquid and absorbent wastes, as needed. All bulk fuel aboard the *Western Mariner* was offloaded and secured. Hanson Maritime crew added sea water ballast to the vessel to maintain vessel stability now that the fuel has been removed.

SEAPRO crew continues to check boom security and pull saturated absorbent materials and replace them as needed. Boom anchors on the "J" boom configurations were set and reset to counteract connection losses in heavy tidal currents. 8,620 ft. of SEAPRO boom remain available in Sitka for use as needed, as well as additional State and federal resources.

The Neva Strait remains open to vessel traffic. The USCG has created a safety zone and issued a Broadcast Notice to Mariners, which informs mariners of the ongoing response efforts and the requirement to request permission to come within 100 yards of vessels engaged in those efforts. The notice also informs mariners to transit the area with caution to avoid collision with response vessels and minimize wake to prevent disturbing containment boom.

On March 25, 2022, the Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique (SCAT) team conducted an informal survey and reported that no sheening was observed on the beaches and lagoons of the Magoun Islands. At the *Western Mariner's* location, the SCAT team observed several invertebrate deaths in the immediate area of the vessel. One deceased sea cucumber carcass was opportunistically recovered near the tug's location. No other impacted or potentially impacted wildlife have been collected or captured.

On March 26, 2022, the SCAT team started formal beach surveys of the impacted shoreline near the *Western Mariner* and completed three segment assessments. Operations have mobilized equipment for a high volume, low pressure seawater beach deluge in the immediate vicinity of the vessel in anticipation of the SCAT team's recommendations. This activity will be actively monitored by response personnel and containment boom and absorbent materials will be used to capture any sheening that results from the shoreline flushing operations.

RESOURCES AT RISK OR AFFECTED: Pacific herring are currently aggregating and staging for spawning in the greater Sitka Sound area. **Humpback whales, porpoises, sea lions, harbor seals, shorebirds, and eagles have been observed in the area, but no impacts to marine mammals or avian wildlife have been reported.** Stretches of environmentally sensitive shoreline occur in the area, such as tidal flats and brackish marsh. 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.

On March 21st, 2022, a four nautical mile sheen was observed between the grounded vessel north to the Kane Islands in southeast Salisbury Sound, but no observations of extensively oiled shorelines were reported.

On March 21st and 23rd, 2022, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) conducted overflight surveys and did not observe any herring spawning or schooling near the sheen. On March 24th, 2022, around 8:30 am, ADFG conducted overflight surveys and observed 20,000 tons of herring in Hayward Strait (Figure 1) that were moving into Krestof Sound. The survey observed broken sheening that extended into Olga Strait as well as Krestof Sound, extending south to the north end of the Magoun Islands. Subsequent overflights showed that the sheening outside of Neva Strait had dissipated throughout the day.

The Magoun Islands hold significant cultural importance to local subsistence users and is an area where commercial fisheries take place.

There continue to be two overflights a day to observe wildlife and sheen around the response. An overflight conducted by SEAPRO on March 26, 2022, at 2:10 pm, observed no visible sheen outside Neva Strait. Rainbow sheen was observed between the J-boom configurations on the west shore of Neva Strait directly around the vessel. Along the eastern shore rainbow sheen was observed between Entrance Island and just south of Wyvill Reef, predominantly in areas with a sandy shoreline or directly around the grounding site.

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and ADEC issued several seafood safety recommendations for herring egg and other subsistence harvests. An aerial survey conducted by the ADFG on March 26 reported that no herring spawn were observed from Crawfish Inlet to Salisbury Sound. An opening of the Sitka Sound herring sac roe fishery occurred from 11:00 am until 12:15 pm, March 26, 2022.

The State and Federal Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) Trustees conducted ephemeral data collection on March 26 and 27, 2022 to validate their preliminary evaluation of environmental harm caused by the spill.

FUTURE PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Hanson Maritime and Global will continue preparing for salvage operations for the *Western Mariner*. SEAPRO will maintain crew onsite to tend the containment and J-configuration boom. Environmental shoreline assessments and wildlife observations will continue to carry out systematic evaluations of the impacts to the shorelines.

WEATHER:

Sunday:

Partly sunny with isolated rain showers in the late morning and early afternoon. Lighter winds and little to no precipitation for the next 24 hours. Temperatures will rise to the lower 40s this afternoon and then drop to near freezing overnight before rebounding back into the 40s for Monday.

Monday:

Mostly cloudy then becoming partly sunny. Chance of snow in the morning. Chance of rain early in the afternoon, then rain likely late in the afternoon. Winds and precipitation will increase out of the southeast on Monday and Monday night as a new front comes in from the SW.

Tuesday:

Rain with a high near 44. Southeast wind around 10 mph. Chance of precipitation is 100%.

Tides:

Date	Day	Time	Pred	High/Low
3/27/2022	Sunday	3:28	4.72	L
3/27/2022	Sunday	9:20	9.03	H
3/27/2022	Sunday	16:30	0.15	L
3/27/2022	Sunday	21:17	8.27	H
3/28/2022	Monday	04:47	3.77	L
3/28/2022	Monday	10:38	9.36	H
3/28/2022	Monday	17:56	-0.27	L
3/29/2022	Tuesday	00:00	9.01	H

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 1. Incident Location.



Figure 2. Incident location. The yellow lines demark the extent of a wider rainbow sheen observed by an overflight conducted by SEAPRO on March 26, 2022. No visible oil sheens were observed outside the green lines. Photo by SEAPRO.



Figure 3. Global Diving and Salvage, Inc. crewmember continues fabrication welding on the hull of the *Western Mariner* on March 25th. Photo by Global Diving and Salvage, Inc.



Figure 4. Image of the *Western Mariner* within the primary containment as of March 26th. Photo by Global Diving and Salvage, Inc.

AGENCY/STAKEHOLDER NOTIFICATION LIST:

Please refer to the previous SITREPs for the agency/stakeholder notification list. Previous SITREPs can be found by following the link in the **Additional Information** box above.