

F/V St. Joseph

Contributor: Wyn Menefee, Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Vessel Overview

Name: St. Joseph

Incident: Weather and mechanical issues required the crew to abandon the vessel and leave it adrift.

Date reported: May 26, 2012

Vessel type: Fishing tender

Hull material: Wood

Length: 74 ft. LOA

Beam: Unknown

Tonnage: Unknown

Vessel Location

Location: Kayak Island, Alaska

Site Name(s): The "Lost Coast" near the Tsiu River.

General description of location: The vessel grounded adjacent to a steep cut bank on a sandy beach which was exposed to heavy swell and breaking waves.

Coordinates: 60° 3.8' North, 143° 10.0' West

Average Site Depth: N/A

Habitat/Substrate Type Impacted: Sand beach

Jurisdictions: The State of Alaska had jurisdiction over the vessel, while the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) had authority over the removal of oil/fuel left onboard.

Incident Narrative

History: On May 25th of 2012, the crew of the F/V St. Joseph was overwhelmed by heavy seas, which disabled the vessel's steering leaving it unresponsive. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) was called in to extract the crew and the vessel was left adrift near Kayak Island, Alaska. The vessel grounded the next day on the "Lost Coast" and state and federal agencies were notified of the incident. The USCG initially started working with the owner of the vessel, which was insured, to develop a salvage plan for removing the fuel and oil that remained onboard. The responsible party then hired a contractor who removed the fuel and assessed the vessel's location and condition; which was verified by a USCG inspection of the site.

Alaska's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) took over jurisdiction from the USCG after the fuel/oil was successfully removed from the St. Joseph. After sending the responsible party an "agency letter to remove the vessel" the DNR was contacted by the insurance representative, a Marine Surveyor/Adjuster, who informed the DNR of the vessel's current conditions and provided three vessel salvage options. The third option, which involved cutting up the vessel in place, was favored by both the USCG and the insurance company due to the vessel's rapidly deteriorating condition.

The salvage company submitted a removal and disposal plan to DNR based on the third option. The plan was approved and the state issued the salvage company a permit to salvage the vessel on state tidelands. In addition to the salvage permit, the contractor was also required to obtain a "black smoke" permit from Alaska's Department of Environmental Conservation in order to burn part of the





vessel on the beach. At the end of July 2012 the contractor moved in their equipment and started the vessel salvage operations.

Lead agency or organization: Alaska's Department of Natural Resources had jurisdiction and oversight over the vessels removal and disposal, which was led by the insurance company and their contractor.

Other collaborators/stakeholders involved: The USCG and Alaska's Department of Environmental Conservation.

Funding source(s): Funding for the pollution abatement, removal and disposal were paid for under the vessel owner's insurance policy, which had a \$300,000 limit.

Threats from ADV

Environmental: Fuel and oil onboard the vessel had the potential to leak into the environment.

Critical habitats involved: None

Navigation: If the vessel (or pieces of it) washed off the beach it could have had become a navigation hazard.

Vessel Removal Actions

Start date: July, 2012.

End date: August, 2014 (final debris removed)

Removal options considered: Marine Surveyor/Adjuster presented three salvage options based on the condition of the vessel. The first two involved removing the vessel by sea. The third entailed cutting up the vessel at its present location, burning part of the vessel onsite and removing the rest by air.

Environmental Considerations: Removing the fuel and oil left onboard and removing the threat of fuel/oil pollution was the main environmental concern.

Removal Methods: The St. Joseph was cut apart and disassembled on the beach by the salvage contractor, who burned anything burnable on location and hauled all un-burnable materials to a staging area for removal by aircraft.

Authorities used to take Possession of Vessels: N/A - the vessel remained the property of the owner (and insurance company).

Permits Required: A salvage permit from DNR and a black smoke permit from the Department of Environmental Conservation were required by the state prior to starting the salvage operation.

Salvage Contractor(s): Alaska Marine Response of Cordova.

Contractor Selection Process: The contractor was chosen by the insurance company.

Approximate removal costs: The estimate for the entire salvage operation, including the pollution removal, was \$340,000.

Other cost information: The salvage company estimated that the air freight costs to remove the vessel debris would be around \$70,000 alone (at \$1 per pound).

Vessel Disposal Process/Issues: Wave action against the vessel was rapidly damaging the vessel and piling up sand against the hull which made removing all of the vessel impossible. The bottom of the hull, propeller shaft, cement ballast and keel could not be removed and were left on the beach.

Vessel removal summary: The salvage company began the salvage operation in earnest on 7/20/12. They brought in a Kubota tractor with a front bucket to assist with the operation and set up a staging



area at the nearby airstrip for the unburnable debris. They proceeded to cut up the vessel and burn everything that was burnable on site. They were unable to keep ahead of the sanding in of the hull and keel with the equipment they had on site and their budget didn't allow for bringing in any larger equipment, so they were given permission by DNR to leave the keel and part of the hull on the beach. Two years after the removal operations began the salvage contractor air shipped out the last pallets of debris staged at the airstrip and completed the salvage operations.

Project Challenges

Environmental: Weather was a huge challenge and wave action around the vessel was quickly burying it in sand. The contractors had to spend significant time trying to remove the sand that kept accumulating around the vessel.

Geographical: The location of the vessel was remote which required the contractors to cut the vessel apart on the beach and either burn or fly out the debris.

Weather/Seasonal: Bad weather delayed the removal operations on several occasions and shut it down during the winter months.

Additional challenges: Scheduling the planes that were required to remove the debris was difficult and caused substantial delays for the contractor.

Contact Information

Wyn Menefee
Chief of Operations
Alaska DNR, Division of Mining, Land and Water
Phone: 907-269-8501