

Removing Sunken Vessels in Oregon

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Vessel Overview

Name: F/V Ina and Lovechild

Incident: Two derelict vessels sank around the same time. Their owners were unable to maintain the seaworthiness of the vessels and both vessels sank in the Yaquina River in July of 2014. Since sinking, neither owner has been able to raise the vessels; they have subsequently been sitting on the bottom on the river for a little over a year and have become the property of the State. As of September 2015,

both vessels have been removed from the river using Oregon State Marine Board's Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Removal fund, as well as a financial match from the Department of State Lands fund for vessel removal.

Date reported: July 22, 2014

Vessel type: The Ina was a former commercial fishing vessel, (ship builder: Sigurd Blix) built in 1920. The Lovechild was a recreational sailboat (manufacturer: Huntress) built in 1968.

Vessel ID#: Ina: USCG Documentation number =231525; Lovechild: OR 990 ACT (State registration number)

Hull material: wood

Length: 31.6ft (Ina), 36ft (Lovechild)

Vessel owner details: Through Oregon's seizure laws, these vessels have both become property of the State.



Vessel Location

Location: Both vessels sank in the Yaquina River, near Newport, OR, about 5 miles apart. See map right for approximate locations.

Site Name(s): Yaquina River

General description of location: Both were on the sides of the main channel so were not significant navigation hazards.

Coordinates: FV Ina: 44.610400°N, -124.012316°W; Lovechild: 44.572633°N, -123.964617°W

Average Site Depth: 25ft (Ina); 10ft (Lovechild)

Habitat/Substrate Type Impacted: The Ina is on the estuary shelf off the main navigation channel, near River Mile 3.75. The Lovechild is near the southern edge of the River, near





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River Mile 8.75. The riverbed beneath both vessels is unconsolidated mineral substrate and these areas are a mix between natural estuary settings and developed waterfront areas.

Jurisdictions: The Yaquina River is both a state owned waterway and a federally navigable waterway under jurisdiction of the Oregon Department of State Lands and the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Incident Narrative

History: The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) responded to the sunken vessels initially to mitigate any pollution threats. Neither vessel had much fuel onboard (sheening was from residual fuels only). Once the threat of pollution was abated, the Coast Guard's responsibilities were complete. Both the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division and the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office Marine Patrol Unit responded to make contact with the vessel owners and follow-up with seizure notifications once they failed to act. State Police took the lead on continuing to notify the owners throughout the process. Oregon Department of State Lands and the Oregon State Marine Board worked together to come up with a plan to take action on the sunken vessels. There were some hurdles in figuring out the permitting process for removing sunken vessels that were silted-in since it has not been done often in Oregon waters (see Lessons Learned section for more on this). The Marine Board was the lead agency in removing the vessels, through hiring a contractor.

Lead agency or organization: The USCG responded to the sunken vessels initially and once the threat of pollution was abated responsibility was transferred to both the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division and the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office Marine Patrol Unit (see History).

Other collaborators/stakeholders involved: Vessel owners, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Lincoln County Planning Department, all agencies notified through the ACOE Joint Removal/Fill Permit application.

Funding source(s): Oregon State Marine Board Salvaged Vessel Subaccount (portion of fees collected by the agency for registration and titling of recreational boats in Oregon). Department of State Lands provided a 25% match in funds for the removal of the two vessels.

Threats from ADV

Environmental: The sunken vessels are marine debris. While liquid pollution threats were removed from the vessels prior to their sinking, the vessels themselves degrade with time underwater and can break apart. The debris can leach and/or interfere with the natural habitat and character of the estuary, which is home to many important fish and shellfish species. The vessels are both older and likely contain asbestos in their materials, which is a hazardous waste that must be removed from the water. According to the Biologists with the State's Fish and Wildlife Department, it is more important to remove these vessels from the water rather than allow them to remain.

Critical habitats involved: The Yaquina River Estuary is home to Coho salmon, southern green sturgeon, and eulachon – all endangered species. It is also listed as essential fish habitat for salmon species as designated under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. This area is also home to many important forage fish, shellfish, benthic organisms, and anadromous fish species, as well as many birds and marine mammals.



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Navigation: While these vessels were just outside the main navigation channel, they could pose navigation hazards for any boats wishing to anchor off-channel for fishing. This River is highly used, not only for navigation, but for recreation as well.

Aesthetic: The Yaquina River Estuary is a fairly undeveloped area with a beautiful view-scape. Abandoned and derelict vessels greatly impact the aesthetics of the area by disrupting the natural beauty.

Vessel Removal Actions

Start date: August 31, 2015

End date: September 7, 2015

Authorities used to take Possession of Vessel: Oregon Revised Statutes 830.908 through 830.948 (laws governing the removal of abandoned and derelict vessels). These laws require an enforcement agency to notify the last known owner of a vessel to take responsibility for their ADV. The enforcement agency in this case was Oregon State Police, Fish and Wildlife Division. The legal owners of the vessels were either unable or unwilling to take responsibility for their derelict vessels in the timeframe allotted and so the vessels became property of the State. Because the vessels were sunken, they were seized in place until permits were obtained to remove them from the water and properly dispose of them. The Marine Board has the authority to use a portion of its budget that is set aside every two years to pay for up to 90% of the costs involved in the salvage, tow, removal, storage, and disposal of abandoned and derelict vessels. The Department of State Lands generally provides the matching funds for ADV removals since these vessels are typically unauthorized to be on the state waters/lands in which they are moored or sunken.

Removal options considered: Exact removal activities vary from vendor to vendor; however, the removal and disposal contract requires the use of containment boom and silt curtains during the raising and moving of the vessels, which minimizes the disturbance of sediment and impacts to the ecosystem (this is a best management practice). Activities typically include: using a crane barge, riggers, dewatering pumps, and divers to raise and secure the vessel; then towing the vessels to a marina or boatyard for removal to the upland. Divers may patch holes or hull damage and attach and inflate lift bags in the water. Vessels are disposed of in a designated upland disposal site.

Environmental Considerations: Removal operations were contracted in order to prevent any additional damages to the environment.

Permits Required: Joint Removal/Fill Permit under the Nationwide Permit 22 with Regional Conditions, through the Army Corps of Engineers; Department of State Lands – short term access agreement to remove vessels from state lands; Department of State Lands – emergency authorization for removal of material in waters of the state; informal consultation with District Fish and Shellfish Biologists with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Removal Methods: The contractor who won this bid used a crane barge to lift the vessels out of the water and on to the barge for transport to the Port of Newport, where they were demolished on land. Divers placed lifting slings around the vessels prior to being lifted out and used dewatering pumps to remove water from within the vessels. The vessels were both made primarily of wood and had been stripped of all valuable parts, so demolition was fairly straightforward.

Salvage Contractor(s): Billeter Marine LLC (out of Coos Bay, OR)



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Contractor Selection Process: The Marine Board solicited bids for the removal project; evaluated each contractor's bid and hired the bid with the most cost-effective plan that addressed all the relevant state and federal laws for vessel salvage. In addition, it is a requirement that hired contractors use silt curtains and containment boom in removing any sunken vessels.

Vessel Disposal Process/Issues: Materials were recycled or disposed of at an approved landfill.

Approximate removal costs: \$58,000

Other cost information: Considerable staff time due to permitting process required to remove sunken vessels.

Project Challenges

Environmental: For good reason, there are strict in-water-work periods for the Yaquina River. This made it challenging for the Marine Board to gain the relevant permit approvals, hire a contractor, and for the contractor to complete the work before the in-water work period ended in mid-September (when salmon season opens).

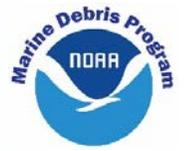
Weather/Seasonal: Since the sunken vessels were located in a tidally influenced system, contractors had to plan work around tide cycles. Visibility is also very limited in this area.

Funding: Sunken vessels, especially those that have been silted-in over time, are extremely expensive to remove. This one project has used up over one third of the Marine Board's biannual budget for this work, limiting what the agency will be able to accomplish the rest of the biennium related to ADV. There is no dedicated funding system for the removal and disposal of commercial vessels, making it challenging to deal with these vessels when they become abandoned and/or derelict. As a recreational boating agency that gets its revenue from the titling and registration of recreational vessels, it is difficult for the Marine Board to take on projects involving commercial vessels, especially with a limited budget.

Lessons Learned

An additional challenge of this project was learning how to navigate the permitting process for sunken vessels. The Oregon State Marine Board has very rarely had to remove sunken vessels, especially ones that have been submerged for such a long period of time. While the removal of sunken vessels does fall under the Army Corps' Nationwide Permit #22, it was not initially clear that a pre-construction notice would be required before beginning project activities. This notification process still requires the applicant to fill out a 15-page Joint Removal/Fill application and can take 45-60 days to receive an approval. Additionally, since the vessels were submerged on state lands, permits from the Department of State Lands were also required – a short-term lease agreement and emergency authorization for removal of material in waters of the state. While all agencies were helpful in providing information, it was not always clear what permits were required and from what agency for completing this project. It also added several months to our overall timeline, which made it challenging to get the work completed before the end of the in-water work period – a recommended work window provided by the biologists at the Department of Fish and Wildlife to ensure project activities have the least impact to salmon and other estuarine species.

Overall, the process was a good learning experience for the removal of future sunken vessels. It will allow the Marine Board to take the various permit timelines in to account and plan accordingly. It is a



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cumbersome and time-consuming process, but removing vessels that are sunken and silted-in is rare. It would be interesting to know how other states deal with sunken vessel removals and whether the process is similar.

New tools, techniques or developments

While not novel, the Marine Board has a new internal process for dealing with sunken vessels in terms of timelines to receive permits and hire contractors.

Contact Information

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Vessels removed

Vessel name (if known)	Vessel Type (sail, barge, etc.)	ID or Registration #	When or how long abandoned	Incident	Length	Hull material
FV Ina	Former commercial fishing vessel	231525	July 2014	sank	31.6	wood
Lovechild	sailboat	OR 990 ACT	July 2014	sank	36	wood



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Images: first 4 photos are the FV Ina being removed; second 4 photos are the Lovechild's removal

