

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT  
Tugboat Wm. McAllister - Removal Polrep



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
Region II

**Subject:** POLREP #2  
Tugboat Wm. McAllister  
  
Port Douglass, NY  
Latitude: 44.5038516 Longitude: -73.3543396

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**From:** Paul L. Kahn, OSC; Neil Norrell, OSC

**Date:** 3/12/2010

**Reporting Period:**

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

|                                |                                              |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Site Number:</b>            | <b>Contract Number:</b>                      |
| <b>D.O. Number:</b>            | <b>Action Memo Date:</b>                     |
| <b>Response Authority:</b> OPA | <b>Response Type:</b> Pre-Deployment         |
| <b>Response Lead:</b> EPA      | <b>Incident Category:</b> Removal Assessment |
| <b>NPL Status:</b> Non NPL     | <b>Operable Unit:</b>                        |
| <b>Mobilization Date:</b>      | <b>Start Date:</b>                           |
| <b>Demob Date:</b>             | <b>Completion Date:</b>                      |
| <b>CERCLIS ID:</b>             | <b>RCRIS ID:</b>                             |
| <b>ERNS No.:</b>               | <b>State Notification:</b>                   |
| <b>FPN#:</b> E10203            | <b>Reimbursable Account #:</b>               |

1.1.1 Incident Category

The tugboat *Wm. McAllister* sank in Lake Champlain in November, 1963 after striking Schuyler Reef on the New York State side of the lake near the town of Westport. The vessel had a maximum fuel capacity of 14,000 gallons of Diesel. The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum (LCMM) in Vergennes, VT has referred this potential source of water pollution to Region II EPA.

1.1.2 Site Description

The *Wm. H. McAllister* is a steel-hulled Diesel tugboat built by the now defunct Livingston Shipbuilding Company of Orange Texas during World War II. The keel was laid down on February 12, 1942 and launched September 18, 1943. Her papers describe her as an oil screw vessel having one deck, two masts, a raked stem and elliptical stern. Her registered dimensions were 85 ft. length, 23 ft. beam, and 3 m (9.6 ft.) depth. Draft was 11 ft. loaded and 10 ft. in ballast. Registered tonnage was 140 gross and 95 net.

The tug was in U.S. Army service as ST-243 and was acquired by McAllister Brothers, Inc., of New York in

1949. It was renamed the *Wm. H. McAllister*. She was assigned Official No. 258975 on November 10, 1949 and her homeport was listed as New York. The tug sank on November 17, 1963, after striking Schuyler Reef while pushing an empty gasoline barge. All hands escaped to the barge when the tug sank. The owners of the vessel originally planned to recover the hull which was valued at \$250,000 (Burlington Free Press November 11, 1963).

Because of its interesting history the tug was the subject of ROV documentation by the LCMM in 1997.

The vessel is in very good condition, and red and white paint is still clearly visible on the hull. The tug has settled heavily into the bottom of the lake and mud covers a good portion of the rudder. Only the top of the uppermost propeller blade protrudes from the sediment. The vessel's name is clearly painted on the stern, the bow, and the front of the pilot house.

The tug had a 720 BHP four-cylinder diesel engine built by the Alco Sulzer Company of Auburn New York. Cruising speed was 10 knots and full speed was 12 knots. Cruising range was 2415 km (1500 nautical miles). Fuel capacity was 14,000 gallons with a daily fuel consumption of 840 gallons at cruising speed. The LCMM reports that a sheen is noticeable on the surface of the lake above the location of the wreck. It is not known how much Diesel was on the vessel when it sank, nor is there any information as to how much remains on-board.

#### 1.1.2.1 Location

The wreck is located a few hundred yards off the shore near Westport, NY at the base of Schuyler Reef, in approximately 150 feet of water.

Shortly after the tug sank, involved parties executed several diver examinations of the deep site. At least two preliminary discussions considered the feasibility of raising the vessel, although these deliberations did not lead to any actual physical attempt to raise the tug. The vessel *Doris C* was chartered to locate the wreck, but it is unclear whether they were unable to find the wreck or believed it to be too deep to recover. The LCMM first located the wreck in 1988, relocated it during the 1997 Lake Survey, and examined it with ROV later that summer.

#### 1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

The LCMM, which plays a role similar to that of a "Riverkeeper", routinely monitors the lake for various concerns, including water pollution. The LCMM reports that an oil sheen is often seen on the surface of the lake over the location of the wreck, indicating that Diesel fuel may be escaping. Given that the tug is 65 years old and has been submerged for 46 years, it is likely that the fuel tanks are corroded to the point where a catastrophic release of the fuel, if any remains on board, may be imminent. Should that happen, a major spill of oil into a navigable waterway of the United States would occur.

#### 1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results

Assessment(s) of the tug will be made as the need is determined.

## 2. Current Activities

### 2.1 Operations Section

#### 2.1.1 Narrative

#### 2.1.2 Response Actions to Date

EPA Region II has opened an OPA Spill Account with the Coast Guard's National Pollution Fund Center for an initial amount of \$6,000. OSC Kahn met with LCMM personnel on March 4, 2010 to view the underwater video of the wreck and discuss the overall scope of the project. The US Navy Superintendent of Salvage (NAVSUPSALV) has been sent a copy of the 1997 ROV video and some documentation on the vessel. SUPSALV has agreed to review the LCMM documentation and advise EPA as to whether the wreck can be safely accessed and if the fuel oil can be removed.

In a phone con with SUPSALV on 3/11/10 it was opined that the any fuel on-board when the tug sank probably was released through the tank vents. Having said that, SUPSALV recommended that a diver be sent down to the wreck to test the tanks to try to determine if there's any Diesel still inside.

#### 2.1.3 Enforcement Activities, Identity of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs)

EPA has forwarded information about the vessel to the NPFC which will be compared to a Vessel Documentation data base. This may reveal who the owner-of-record is for cost-recovery purposes. Any decision to initiate a cost recovery action is solely within the purview of the NPFC.

| <b>Waste Stream</b> | <b>Medium</b> | <b>Quantity</b> | <b>Manifest #</b> | <b>Treatment</b> | <b>Disposal</b> |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
|                     |               |                 |                   |                  |                 |
|                     |               |                 |                   |                  |                 |
|                     |               |                 |                   |                  |                 |

## 2.2 Planning Section

### 2.2.1 Anticipated Activities

The video documentation has been sent to NAVSUPSALV for evaluation and a feasibility assessment. The LCMM would like to make a video documentary of the oil removal project that can be used for historical and/or educational purposes. In addition, inasmuch as the wreck is an historic object, the EPA Archaeologist John Vetter will work closely with the OSC and the LCMM to ensure that the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act are complied with during the entire project, including the documentation of preservation activities.

#### 2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities

Any response activities will be dependent on the feasibility of accessing the wreck and removing any fuel on-board.

#### 2.2.1.2 Next Steps

See above.

#### 2.2.2 Issues

None, yet.

## 2.3 Logistics Section

n/a

## 2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

## 2.5 Other Command Staff

### 2.5.1 Safety Officer

At the appropriate time a Safety Officer will be designated and a Health and Safety Plan will be written.

### 2.6 Liaison Officer

At the present time the OSC and Director of the LCMM will be handling all liaison matters.

### 2.7 Information Officer

n/a

#### 2.7.1 Public Information Officer

The OSC has requested that Kristen Skopect be assigned to the project to be the POI.

#### 2.7.2 Community Involvement Coordinator

n/a

## 3. Participating Entities

### 3.1 Unified Command

n/a

### 3.2 Cooperating Agencies

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum is an Assisting Agency, as is the Navy's Superintendent of Salvage. C

operating agencies will be determined at the appropriate time. Although not inclusive, agencies that *could* be involved in this project are: USEPA Region I (Boston), various departments within the States of New York and Vermont, US Coast Guard-Station Burlington (VT), US Coast Guard Atlantic Strike Team based at Ft. Dix (NJ), and the US Department of the Interior.

## 4. Personnel On Site

To be determined.

## 5. Definition of Terms

n/a

**6. Additional sources of information**

**6.1 Internet location of additional information/report**

See the web site operated by the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum; McAllister Towing Inc.; and the Tugboat Enthusiasts of the Americas.

**6.2 Reporting Schedule**

n/a

**7. Situational Reference Materials**

See Additional Sources of Information.