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

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region II

Subject: **POLREP #8**
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: 6/2/2010
Reporting Period:

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Site Number:		**Contract Number:**	
D.O. Number:		**Action Memo Date:**	
Response Authority:	OPA	**Response Type:**	Pre-Deployment
Response Lead:	EPA	**Incident Category:**	Removal Assessment
NPL Status:	Non NPL	**Operable Unit:**	
Mobilization Date:		**Start Date:**	1/13/2010
Demob Date:		**Completion Date:**	
CERCLIS ID:		**RCRIS ID:**	
ERNS No.:		**State Notification:**	
FPN#:	E10203	**Reimbursable Account #:**	2010HR02H0XAK302D91C

1.1.1 Incident Category

The tugboat *William H. 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 *McAllister* is a steel-hull Diesel tug built by the now defunct Levingston Shipbuilding Company, Orange Texas, during World War II. The keel was laid on February 12, 1942 and launched September 18, 1943. Her papers describe it as an "oil screw vessel having one deck, two masts, a raked stem and elliptical stern". It's
registered dimensions are 85 ft. length, 23 ft. beam, and 3 m (9.6 ft.) depth. The registered tonnage was 140 gross and 95 net.

The tug was in U.S. Army service as ST-243 and was subsequently acquired by McAllister Brothers, Inc., of New York in 1949 when it was renamed the *William H. McAllister.* The tug sank on November 17, 1963, after striking Schuyler Reef on the NY side of the lake 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 20, 1963).

Because of its interesting history the tug was the subject of ROV documentation by the LCMM in 1997. The vessel was in very good condition and red and white paint is still clearly visible on the hull. The tug has settled heavily but on an even keel 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 Levingtson Shipbuilding of Orange Texas. 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. It is not known how much Diesel was on the vessel when it sank, nor is there any information as to how much may remain 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 various 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 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 has 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

An ROV assessment of the condition and orientation of the wreck is being scheduled for June 14- 16, 2010.

2. Current Activities

2.1 Operations Section

2.1.1 Narrative

2.1.2 Response Actions to Date

EPA Region II had opened an OPA Spill Account with the Coast Guard's National Pollution Fund Center for an initial amount of $6,000. The funding ceiling was increased to $50,000 and to $233,000 on May 6, 2010.

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 U.S. Navy Superintendent of Salvage (NAVSUPSALV) has been sent a copy of the 1997 RV video and some documentation on the vessel. SUPSALV had agreed to review the LCMM documentation and advise EPA as to whether the wreck can be safely accessed. However, on May 10th Mr. K. Skudin with SUPSALV informed the OSC that he has been detailed to work on the BP oil release in the Gulf and would not be able to assist the OSC.

SUPSALV located the original design plans and specs for the tug, a model 327A, and forwarded them to EPA. This vital historical information shows the exact location of the wing fuel tanks (similar to saddle tanks) two forward and two aft inside the hull. There is also a 120 gallon lube oil tank in the engine room. Copies of these plans and specs were sent to the LCMM, Region I Lake Champlain Basin POC, and J. Vetter, the EPA Archeologist. Electronic copies of the plans and specs have been posted on this web site in the Documents Section.

EPA-Environmental Response Team (ERT) based in Edison NJ has agreed to assist the OSCs in this project and has provided advice on ROV and dive ops.

An ROV survey of the wreck is scheduled to occur on June 14 - 16, 2010. The LCMM has contracted with a dive firm to conduct the survey. Video observations made with the ROV will assist EPA in determining whether the vessel is accessible by divers and the extent of corrosion/marine deposition that may hamper further removal action or present a danger to divers.

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

In response to the Field Expedient Notice issued on May 11, 2010 Independent Maritime Consulting (IMT), representing McAllister Towing, contacted the OSC on May 20, 2010. IMT indicated that McAllister is

interested in taking over the oil removal project from EPA and would be willing to enter into a consent order with EPA if indeed McAllister decides to step-up. The date to respond to the FEN was extended to May 28, 2010 in order to give McAllister time to devise a formal reply.

On May 27, 2010 a revised FEN was issued to McAllister Transportation and Towing. This FEN was issued to correct the use of the word "facility" used in the May 11, 2010 FEN to the more correct word "vessel".

On May 28, 2010, a rep with IMT, marine consultant McAllister, visited the EPA Edison, NJ office and met with the OSC. The rep was shown and given a copy of the 1997 ROV survey of the *Wm. H.McAllister,* and was also given a set of deck plans of the vessel that had been provided to EPA by Navy SUPSALV. The rep stated that McAllister Transportation and Towing was willing to take over the oil removal project if it was confirmed that oil remained in the vessel. The rep was asked to put that response in writing to EPA. The rep also asked that someone from his company be allowed to observe the ROV during the event. The OSC agreed to this and arrangements are pending.

Waste Stream	*Medium*	*Quantity*	*Manifest #*	*Treatment*	*Disposal*

2.2 Planning Section

2.2.1 Anticipated Activities

The LCMM has awarded a contract for an ROV survey of the wreck to document it's condition and accessibility. Based on the video obtained during the ROV survey, if the wreck is accessible a manned dive will be organized for July or August, 2010 to attempt to determine if there is still fuel aboard the wreck.

2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities

An ROV survey is scheduled for June 14 through June 16, 2010.

2.2.1.2 Next Steps

Conduct ROV survey as planned.

2.2.2 Issues

None at present time.

2.3 Logistics Section

Logistics for the June ROV survey are being handled by the LCMM staff.

2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

2.5 Other Command Staff

2.5.1 Safety Officer

To be determined.

2.6 Liaison Officer

n/a

2.7 Information Officer

2.7.1 Public Information Officer

2.7.2 Community Involvement Coordinator

3. Participating Entities

3.1 Unified Command

n/a

3.2 Cooperating Agencies

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum is an Assisting Agency. Cooperating agencies will be determined at the appropriate time. Although not inclusive, agencies that 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

No information available at this time.

6. Additional sources of information

No information available at this time.

7. Situational Reference Materials

No information available at this time.