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

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region II

Subject: **POLREP #11**
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: 7/6/2010
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 fuel and it was/is not known how much was on-board when it hit the reef or whether there is any fuel still in the tanks.

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. wide, with 9.6 ft. of displacement. The 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 *William H. McAllister.* While pushing an empty gasoline barge the tug sank on

November 17, 1963, after striking Schuyler Reef on the NY side of the lake. An insuccessful effort was made to beach the tug and t the crew made their way onto the barge when the tug sank. The owners of the vessel originally planned to recover the hull which was valued at $250,000 (see Burlington Free Press November 20, 1963 in Documents section).

Because of its interesting history and the appearance of an oil sheen over the suspected location of the wreck, in 1997 the tug became the subject of ROV documentation by the LCMM. The vessel was observed to be in good condition, it's red and white paint clearly visible on the hull. The tug has settled heavily into the mud but on an even keel. The sediment covers a good portion of the rudder, and only the top of one propeller blade is visible. The vessel's name isvisible on the stern, the bow, and the front of the pilot house.

The tug had one 720-HP, four-cylinder Diesel engine. Cruising speed was about 10 knots, and it's cruising range was 2415 km (1500 nautical miles). Fuel capacity was 14,000 gallons with a daily 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 in 160 feet of water near Westport, NY. Shortly after it sank various parties conducted several dives on the wreck. Preliminary discussions centered on the feasibility of raising the vessel, although these discussions 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 it was unable to locate it or the parties merely concluded it was too deep to recover. The LCMM first located the wreck in 1988, relocated it during the 1997 Lake Survey,and examined it with an ROV that summer.

1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum (LCMM), which has a role similar to that of a "Riverkeeper", has studied the lake for decades and routinely monitors it for various concerns, including pollution. In 1995 the LCMM reported to EPA that an oil sheen is often seen on the surface over the location of the wreck, indicating that Diesel may be escaping. It was referred to EPA Region II in 1995 as a potential source of water pollution. In 1999 EPA decided that there was a remote possibility that there was any fuel left on-board. In early 2010 this situation became the subject of renewed EPA interest and funds were obtained from the Coast Guard's National Pollution Funds Center (NPFC) for a site assessment.

From a "Big Picture" perspective, the tug is 65 years old and has been submerged for 46 of those years. Corrosion is visible on the superstructure, so it is possible that the fuel tanks also 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 was successfully performed on June 15, 2010. Overall, the wreck has changed little over the intervening 13 years since the last ROV dive. The boat is clear of obstructions, although there are some rope/lines attached to the deck railing that were not in the 1997 ROV video, possibly indicating divers have accessed the wreck. There is additional silt accumulation that is almost as high as the level of the main deck, and some areas of rust are visible over the windows in the pilot house.

The ROV dive revealed specific features, such as the location/condition of the fuel tank breather vents, filler ports, and the underside of overhanging superstructure features near the vents. The vents appear to be clear of obstructions and externally accessible. The fuel filler ports are clear and accessible, although the type of tool needed to open the vents remains to be determined. A visible examination of the underside of the overhanging superstructure features and the ceiling in the pilot house/main cabin revealed no accumulation of fuel, eliminating the possibility that fuel had been released but might be trapped underneath enclosed portions of the wreck.

2. Current Activities

2.1 Operations Section

2.1.1 Narrative

2.1.2 Response Actions to Date

EPA Region II 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. NAVSUPSALV had agreed to review the LCMM documentation and advise EPA as to whether the wreck can be safely accessed. However, on May 10, 2010, Mr. K. Skudin with NAVSUPSALV informed the OSC that he had been detailed to the BP oil release in the Gulf and would not be able to assist the OSC.

NAVSUPSALV was able to locate the original design plans and specs for the tug 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, the Region I Lake Champlain Initiative POC, and John Vetter, 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 is supporting the OSCs in this project. It has provided advice on ROV and dive ops, and will support further efforts with a work boat and subcontractor support.

An ROV survey of the wreck was successfully performed on June 15, 2010. Present during the survey were reps from the LCMM, Phoenix International which operates the ROV, three EPA reps, a consultant for McAllister Transportation, two AP reporters, and a civilian with the US Coast Guard. Video observations made with the ROV show the wreck to be in essentially the same good condition that was observed during the 1997 ROV survey. There is light silt accumulation on the flat surfaces, and the silt around the wreck has increased by about 6 inches. The top of the rudder and its shaft, clearly seen in the 1997 video, are almost totally obscured by silt now.

There were two ROV dives on the wreck on 6/15: one in the AM for the starboard side and one in the PM for the port side. The starboard side clearly shows both fuel tank vents and two deck-mounted fuel tank filler ports. There are two tank vents on the port side but no filler ports were seen. The absence of filler ports on one side leads to the possibility that both *aft* saddle tanks are manifolded to each other, as may be the two *forward* saddle tanks. We were able to clearly see underneath the overhanging upper deck over each of the four fuel tank vents and there was no accumulation of oil in these areas, indicating no on-going release from the tank vents. The video also showed that there are no obstructions on or around the wreck, so it will be safe to send a diver to the wreck in Phase 2 to determine if there is any fuel still on-board.

On June 30, 2010 the OSC visited the Essex County OEM in Lewis, NY. The OEM file of the sinking was made available and the OSC made copies of relevant documents, correspondence and contemporary news articles. Three news articles about the sinking went into great detail about the *grounding* and the *crew*, but there was not a word about fuel being released when the boat sank. A 1995 news article reported on a local boat captain who dived on the wreck shortly after it sank, and he stated that there could be at least 4,000 gallons of fuel on-board. Also in 1995 the same captain told the Essex County OEM Director that he believed there could be 6,000 to 10,000 gallons on-board in two tanks, one forward and one aft.
This information was sent to EPA in 1995, and with a renewed interest in the potential threat of a release it raises the current level of suspicion that there is still fuel in the tug.

The Coast Guard's Atlantic Strike Team (AST) Ft. Dix NJ, has committed to support this assessment, and recently the US Navy's Mobile Division Salvage Unit Two (MOBDIVSALU TWO) Hampton VA, has offered to provide Navy divers and equipment to support the next phase of the assessment: a manned dive on the wreck to try to sample the fuel tanks. The OSC is drafting a letter-request to the Navy as well as a draft MOU.

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, a consultant for McAllister Transportation Co., 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 a rep was present during the entire ROV survey.

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

2.2 Planning Section

2.2.1 Anticipated Activities
The video obtained during the 2010 ROV survey shows the wreck and the fuel tank filler ports are readily accessible. A manned dive will be organized for late August, 2010 to attempt to determine if there is still fuel aboard the wreck.

2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities
None at present time.

2.2.1.2 Next Steps

Issue letter-request to MOBDIVSALV U TWO and MOU for diver support and a dive plan to access the fuel tanks for late August 2010.

OSC will attempt to locate Captain Frank Pabst, Plattsburgh, NY and Paul Gordon, Whitehall, NY for phone interviews regarding their knowledge of the sinking.

2.2.2 Issues

NOTE: As a result of a late August dive to access the fuel tanks, if there is fuel on-board it may not be feasible to begin a complex pump-out of the fuel prior to adverse weather and lake conditions setting-in. This may push the actual fuel removal forward to Spring 2011.

2.3 Logistics Section

From a logistics standpoint the Navy'sMOBDIVSALU TW O will provide dive personnel, all dive equipment, and a mobile decompression chamber. EPA-ERT will provide one of it's work/dive boats, and through a subcontractor(s) it will provide a barge, a barge tug, and a 10-ton shore-crane to load/unload the decompression chamber.

The AST will provide H & S support and possibly a boom or skimmer boat which will be deployed during the dive for contingency purposes. In the alternative, Clean Harbors (Burlington, VT) may be contracted to provide on-call services for a fuel-release contingency.

Inasmuch as there may be four vessels in close proximity participating in the assessment, Coast Guard Station Burlington will be asked by the OSC to secure the site for civilian navigation safety and to standby for possible medivac support to Burlington in the event of an injury to personnel.

Advance notice of the assessment activity will be published in the Burlington Free Press (VT) and the Press-Republican (NY).

2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

2.5 Other Command Staff

2.5.1 Safety Officer

The federal OSC is responsible for overall H & S of the assessment. The Coast Guard AST will be designated by the OSC as the overall site monitor for Health and Safety. The MOBSALDIVU TWO will be responsible for all H & S aspects of the actual dive and decompression activities. All subcontractors will be required to read, sign, and abide by the site HASP and any H & S decisions made by either the FOSC, AST, or MOBDIVSALU TWO.

2.6 Liaison Officer

Lt. Chris Kent will be the POC for the Navy MOBDIVSALU TWO. Lt. Jeff Fergursun will be the POC for the AST.
Alan Humphrey with EPA-ERT will be the POC for ERT, and Art Cohn will be the POC for the LCMM.

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

Cooperating Agencies:

USEPA Region I, Boston, MA

Essex County NY OEM, Lewis, NY

Assisting Agencies:

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, Vergennes, VT

US Coast Guard Atlantic Strike Team, Ft. Dix, NJ

US Coast Guard, Station Burlington (VT)

US Navy MOBDIVSALU TWO, Hampton, VA

4. Personnel On Site

Present during the June 2010 ROV survey were reps from the following entities:

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum
USEPA (Region II OSCs and ERT)
Phoenix International (ROV contractor)
Coast Guard Station Burlington (Marine Safety/DHS)
Associated Press (reporter & photographer)
Dryden Diving Co., (representing McAllister Transportation Co.)
Juniper Research (motor vessel owner/operator)

5. Definition of Terms

No information available at this time.

6. Additional sources of information

6.1 Internet location of additional information/report

See the Documents and the Images Sections.

6.2 Reporting Schedule

N/A

7. Situational Reference Materials

See Additional Sources of Information Section.