

NOAA Abandoned Vessel Program Removal Case Study: *Nago No. 15*

Contributing Agency: CNMI Coastal Resources Management Office



OVERVIEW

VESSEL

Dimensions: 16' x 53' *Hull:* Fiberglass
Type: Longliner *Tonnage:* 56

SITE

Name: Tanapag Lagoon
Location: Saipan, CNMI
Coordinates: 15.23463'N 145.74295'E
Land: Above OLW – CNMI Public Land
Below OLW – United States



INCIDENT & REMOVAL

Situation: Grounded during Typhoon Winnie
Incident Date: August 1997
Total Duration: 8 ½ Years, Aug. 1997 – Feb. 2006
Actual Operations: 2 months, Dec 14, 2005 – Feb 20, 2006
Cost: \$49,100
Funding: \$19,100 – CNMI Coral Reef Initiative
\$30,000 – NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program
Agencies Involved: NOAA, USCG, US Army Corp of Engineers, CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources-Division of Fish and Wildlife, Historical Preservation Office (HPO), CNMI Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and CNMI CRMO
Primary Threats: Environment

DETAILS

VESSEL, HISTORY & INCIDENT

NOAA AVP #: 1253

The Nago No. 15 was the most recent of three sister ship to go aground. All were owned by the Japanese fishing firm, Roshe International. The Nago No. 16 sank on the reef off Pagan when transiting from Japan to Guam with the Nago No. 15 in January 1997. The Nago No. 11 towed the Nago No. 15, which also had trouble, into Saipan's port.

The USCG requires security bonds for foreign flagged vessels to pass through territorial waters. Roshe International's local agent used the \$10,000 bond they carried to fund reef and shoreline assessments on Pagan. When no significant damage was found, the CNMI government gave clearance for the Nago No. 15 and 11 to continue from CNMI to Guam. Despite permission to leave, the vessels remained tied together and docked next to Saipan's seaport where they fell into further disrepair. In April 1997 the Nago No. 11 sunk where it was docked, creating an oil spill. The No. 11 was pulled from the water and the Nago No. 15 was anchored nearby.

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CNMI sent another clearance letter to the local agent in August 1997 emphasizing the threat from typhoon season and the need to remove the vessels. The owners did not take action and Typhoon Winnie hit less than a week later. The Nago No. 15 grounded in 3-5' of water the middle of a vast shallow seagrass bed in Tanapag lagoon. Reflected wave energy then created and maintained 8' wide scour on the portside and 20' wide scour off the bow.

Shortly after the storm, the owner's local agent, Saipan Shipping Company, Inc. removed hydraulic fluid and diesel fuel from the Nago No. 15's reserve tanks. The owners were then unable to make further payments to their agent and "walked away" from further responsibility for both the Nago No. 15 and 11. The CNMI government declared them officially abandoned in 2000 and put them up for auction. There were no buyers and the vessels remained where they lay.

In 2003, NOAA's Abandoned Vessel Program surveyed the Nago No. 15 and declared it as a high priority for removal because of its potential to cause further harm to the surrounding benthic habitat. This concern was echoed by local scientists and proved well founded when the vessel was pushed another 50' across the seagrass bed by typhoons Chaba and Ting Ting in 2004. The additional damage spurred renewed interest in the Nago No. 15. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) Pacific Strike Team soon assessed it and found approximately 700 gallons of diesel fuel and hydraulic oil remaining on board. In January 2005 the USCG successfully pumped and disposed of 8.5 drums of oil (460 gal) from the vessel's fuel, hydraulic, and lube oil tanks using the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund. They were unable to meet a CNMI request to use the Fund to remove the vessel as well; the fund has significant limitations on activities it can support. The Strike Team did not reballast the vessel so that future removal efforts would be simplified. CNMI agencies then allocated funding from the CNMI Coral Reef Initiative grant and NOAA released emergency funding from the Coral Reef Conservation Program so the vessel could be removed.

A salvage company was selected to carryout the removal in early 2005. The funding became available in August and the removal began in December. Removal was completed in February 2006.

INCIDENT RESPONSE & SALVAGE OPERATIONS

Contractor: SEAFIX, Incorporated
Authority: CNMI Attorney General's Office declared vessel "abandoned" in 2000 under Admiralty Law
Permits: US ACOE Nation Wide Permit 22 authorization
DEQ 401 Water Quality Certification – waiver
HPO Section 106 and CRM Permits

SEAFIX, Inc. provided the lowest estimate for the operation and was hired in June 2005 to remove the Nago No. 15. In August, they were informed that funding was available and they could proceed. However, scheduling conflicts and tides delayed the start of the operation until December 14th, 2005. The initial shipbreaking began with the vessel in place. Salvagers cut away and removed as much of the exposed cabin and hull as possible to increase the vessel's buoyancy. They used a raft with a block and tackle to move the engine blocks and pieces of the house and hull on deck and transport them to shore where it was sorted. Recyclable metal scrap was separated from non-recyclable materials, e.g., fiberglass, wood, foam, glass, etc.

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The crew removed over 20 tons of debris from the Nago No. 15 before attempting to pull her to shore on January 31st from the beach staging area. Operation planners chose this location to provide a tow path clear of large coral heads. Using a winch and boom truck, they moved the vessel approximately 100' inland before it grounded again. Removing additional weight was necessary before they could attempt another pull out.

By February 7th, 2006 the vessel was light enough for SEAFIX, Inc. to take advantage of surging wave conditions and the rising tide to buoy the vessel and pull it to shore. The salvage crew finished dismantling the hull and separating the pieces at the beach staging area. Containment booms were deployed during the pull out and absorbent pads were available in case of residual oil. No spillage occurred.

DISPOSAL OPERATIONS

Contractors: SEAFIX, Incorporated, Errico Enterprises

A total of 34,441 lbs of metal was separated and given to Errico Enterprises for scrap. The remaining 77,920 lbs of non-recyclable debris was sent to Saipan's Marpi landfill for final disposal. No dangerous waste was found onboard; all the fuel tanks were empty.

One disposal issue arose when a change in administration in January 2006 led to some confusion about who was responsible for the landfill tipping fee. CRMO resolved this quickly, however, by providing the new administration with correspondence documenting that tipping fees had been waived for this government project.

LESSONS LEARNED

Improved regulatory authority would decrease risk and improve response.

The CNMI lacks sufficient regulatory power to: require vessel insurance, ensure that vessels are sea worthy, require proper maintenance by owners, or access emergency response funds to remove vessels at risk before they sink or run aground. Amended policies are being written to address these deficiencies and to make abandonment a less attractive option for owners.

The CNMI also needs to improve enforcement of its emergency contingency plan to ensure quick preparation and response for storms and other emergency events.

Document Publication: April, 2006

NOAA Abandoned Vessel Program
(206) 526-4599 – orr.vessels@noaa.gov
<http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/dac/vessels/>

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Vessel dismantled in place



Large section of house brought to staging area on barge



Remainder of vessel getting cut up at staging area



Hull fragments hauled to landfill

CONTACT INFORMATION

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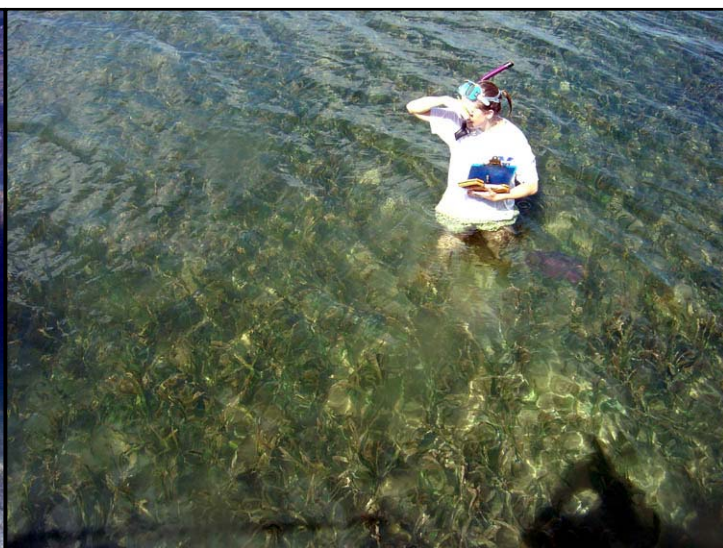
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ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



Scoured bottom around the vessel prior to removal



Representative seagrass surrounding vessel



Pumping fuel from vessel into barrels



Pulley system for redirecting tow from truck to vessel