



NOAA Abandoned Vessel Program Removal Case Study: *Seagull*

Contributing Agency: Guam Department of Agriculture

OVERVIEW

VESSEL

Dimensions: 13'x70' *Hull:* Fiberglass
Type: Sailing *Tonnage:* <50

SITE

Name: Sasa Bay Marine Preserve
Location: Apra Harbor, Piti, Guam
Coordinates: 13 26.681'N 144 40.872'W
Land: US Navy & the Government of Guam
(Disputed Ownership)



INCIDENT & REMOVAL

Situation: Grounded during supertyphoon
Incident Date: December 8, 2002
Total Duration: 15 months, Dec. 8, '02 – Feb. 27, '04
Actual Operations: 1 Days
Cost: \$ N/A
Funding: Owner funded operation
Agencies Involved: US Navy, US Army Corp of Engineers, Guam EPA, Guam Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources
Primary Threats: Environment, Aesthetics

DETAILS

VESSEL, HISTORY & INCIDENT

Vessel ID #: GU4962PU
NOAA AVP#: 2537

The *Seagull* is a 70' fiberglass ketch that grounded in Sasa Bay, Guam during Supertyphoon Pongsona in December, 2002. The vessel was moored at the nearby Marianas Yacht Club, broke free during the storm and wound up hard aground adjacent to the mangroves of Sasa Bay Marine Preserve. Typhoons and hurricanes commonly result in similar incidents. In most cases the vessels sustain significant damage and post-incident they are not worth enough to justify the cost of salvage. In this case, however, the *Seagull* sustained only minor keel damage, creating a situation where vessel removal was financially viable as long as the vessel did not sustain further damage and salvage costs were kept down.

While the vessel was in excellent condition, it did settle on very valuable habitat. It rested on the "dead coral pavement" immediately adjacent to one of the island's richest mangrove areas. The only shore side access was a small walking trail through the forest. Seaward of the vessel, there was a

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very shallow reef that *Seagull* floated over on the large storm surge. The area is also an important foraging area for hawksbill sea turtles.

INCIDENT RESPONSE & SALVAGE OPERATIONS

Contractor: Chris Bell – local salvage operator

Permits: US Army Corp – CWA Section 404 Dredge and Fill Permit
Guam Seashore Clearance Permit – not required because a functional Guam Seashore Protection Commission had not yet been established at the time of removal

Shortly after the grounding, the Guam Environmental Protection Agency (Guam EPA), Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources (DAWR), and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) met with a local salvor to discuss removal options. While the vessel was in good condition and quick removal was a priority, there were a number of obstacles to overcome. *Seagull* was located in a marine preserve, surrounded by rich mangrove and a shallow reef. This made accessing the vessel from land or water difficult and potentially very costly. The vessel was owned by 5 Japanese businessmen who were not willing to pay more than the vessel was worth to remove it and repeatedly delayed salvage. There was 128 gallons of gasoline and 40 gallons of oil on board introducing the logistical complications involved with managing these substances. There was also debate over whether the submerged lands in this area were managed by Guam or the US Navy and therefore who was responsible or should be in charge of the operation.

It was Spring, 2004 before these concerns were worked out and the vessel was removed. Government of Guam and ACOE agreed to allow the salvor to cut a 12'x60' channel in the “dead coral pavement” as long as the equipment came in and the work was done from the water side (avoiding mangroves). The Navy felt their participation was necessary to maintain their potential claim on the submerged land. They agreed to supply a crane to lift a small barge and excavator over the shallow reef and to lift the barge back into the channel once the operation was complete. This let the salvor meet the ACOE requirements. DAWR threatened to issue legal abandonment papers to stimulate the owners into action. This action was never necessary.

The owners contracted a local salvor to perform the operation. The excavator was brought in and used to cut the channel. The salvors were then able to right the vessel and move it into deeper water. *Seagull* was then guided back into the main channel through a small cut in the reef made by a prior grounding. The temporary trench in then bottom was refilled and the barge and machinery were then lifted back over the reef.

DISPOSAL OPERATIONS

The vessel was salvaged in seaworthy condition. Disposal was not necessary.

LESSONS LEARNED

Immediate action would have simplified the process..

Immediately following typhoons, the permitting process is streamlined significantly under an emergency declaration. If the owners had contacted the necessary agencies immediately after the storm, this emergency condition could have been used to simplify permitting and dramatically reduce response time.

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Surveying Vessel- June 2003



Measuring Port Side



Backhoe on barge with excavated sediment between barge and



Seagull & Barge after refloating and before moving vessel back to channel

CONTACT INFORMATION

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