

Robert M. Parry

Wrecks and Floating Debris Authorities

Biography

Mr. Robert M. (Bob) Parry is the Chief of Navigation Section in the Seattle District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Bob is an Engineering graduate of the University of Washington. He has worked for Seattle District for 22 years in its Navigation program coordinating and executing the Operation and Maintenance of the District's Harbor and River projects. Most of this effort involves dredging and disposal of dredged material from the Federal waterways in Puget Sound and the Washington coast. One of his other responsibilities that relates to this Conference is to administer the District's Wrecks and Obstruction program and also the removal of floating debris in Puget Sound.

Presentation Abstract

Wrecks and Floating Debris Authorities: The Corps of Engineers has one authority universal to all its Districts, namely the Wrecks and Obstruction authority. This authority allows the Corps, in certain limited instances, to remove floating or sunken objects that are a hazard to navigation. Usually this authority is only used in Federal waterways. The Coast Guard also has to agree that a hazard to navigation exists before the authority can be invoked. Another authority exists for several Districts such as Seattle, San Francisco, and New York. These are Congressionally authorized projects for the removal of floating debris in certain specified bodies of water. In Seattle District, this is Puget Sound. While the Wrecks and Obstruction authority is invoked on a case by case basis, the floating debris projects are day by day. In Puget Sound, the Corps routinely patrols for and removes floating debris of all kinds, except for abandoned vessels.

Illustrative incidents: In the winter of 1995, the motor vessel K.J., a retired Navy minesweeper being refitted by private owners, was evicted from its moorage for non-payment of fees of its berth in the port Orchard marina. Anchored outside the marina, the anchor drug in a storm, allowing the vessel to sail across the inlet into the Navy's mothballed fleet in Bremerton. The Navy corralled the vessel, which was damaging other ships, and tied it to one of their own buoys. Being in poor shape, the vessel took on water during Washington's rainy winter and sank. Because the vessel did not sink

in a federal channel, rather sinking at moorage, which is one of the specified exceptions, the Wrecks and Obstructions authority could not be used. The Navy had to float and dispose of the vessel using it's own means. And, typical of the ownership of most of these old abandoned vessels, the owner was indigent and costs could not be recovered.

In the winter of 2000, the tug Seaway 10 was tied to one of the buoys used to "park" vessels waiting to enter the Lake Washington Ship Canal Locks. The tug was really abandoned, since the engine and other valuable items had been removed. The tug broke loose, or was maybe cut loose by one of the other irate users of the buoys, and drifted in the wind and currents, beaching itself in northern Puget Sound. The tug was not hard aground, and threatened to float loose in a northerly storm. The Coast Guard removed the oil and fuel, and the tug was towed back to the mooring buoy. It broke loose a second time, and was towed inside the Locks to control it. It is now in the process of being auctioned off by the Seattle Police.