

SALVORS AS THE ULTIMATE ENVIRONMENTALISTS

cont'd from page 56



John A. Witte is president of the American Salvage Association

Threats (RUST) Database exceeds 7,000.

The pollutants contained in older as well as more recent shipwrecks pose serious envi-

ronmental risks to the U.S. and its coastal waterways, beaches and wildlife. Degradation of the wrecks' hulls and tank plating will ultimately cause fuel and cargo oil tanks to fail, thus allowing oil to escape into the environment.

Pollutants are escaping from these wrecks as you read this article.

Based upon recent studies conducted on the issue of clean up versus remediation, it seems clear that the cost to the public of removing the oil from the wreckage now, while it is still contained, is significantly less than the costs incurred if the oil is allowed to escape into the sensitive marine environment with the attendant impact to natural resources, sea life, as well as the significant economic losses suffered by seaside communities as a result of beach closings and related consequences.

Countries around the world are beginning to recognize the environmental threat posed by the cargo and/or bunker oils and chemical cargoes remaining aboard shipwrecks located in their respective waters, and the time has come where action should be taken to deal with those pollution threats in a controlled and cost effective manner rather than the high cost emergency response approach.

There is an initiative underway to begin the intelligent and systematic remediation of these undersea time

bombs. This program, being championed by representation from both the public and private sectors, is presently known as the Wreck Oil Removal Initiative Demonstration Project. While in its infancy, this project will hopefully be the precursor to the intelligent and systematic remediation of vessels that if ever allowed to release their pollutants into our environment will make the *Exxon Valdez* look like a training exercise.

This project—as a result of the foresight of efforts of both public and private sector organizations involved—has once again brought attention to the issue of shipwrecks and their detrimental effects on the environment. Our collective approach to the problem is to evaluate the RUST data base, created and managed by NOAA, prioritizing the threats contained in each vessel based upon the probability of a release and its impact to the environment, and to ultimately urge Congress to appropriate funds on an annual basis to remove the pollution threat. It certainly seems to make sense based upon our heightened national awareness as relates to the issue of environmental preparedness; we now need to determine how to put a good idea into practical application.

TIME TO ADDRESS SALVAGE AND MARINE FIREFIGHTING

There still remains another great need to be addressed to further the environmental protection of our nation and that is to promulgate and implement the U.S. Coast Guard's Proposed Rule 33, CFR Part 155 Salvage and Marine Firefighting Requirements.

Finalizing the current proposed salvage regulations would help to create a stable and effective National Salvage Policy that is needed by this country now more than ever. The salvage community stands ready, willing and able to assist the U.S. with matters of maritime protection, casualty response planning, vessel and cargo salvage, wreck removal and harbor clearance, and most importantly

marine environmental protection. These regulations are crucial to those efforts.

Just like OPA 90's effectiveness in reducing oil pollution from ships, there is little argument today against the need to promulgate these salvage and firefighting regulations in order to protect national security; ensure minimal disruption to the U.S. economy resulting from marine casualties; minimize environmental impacts due to pollution from marine casualties and from Mother Nature's fury; in addition to protecting public safety in the aftermath of September 11th. The Salvage and Firefighting regulations would help to ensure a maritime salvage capability that is ready and able to respond to the variety of events that occur in our domestic and surrounding waters.

The salvage industry is an essential component in providing the tools necessary for meeting the environmental imperative. The ASA member companies have traded in their peg legs, eye patches and parrots for state-of-the-art technologies, and an understanding of the needs of their customers and the environment in which we live in. We are also a community that encourages the highest standards of safety and responsibility. We do so by partnering with the Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, by building close ties with NOAA and other federal agencies to enhance the lines of communication and to collaborate on critical events our nation may face. And we do so by urging the promulgation of important industry regulations that will help to ensure professional salvage capability over the decades to come. A tall order to fulfill to be sure, but one which we in the professional salvage community believe is within our collective abilities. While a day without a salvor may not typically be likened to a day without sunshine, the need for professional salvors and the services that we bring to bear are an essential component to any successful causality response.

www.americansalvage.org

ML

BY JOHN A. WITTE JR., PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SALVAGE ASSOCIATION

SALVORS AS THE ULTIMATE ENVIRONMENTALIST

Environmental preparedness is a growing issue of concern across the world. As president of the American Salvage Association, I believe salvors play an essential role in the prevention of pollution entering our waters by keeping potential pollutants in the ship.

Protection of the marine environment is an important component of a salvor's everyday life. They are the ultimate environmentalists. By keeping pollutants contained in a stricken vessel, a significant portion of the environmental impact is removed. If contained, and subsequently removed with the vessel, a pollutant carried by a stricken vessel cannot impact the

environment. Recent high profile casualties such as the *Cosco Busan* located in San Francisco Bay did not have a professional salvor in attendance at any point in the response. While this and similar incidents luckily did not result in a loss of the vessel, one could imagine how much worse the incident would have been if the vessel stability or condition was compromised to a point where the vessel began to sink or break up and there was no professional salvage expertise onsite to respond to the problem. In this regard the phrase "a penny's worth of prevention is worth a pound of cure" quickly comes to mind.

A salvor is typically an afterthought until the proverbial manure hits the fan. Why then are we normally the last ones invited to the party?

In light of the national outcry to provide for a heightened level of marine environmental protection, and with the benefit of our nation's significant response capabilities, our country must also take note of the threat to the ocean and coastal environments posed by the aging population of shipwrecks located off its coasts. This threat is not insignificant. The number of known targets tracked by NOAA through its Resource and Undersea

Continued on page 55

MARINELOG

ISSN 08970491

USPS 576-910

A Simmons-Boardman Publication

345 Hudson Street, New York, N.Y. 10014
Tel: (212) 620-7200 Fax: (212) 633-1165
Website: <http://www.marinelog.com>

Advertising Sales

UNITED STATES

New York Sales Office
345 Hudson St., 12th floor
New York, NY 10014

Roland Espinosa
Sales Director
Tel (212) 620-7225
Fax (212) 633-1165
E-mail: respinosa@sbpub.com

U.S. GULF COAST

Jeff Sutley
Tel (212) 620-7233
Fax (212) 633-1165
E-mail:
jsutley@sbpub.com

WORLDWIDE

Europe Representative

Donna Edwards,
International Sales Manager
e-mail: dedwards@sbpub.com

Marine Log (UK)

Suite K5 & K6 The Priory,
Syresham Gardens, Haywards Heath
West Sussex RH16 3LB
Tel: +44-1444-416368
Fax: +44-1444-458185

Korea

Young-Seoh Chinn
JES Media International
2nd Fl. ANA Bldg.
257-1, Myungil Dong,
Kangdong-Gu
Seoul 134-070, Korea

Tel: +822-481-3411

Fax: +822-481-3414

e-mail: jesmedia@unitel.co.kr

CLASSIFIED SALES

Diane Okon
Classified Advertising Sales
20 South Clark St., Suite 2450
Chicago, IL 60603
Tel: (312) 683-5022
Fax: (312) 683-0131
E-mail: dokon@sbpub-chicago.com