

# Mona Island Low Profile Vessel Emergency Restoration

## CRRT Meeting, Jan 23 2024

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August 31, 2023, Submersible Drug Runner/LPV discovered & reported to NRC



Photos- DNER

# INCIDENT LOCATION – MONA ISLAND



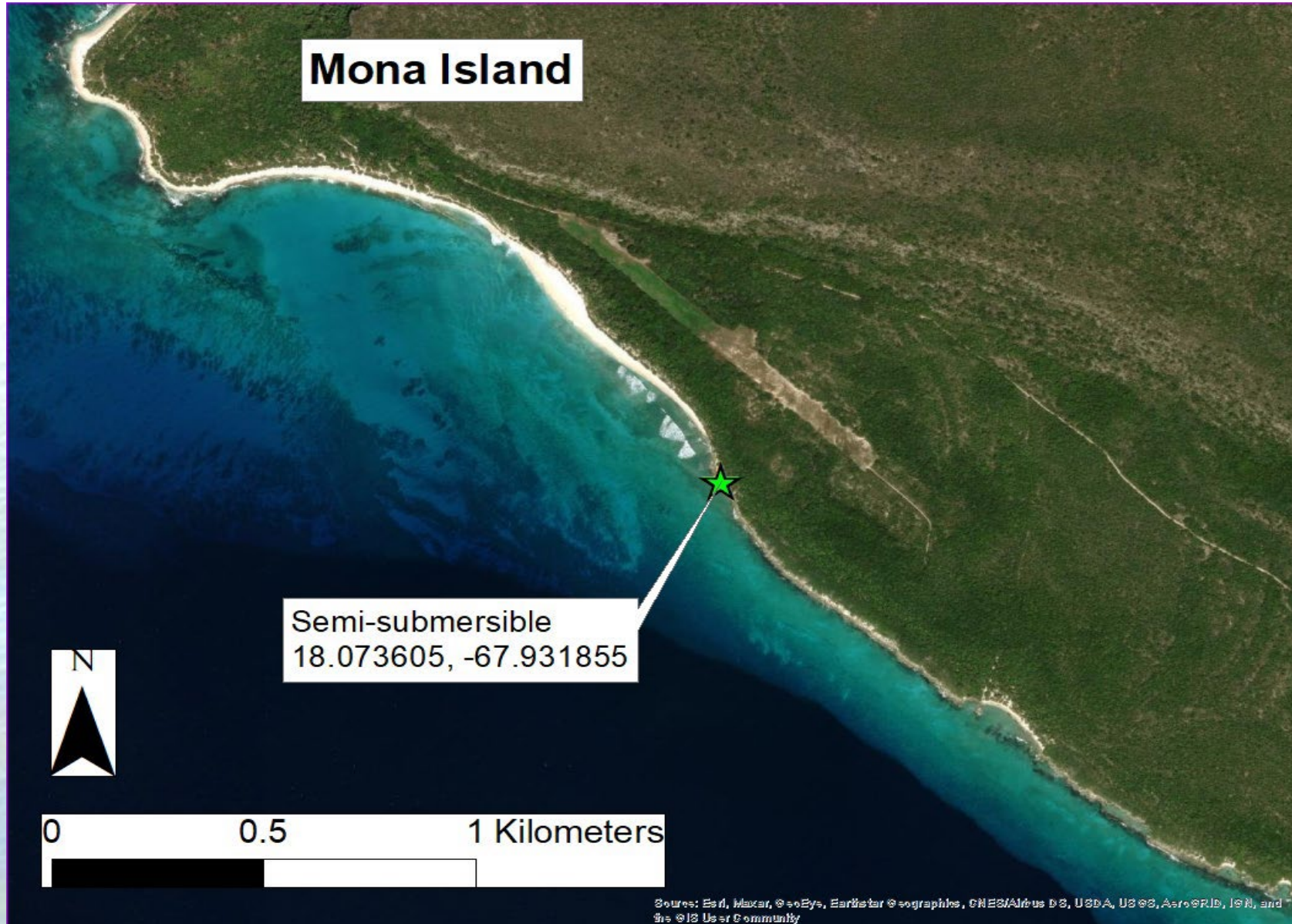


Photo: NOAA

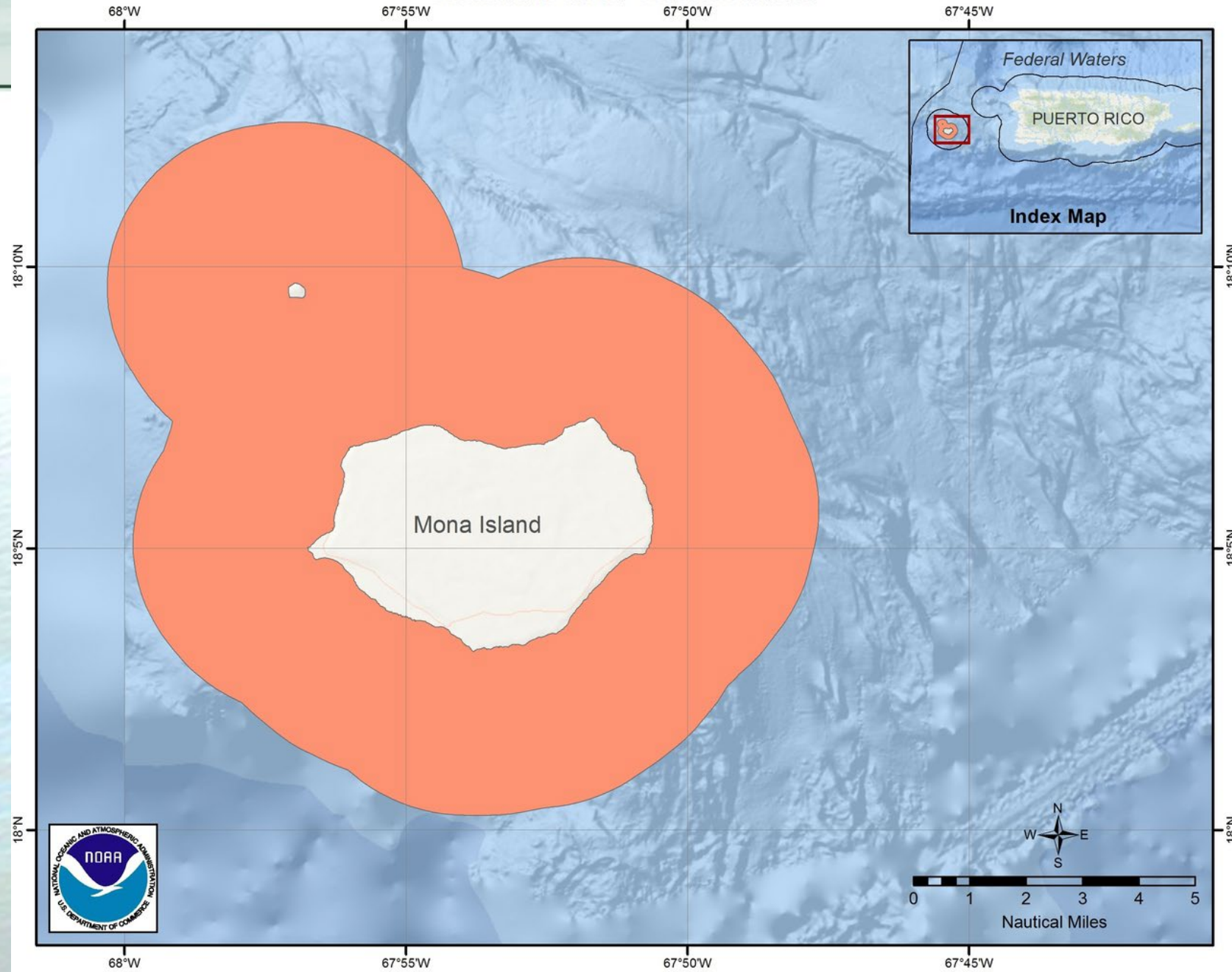


Photo: NOAA

# INCIDENT LOCATION – MONA ISLAND

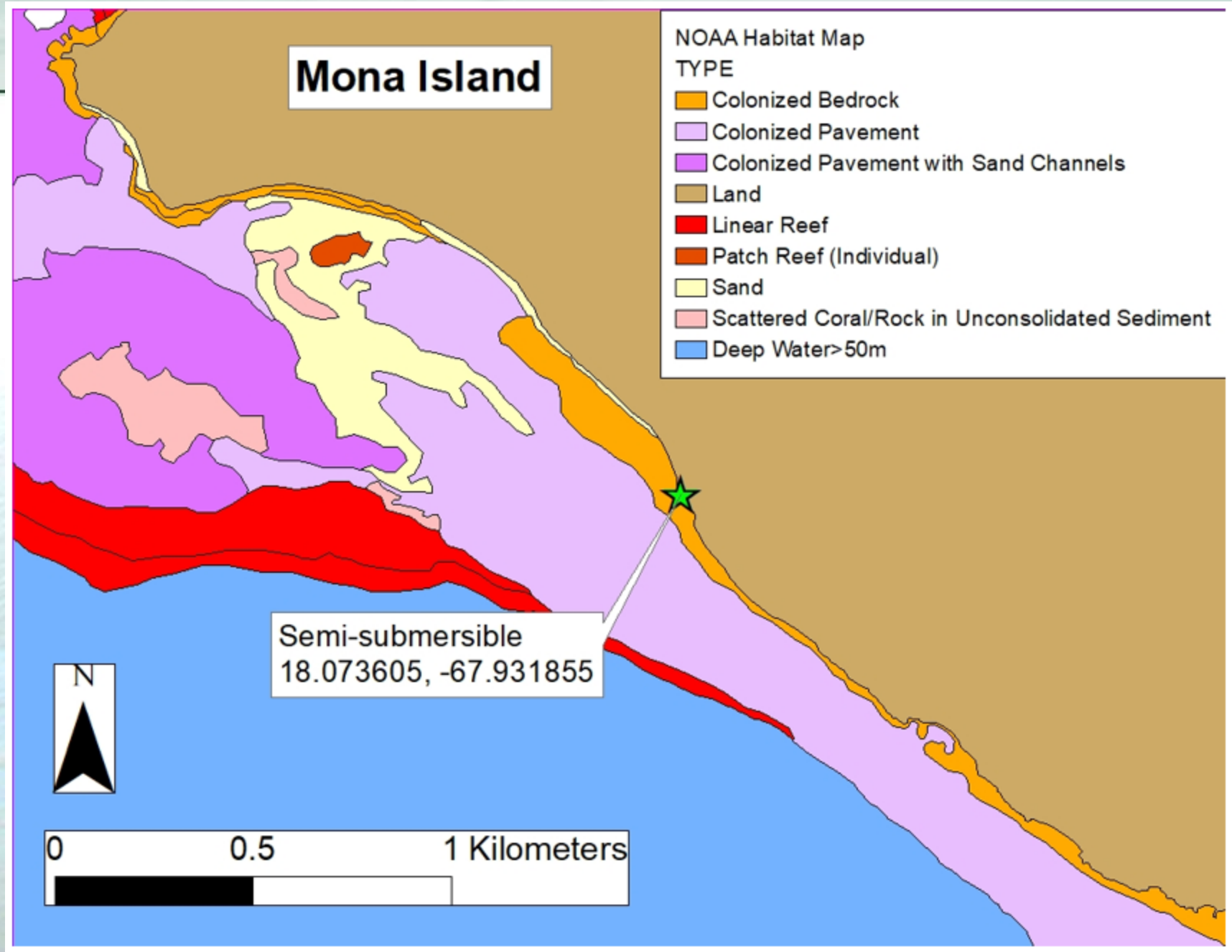


### Hawksbill Turtle Critical Habitat



Esri Ocean Basemap Sources: Esri, Garmin, GEBCO, NOAA NGDC, and other contributors





# TIMELINE

- August 31 – abandoned vessel discovered and reported to NRC
- Sept. 4-6 – USCG response
- Sept. 18 – USCG memo
- Sept. 20 – Trustees start Initiate funding with NPFC - Preassessment
- Sept. 27 – Trustee site visit to evaluate vessel and resources
  - Trustees make determination that Emergency Restoration is warranted
- ...
- Oct. 2 – Trustees submit claim for Emergency Restoration
- ...
- Oct. 19 – NPFC adjudication
- Oct 20 – Trustees select contractor
- ...
- Nov. 3-8 – Emergency Restoration Actions



Sept 27 – Strong  
smell of fuel in  
and around  
vessel. Interior of  
vessel coated in  
fuel.



# Continuing Danger to Natural Resources



Photo: DNER



Photo: DNER



Photos: NOAA

# Endangered Species

## Sea Turtles:

- At initial discovery of vessel, August 31, 2023, 50 Hawksbill and Green sea turtle nests on Las Mujeres beach.
- By September 29, more than 90 Hawksbill and Green sea turtle nests.
  - Predominant currents were anticipated to take any released oil or oily debris toward nesting beach.

## Corals:

- ESA listed corals in vicinity of vessel
  - Elk horn, Stag horn, Pillar corals, Star corals, and Cactus corals

# Trustee Determination

- Due to the threatened and endangered status of the sea turtles and several of the corals, the Trustees have determined that avoiding irreversible loss and reducing danger to these imperiled species is an action that needs to be taken as soon as possible. If left in place, the vessel will eventually break up during storms or high surf, releasing remaining fuel, engine oil, and spreading oil-contaminated debris along the shoreline and reef.

## EMERGENCY RESTORATION 15 CFR 990.26

(a) Trustees may take emergency restoration action before completing the process established under this part, provided that:

- (1) The action is needed to **avoid irreversible loss of natural resources**, or to **prevent or reduce any continuing danger to natural resources** or similar need for emergency action;
- (2) The action will not be undertaken by the lead response agency;
- (3) The action is feasible and likely to succeed;
- (4) **Delay of the action** to complete the restoration planning process established in this part likely would **result in increased natural resource damages**; and
- (5) The costs of the action are not unreasonable.

# OPA 33 USC 2712(h)

## (h) OBLIGATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH PLAN

(1) IN GENERAL Except as provided in paragraph (2), amounts may be obligated from the Fund for the restoration, rehabilitation, replacement, or acquisition of natural resources only in accordance with a plan adopted under section 2706(c) of this title.

(2) EXCEPTION Paragraph (1) shall not apply in a situation requiring action to **avoid irreversible loss** of natural resources or to **prevent or reduce any continuing danger** to natural resources or similar need for emergency action.

## Awaiting adjudication on Emergency Restoration Claim

- Four quotes and procedures obtained
  - A range of options and costs proposed with varying levels of detail in initial proposals
- Emergency ESA Consultation undertaken
- Good sea conditions and weather...

Vessel on October 11, 2023 as photographed by one contractor while developing quote.



Photo: Xperts LLC

# Oct 19 adjudication received

- Offer accepted immediately on Oct 19
- Oct 20, Trustees select contractor and sub based on proposals
  - Details sufficient to understand proposed vessel removal action
  - Dedicated biologist to ensure minimization of natural resource impacts
  - Reasonable costs
- Oct 24, final design and preparation
  - Rapid action requested because of swell forecast
- Swell arrives early...

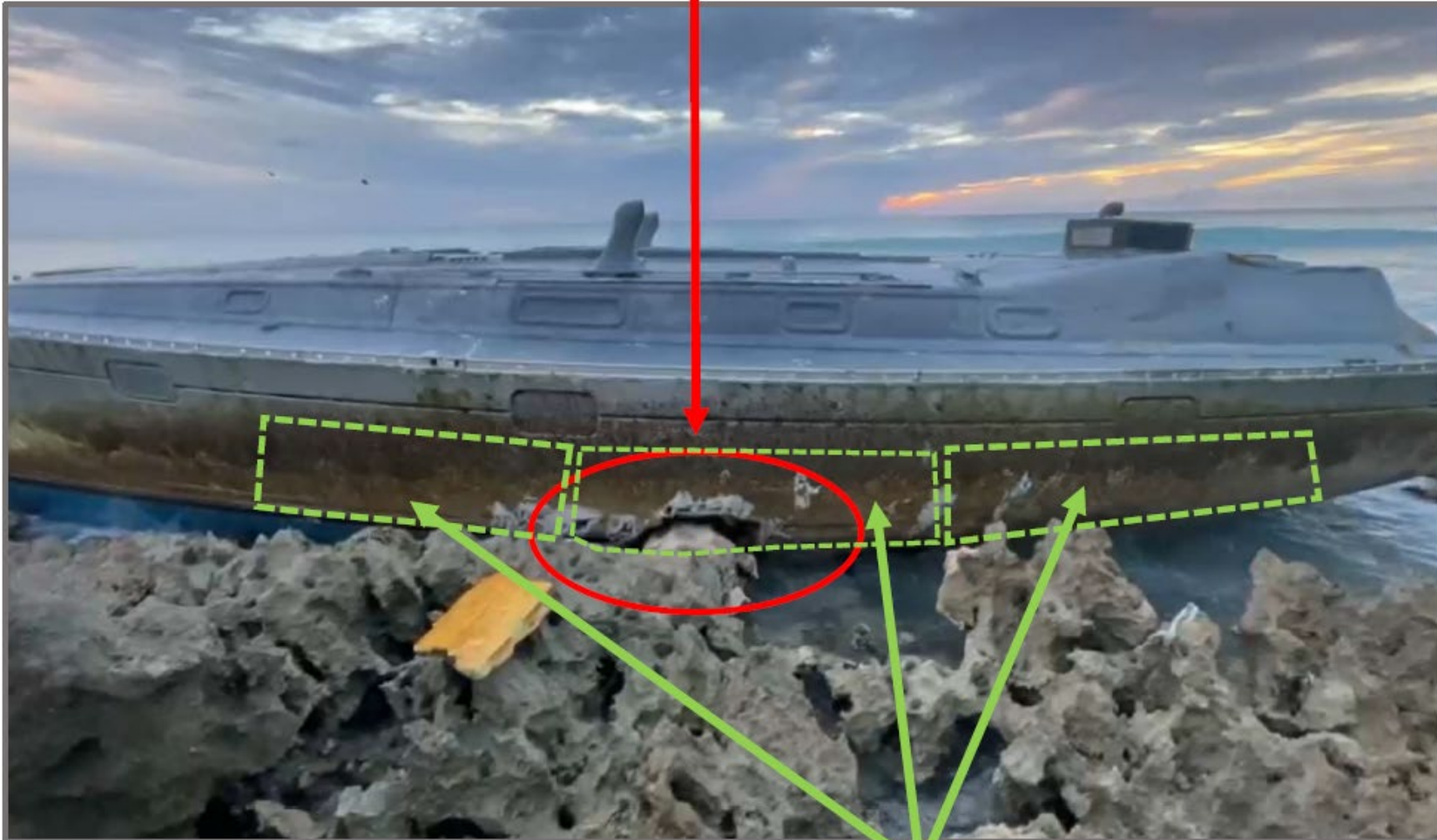


By October 26



October 26...

Broken diesel fuel tank



Approximate location of left-sided inner diesel tanks



# Re-evaluate options

- Vessel can no longer be easily refloated
- Proposed action to cut vessel into pieces and load on tug for transport
  - As vessel is cut-up, recover remaining fuel from tanks, remove oily debris and oily pieces of vessel
  - Natural resource survey to identify work areas on shore and in the water

## Result:

- More complicated logistics
- Increased costs

## On site action: Re-re-evaluate options

- Due to sea conditions top half of vessel removed but unable to cut up the rest of the vessel
- Conditions slated to get worse
- Decision made to float bottom half of vessel using lift bags before weather window completely closes
- Use of pre-identified areas where natural resource impacts minimized
  - Marked sand areas
  - Tug stays offshore to avoid propwash on sensitive habitat



Photos: Xperts LLC

# Conclusions

- Vessel successfully removed during Emergency Restoration Action
- Danger to imperiled species and their designated critical habitat reduced

## Delays resulted in:

- Additional releases of oil into sensitive environment
  - Still evaluating potential impacts to natural resources
- More complicated
- Increased cost

# Questions?

