

Tow Rigging Tests Underway for CDU Kulluk

Saturday, 05 January 2013

Jay Barrett/KMXT

Responders to the grounded Shell "conical drilling unit" Kulluk planned to hook up a tow line today (Saturday) to test their methods for dragging the huge, round structure off the beach, where it's sat since New Year's Eve. The test is weather dependent, according to the latest situation report from the Unified Command.

Meanwhile, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation has said in its separate situation report that the Unified Command has approved plans to tow the Kulluk to nearby Kiluda Bay on Kodiak Island after it is dislodged from the beach. The location was announced at a Saturday afternoon press conference. The sheltered bay will allow the Kulluk and its tow ships a place of refuge from further winter storms as they evaluate the rig's condition and make any needed repairs.

They also plan to deploy boom, as a precautionary measure, to Sitkalidak Island to protect salmon streams connecting to Ocean Bay, near the grounding site.

They have also developed a protection plan to be used in the event that wildlife in the area is affected during the recovery. They have brought in International Bird Rescue to assist should their expertise be required. In addition, Protected Species Observers are being deployed on-scene. The area around the Kulluk is considered critical habitat for endangered Steller Sea Lions and birds.

The latest report from salvage teams on board the Kulluk is that all the fuel tanks remain intact and no oil sheen has been spotted in the area. The Kulluk carries about 150,000 gallons of diesel fuel.

Meanwhile, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation has said in its separate situation report that the Unified Command has approved plans to tow the Kulluk to a place of refuge for evaluation and repairs after it is dislodged from the beach. In a Saturday afternoon press conference, Kiluda Bay on Kodiak Island, has been chosen as the protected area the Kulluk will be towed for evaluation.