Arlluk Update: Preliminary Investigation Shows No Damage to Hull

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service research vessel is being stored on dry ground today after sinking early Friday morning in St. Herman Harbor. The sunken Arlluk was discovered by the Harbormaster around 3:30 a.m. on Friday. The Coast Guard Marine Safety Detachment was notified and personnel arrived on-scene at 3:50 a.m. The wildlife service also contracted Lazy Bay LLC personnel help with refloating the 63-foot vessel.

Larry Bell is the assistant regional director for external affairs for the fish and wildlife service and said the Arlluk was refloated on Saturday.

-- (Arlluk Update 1 :20 “The vessel had be removed … and safe to board.”)

Bell said once the vessel is blocked, or stabilized on dry ground, investigators will board the vessel.

-- (Arlluk Update 2 :17 “They they’ll … oil product or anything like that.”)

While the exact cause of the sinking won’t be known until the investigation is complete, Bell said there are preliminary thoughts on how it happened.

-- (Arlluk Update 3 :40 “They have … complete inspection from the inside.”)

Bell said there was an estimated 20 gallons of diesel fuel spilled while the vessel was under water in the harbor, but containment booms helped minimize pollution. In general, he said the incident could have been much worse.

-- (Arlluk Update 4 :27 “We’re happy … without risk of any contamination.”)

The sinking may have been the last straw for the Arlluk. Bell said the fish and wildlife service doesn’t know for certain if the boat will be used again, but at this point he doesn’t think it will.

The vessel has a history reaching back into the 1970s, including a stint as an undercover drug boat. Bruce Woods is another spokesperson for the wildlife service and said the vessel was seized during a drug bust in the 1990s.

-- (Arlluk Update 5 :47 “The Arlluk was … value of the ship was $2.5 million.”)

The fish and wildlife service is leading the investigation and hopes to have personnel onboard the vessel at some point tomorrow (today).

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