

Kennicott Assists Ailing Fishing Vessel

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

The Alaska State Ferry Kennicott's return to Kodiak from its run to Unalaska and back was just a bit delayed over the weekend, but, as the Marine Highway System's Jeremy Woodrow tells us, it was for a good cause.

"Yeah, the Kennicott was sailing from Sand Point to Kodiak on Sunday and got a notice over the radio that fishing vessel southwest of Kodiak Island was taking on some water. I think the Kennicott happened to be one of the closer vessels, so it turned around. I believe it was the first boat on the scene, by my knowledge. So it deployed one of the safety boats on the Kennicott and assisted the vessel with getting water off the deck."

Horizon Lines Manager Rick Kniazowski was a passenger on the Kennicott when it got the distress call from the Nome-based Erica Rene, a 51-foot Dungeness crabber.

"We had just entered Shelikof Strait when all of a sudden we did a 180, and I was like, 'Wow, wonder what's this about?' and they came over and announced they had received an SOS; they were the closest to respond, so we came around the tip of Kodiak, near the entrance to Alitak, and there she was, this tiny little crabbing boat, wallowing stern-first in the probably 6- 8-foot seas."

The Erica Rene's bilge pumps had apparently failed, and Kniazowski said the Kennicott sent a small boat to assist.

"The Ken launched their rescue boat. They had problems with one of their engines so they launched the other rescue boat and then they had problems with that one so went back to the first one. They went over with, looked like the engineer from the vessel, the Kennicott. And they put some pumps on, pumped out the bilge and got the bilge restarted and the Erica Rene headed off, I'm not sure where. There were a couple wet, cold-looking guys on the back deck. So we were probably alongside maneuvering and doing pumps and stuff for two-and-a-half, three hours."

The Kennicott arrived back in Kodiak at about 1 Monday morning, and set off again at about 3 a.m. Woodrow says it should be caught back up by the end of the week.

"Yeah, for a good cause it put the vessel behind about four hours getting into Kodiak, so it's obviously behind that amount as it tries to make up time moving into its cross-gulf and down to Bellingham trip. So when it gets to Bellingham at the end of the week, it will be on schedule arriving Bellingham and obvious on schedule departing Bellingham this end of the week."

You can check the Kennicott's revised schedule, and even track its whereabouts, at Ferry Alaska.

