State Fines Greenpeace Ship for 2012 Incursion

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Lauren Rosenthal/KUCB

A state board has fined Greenpeace $15,000 for traveling through Alaskan waters without a marine pilot.

The violation occurred during Greenpeace’s “Save the Arctic” tour to protest Shell’s oil exploration in July 2012.

Greenpeace had sent the Esperanza, their 237-foot, Dutch-flagged research vessel. The Esperanza were supposed to study corals and sealife in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas.

Along the way, the vessel stopped into a few Alaskan towns. That’s where it ran into trouble.

Crystal Dooley is a coordinator for the Alaska Board of Marine Pilots.

“Pilotage is compulsory at all entrances from seaward to Alaska’s bays, sounds, rivers, straits, inlets, harbors, ports, or other estuaries or passages within three nautical miles of the state's coastline,” she said.

Dooley says the Board of Marine Pilots got an anonymous tip that the Esperanza may have broken that rule at Point Hope.

Dooley says they looked up data from the vessel’s Automatic Identification System receiver. It showed that the Esperanza anchored inside the mandatory pilotage zone.

The Board of Marine Pilots voted to fine Greenpeace in October.

Greenpeace attorney Deepa Isac says the organization is still sorting through the violation. They have retained a lawyer in Alaska, and they may file an appeal.

Isac says the Esperanza crew is experienced in traveling through Arctic and near-shore environments.

“They always look into what is required locally in all the areas that they go,” she said.

The Alaska Board of Marine Pilots is not investigating any other violations from Greenpeace’s trip to Alaska.