

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CAPSIZING/SINKING OF THE *GOLDEN*  
RAY IN THE BRUNSWICK RIVER,  
GEORGIA, ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2019

Accident No.: DCA19FM048

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Interview of:



U.S. Coast Guard

Military Safety Unit  
Savannah, Georgia

Wednesday,  
January 29, 2020

## APPEARANCES:

LT [REDACTED], Investigator  
U.S. Coast Guard

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of [REDACTED]:

By Lt. [REDACTED]

4

I N T E R V I E W

(9:45 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 LT [REDACTED]: Good morning. This is Lieutenant [REDACTED] on  
4 January 29th, 2020, at 0945. I have been asked to research into  
5 all the things regarding the pollution response and salvage  
6 activities surrounding the incident around the *Golden Ray*, and I'm  
7 here discussing these questions. My name is [REDACTED] once  
8 again, [REDACTED].

9 And go ahead and introduce yourself.

10 MR. [REDACTED]: This is [REDACTED] MST2 here at MSU  
11 Savannah. My name is spelled [REDACTED]

## INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED]

12  
13 BY LT [REDACTED]

14 Q. And what was your role on the incident?

15 A. My role on the *Golden Ray*, I was in Operations, so out on  
16 on-water recovery, and later I switched to different other various  
17 positions.

18 Q. And at the unit here, are you FO SCR?

19 A. At the unit I'm an FO SCR in the IMD shop here at MSU  
20 Savannah.

21 Q. And do you consent to this interview being recorded?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. All right. So go ahead and start off in the beginning on how  
24 you were first notified about the incident.

25 A. I was notified of the incident at about 3:30 in the morning.

1 It came from MST3 [REDACTED] (ph.), who was on duty. He told me  
2 that there's a capsized ro-ro in Brunswick, and I was needed to  
3 come in. So I live in town; it was a quick easy bike ride in. I  
4 got to the unit probably around 4:30. And then around 5:00, I  
5 left and departed for Brunswick.

6 Q. And then once you arrived in Brunswick, kind of describe what  
7 your first observations were and then what role you took on.

8 A. When I first arrived in Brunswick, it was dark. We were  
9 standing by the coastal resources building behind the station  
10 there. And a couple of the crew members were still being pulled  
11 out the -- driven to shore by the station. So it was basically a  
12 search and rescue.

13 My job was basically coordinating with NRC who had been hired  
14 as the OSRO. So I coordinated with them, directed them to where I  
15 thought a good staging point would be under the Sidney Lanier  
16 Bridge. So that's where I directed them to go and waited for them  
17 to get there. And at first light they got there, and we went out  
18 and made a lap for whatever pollution we could find.

19 Q. Why was the Sidney Lanier Bridge a good staging area  
20 location?

21 A. It was immediately adjacent to where the Coast Guard station  
22 is and based on local knowledge, and we were looking at maps where  
23 other points. Sidney Lanier was about a 10-minute boat ride away.  
24 And that was the best we could find at that time, and it still is  
25 the staging area, so it was a pretty good decision.

1 Q. Good. And then from there, what actions did you take after  
2 establishing that as the staging area?

3 A. After that action was taken, we went out -- myself and  
4 Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED], we went out with an NRC vessel and did  
5 an initial lap to determine what the pollution extent was. So I  
6 think we noticed a light sheen early that morning. But I guess  
7 other photographs we -- that were taken at the time, there was the  
8 black slick in the water. But it was basically to get eyes first  
9 on scenes of what is the pollution damage, if there was anything  
10 coming out.

11 And then also, I'd been on the phone with someone from DNR,  
12 and they had told me that their highest priority or concern was  
13 protecting the environmentally-sensitive Bird Island. So we went  
14 to see where that was in the vicinity and if the oil was indeed  
15 going towards there.

16 Q. Was the oil going towards Bird Island at that point?

17 A. At that time, it was -- we didn't -- the oil was going  
18 towards the opposite way down towards the Morningstar Marina, not  
19 that way.

20 Q. Okay. When you arrived on scene, can you describe the sheen  
21 that you saw?

22 A. It was a light rainbow sheen. Didn't have a strong odor to  
23 it. But there was a rainbow sheen pretty much all around the  
24 vessel in all directions.

25 Q. Okay. And you mentioned that some images had been taken.

1 Were those -- where were those taken from?

2 A. I think a Coast Guard helo, but I'm not sure where they  
3 were. But you could see like there was a black slick coming from,  
4 and we had been given a whole bunch of information whether there  
5 was a sheen or wasn't a sheen that morning.

6 Q. Okay. When you were on scene, was there any indications that  
7 it was thicker than a sheen, like fuel oil smell or anything like  
8 that?

9 A. At first, no.

10 Q. No. Okay. So then after doing an assessment, what actions  
11 did you take?

12 A. As soon as -- then we went back to the pier. MSC had -- and  
13 Jacksonville Spillage Control got there, I'd say about 9 o'clock  
14 with a couple more boats and resources. So we got out and we  
15 decided to get a section of -- so they had 500 feet of boom in a  
16 trailer, and we asked for that trailer to be taken over to Jekyll  
17 Island. And then from at the Jekyll Island fish pier there,  
18 there's like a small little riprap area, and they could easily  
19 pull and launch boom there and pull the boat right there. And  
20 then we wanted to boom off as much as we could of Bird Island  
21 immediately.

22 So with that 500 feet, we took that to Bird Island. And then  
23 by the time that 500 feet was in place, there was already more  
24 boom in there, so we ended up putting 2,000 feet across the head  
25 of Bird Island. And that took probably took until around 12:30 to

1 1:00. And then I'd say around 12:30 to 1:00 that day, was I  
2 think -- I don't know when low tide was, but if my memory is  
3 correct, around that time is when we started seeing oil come out  
4 of the back of the ship -- of the stern of the ship; that's where  
5 it appeared to be coming from. So then we started recovery  
6 actions.

7 Q. Okay. Before we talk about recovery actions, when you first  
8 arrived with NRC, what resources did they have on scene at the  
9 time?

10 A. They had two vessels, two workboats, a vac truck, and 500  
11 feet of boom in that trailer. They had a vac truck because they  
12 thought there was misinformation. They thought that the vessel  
13 had capsized at the Colonel's Island Facility, not in the water  
14 like that. So that's why they brought a vac truck.

15 Q. Okay. And that was all the resources they had initially?

16 A. That's all the resources they had initially.

17 Q. And then you mentioned Jacksonville Spillage Control came.

18 A. Um-hmm.

19 Q. What resources did they bring with them?

20 A. They had two or three more workboats, the personnel and crew  
21 accompany that, and then a whole bunch of boom, I'd say around  
22 2,000 feet of boom.

23 Q. Okay. And that's what was used for Bird Island?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. So now, once you started deploying from the marina



1 there, did you -- what action did you take as you headed towards  
2 Bird Island?

3 A. So the first time there, we towed about 200 feet of boom.  
4 And it was slow, so it was probably like an hour transit there.  
5 Then we observed a light sheen in the water. And occasionally,  
6 you'd see the little segments of a couple pockets of oil. But our  
7 goal was to get the Bird Island boomed off, because we didn't know  
8 how much was actively discharging or anything at that point.

9 There was -- because it was hard to get out towards the  
10 vessel. We wanted to stay away from search and rescue operations  
11 that were ongoing, because there were tugs and boats flying all  
12 around that boat. So we were just staying away and letting the  
13 search and rescue do their thing.

14 Q. Okay. And what section of Bird Island did you boom off  
15 initially?

16 A. We boomed off the -- I don't know -- the head of Bird Island.  
17 So it was basically the closest point towards the boat. On the  
18 map, right here.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. That's where we boomed off.

21 Q. And just note for the recording, he's pointing at a chart  
22 that has Bird Island that had the section of the island that was  
23 closest to the capsizing of the *Golden Ray*. And at that time, was  
24 there any oil on Bird Island?

25 A. We didn't go on Bird Island, but it's hard to say.

1 Q. It's hard to say? Okay.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Did -- you didn't physically observe?

4 A. No, none was observed.

5 Q. Okay. And then -- so then after you boomed off Bird Island,  
6 you're heading back, and you noticed oil coming from the stern of  
7 the vessel, correct?

8 A. Yeah, after -- yeah, I'd say a couple hours later, I think  
9 one of the tugs actually reported it to us, because we didn't have  
10 any boats out there because we were basically busy pulling boom  
11 out and everything. I think one of the tugs came on the radios  
12 and said, pollution boat, we got oil coming out. And so that's  
13 when we were notified.

14 Q. And then what were the initial actions to encounter the oil?

15 A. Initial actions. We -- since we didn't have a lot of  
16 resources on scene, we took the bails of sorbent boom, basically  
17 strung them between two vessels and tow them up until they picked  
18 up -- until they were basically coated in black. And then we kept  
19 on doing that until we couldn't recover any more.

20 Q. And what did you do with the sorbent boom once it was full?

21 A. It was bagged properly and then -- everybody was wearing  
22 their proper PPE, like Tyvek suits, gloves, and everything. And  
23 it was disposed of properly.

24 Q. Where -- did they take it to a barge or to -- back to the  
25 staging area?

1 A. Back to the -- so we had -- I think by this time we had six  
2 or seven vessels, so we had one boat basically running supplies  
3 out to the boats, and then we'd hand -- they'd hand us fresh  
4 supplies and then they'd bring all the -- or --

5 Q. So there was a runner boat --

6 A. Yeah, a runner boat bringing everything back and forth.

7 Q. Okay. How effective was that sorbent boom of collecting the  
8 product?

9 A. It adhered to it, but didn't really absorb anything into it.  
10 So you could see -- I think we split open one of them, and inside  
11 was all white. But -- so it was just -- it adhered to it. And  
12 they were black pretty much instantly as soon as you put them in  
13 the water, because they were just -- there was quite a bit of oil  
14 that came out that first time that I saw.

15 Q. Okay. Did -- was there -- about how much would you estimate  
16 was coming out?

17 A. Oh, it's hard. I'd say 40, 50 barrels.

18 Q. Okay. 40, 50 barrels. And above that, how much do you think  
19 was collected?

20 A. Not a lot.

21 Q. Rough percentage?

22 A. 10, 20 percent.

23 Q. Okay. And then were any other strategies put in place at  
24 that time to recover the oil that was getting past the initial  
25 recovery op?

1 A. No. We just basically were chasing the oil down -- let's see  
2 what the river name is that -- down the -- it doesn't have it on  
3 the map, but it was down the waterway basically towards the --  
4 sorry -- Morningstar Marina. We were chasing the oil down this  
5 way. And it was just getting further and further away from the  
6 boat, just when it came out.

7 Because it wasn't like a -- it just came out like a big  
8 pocket all at once -- well, not all at once, over like a 15-minute  
9 -- and then it stopped. So we just were following the oil until  
10 it -- we couldn't recover any more, because then it was all on the  
11 marsh grass.

12 Q. And let the recording show that he was pointing towards the  
13 north towards Lanier Island where Morningstar Marina is located on  
14 the east side of the island.

15 A. Yeah, I guess Frederica River maybe. Frederica River sounds  
16 right.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Yeah, Frederica River; there it is.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. All right.

21 Q. There's a split where -- it looks like --

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. -- it looks like there's a split between the Mackay and the  
24 Frederica.

25 A. Yeah; um-hmm.

1 Q. Okay. All right. And then what was -- what else did you do  
2 that first day that you were on scene?

3 A. It was pretty much that; we ended up chasing the oil all the  
4 way down to Morningstar Marina. And by that time it was pretty  
5 dark out. A couple other boats, they got six -- I think there  
6 were two 600 sets of boom stored that we placed off the bow of the  
7 boat and off the stern of the boat to -- where the current was  
8 mostly flowing to try to collect the oil.

9 But those were pretty ineffective due to just the strong  
10 tides and the anchors just completely dragging. If we set the  
11 anchor length to -- was it seven times the depth; I think it was  
12 for fast water. And we were still dragging anchor because we  
13 didn't have enough resources or proper resources.

14 Q. On that day, what was the approximate current?

15 A. I have no --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- I couldn't even give you a guess --

18 Q. Got it.

19 A. -- but it was strong current.

20 Q. Strong current?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. So was there -- did it look like when you boomed off Bird  
23 Island that there was a boom entrainment at all from the current?

24 A. Yes. And we did quite a bit of adjusting. And then the next  
25 day it was actually, I think a couple hundred feet were up on the

1 island. So it was a strong current.

2 The problem that we had, I think the first day, was setting  
3 boom on Bird Island, as they didn't have the anchor chain. They  
4 basically just tied the stem to a line, so like a synthetic line,  
5 which caused it to float and not weigh down. So I think there was  
6 a failure of just having resources on scene; we didn't have the  
7 proper resources.

8 Q. Okay. So other than DNR, was any other entity involved in  
9 deciding that Bird Island was the primary habitat to protect?

10 A. It was DNR. That's the only person I talked to that first  
11 day was DNR. I think I talked to them around 8:00 in the morning.  
12 And they told me that Bird Island -- or probably earlier than  
13 that -- yeah, it was before I even launched in the morning on NRC.  
14 So talked to someone from Bird Island. He gave me Bird Island.

15 And then back towards the Intracoastal Waterway, there's an  
16 artificial reef, and that was given as well as a couple rookeries.  
17 But we went with Bird Island being -- and they confirmed as well  
18 that Bird Island was the number one priority.

19 Q. Okay. Is Bird Island listed in the ACP?

20 A. I don't believe so. It's an artificial island made of dredge  
21 spoils, or a man-made island from dredge spoils. And I think when  
22 I looked at -- I haven't looked at ACP, but somebody told me that  
23 it wasn't on there.

24 Q. Okay. Do you know if the ACP was consulted at all for  
25 protecting environmentally sensitive areas or anything like

1 that -- strategies?

2 A. Initially, I don't think so.

3 Q. Okay. And -- or any GRSs?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay. And now, on that first day, was there any shoreline  
6 impact?

7 A. Yes. Shoreline -- well, shoreline impact, but there was  
8 marsh impact.

9 Q. Marsh impact; okay.

10 A. Marsh impact along the Lanier Island. At the head of it  
11 where it splits between Mackay and Frederica Rivers, there was  
12 definitely impact there. And then there was oil seen going down  
13 the Back River as well. And I'm not sure what SCAT found, but  
14 there was -- I did observe the oiled grasses in the Back River,  
15 then a lot down at Morningstar. I think Morningstar Marina  
16 actually called the NRC that first day as well saying that they  
17 had oiled grass.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Because when we were filling up the boats -- because they  
20 didn't have fuel trucks or anything yet, so the first couple days  
21 we fueled up at Morningstar Marina. And then when you're going to  
22 walk to go use the bathroom or something like that, you could see  
23 the grass and everything behind the marina was covered in oil.

24 Q. Okay. And you mentioned SCAT. Was there SCAT activities  
25 that first day?

1 A. I have no idea if SCAT was set up immediately day one, but I  
2 think day two, I think, by day two or day three, there were people  
3 out there looking at the shore. I don't know if SCAT officially  
4 was --

5 Q. And then --

6 A. -- set up yet.

7 Q. -- there a daily overflight?

8 A. Yes. There was tons of people up in the air. There was  
9 news -- the first day, there was Coast Guard helicopters, news  
10 helicopters, airplanes. DNR had drones, and there were a couple  
11 other drones out there. But yeah, and there were overflights.

12 Q. Was there ever a temporary flight restriction put in place?

13 A. I could not tell you.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. But I believe there was, but I'm not sure.

16 Q. Okay. And do you know if there was a safety or security zone  
17 put in place?

18 A. Yes. The initial safety zone, I believe was a half-mile in  
19 all directions, if my memory serves correctly. But that was only  
20 for the first couple days, and then it was eventually reduced to,  
21 I think the 150 yards, what it is currently as well. But that was  
22 a couple days later. So it was a half-mile.

23 And so we had a rough time. There was a Coast Guard security  
24 zone basically built around there doing 24-hour enforcement, one  
25 or two boats. But there was a lot of media interest, so we were



1 dealing with media boats driving through the oil slicks and  
2 everything like that, to -- just to get up to the *Golden Ray*. So  
3 it was hectic the first couple days.

4 Q. Okay. And how late did you work on the first day?

5 A. The first day, we -- as soon as we, as we couldn't see  
6 anymore, we went back.

7 Q. Okay. And where was the initial incident command post stood  
8 up at?

9 A. Initial -- so initially in the morning, it was behind the DNR  
10 Coastal Resources building were outside stationed there. But then  
11 by that time that that first night was over, I went back and met  
12 up with everybody at the Embassy Suites in Brunswick, the hotel.

13 Q. Okay. And that's where it had moved to --

14 A. And that had already moved to that.

15 Q. -- by the first night?

16 A. Yes, the first night.

17 Q. And did you do any debriefing with people at the Embassy  
18 Suites there?

19 A. Yes. I believe I met with Chief [REDACTED] and Chief [REDACTED]  
20 (ph.) and a warrant officer from the Gulf Strike Team. And they  
21 were asking like what we had seen and everything out in the water  
22 that day. And that was who I debriefed. And we had also been in  
23 constant communication via text message and calls with everybody  
24 else from the unit that was back at the ICP. Mainly Lieutenant  
25 Commander [REDACTED], and Lieutenant Junior Grade [REDACTED].

1 Q. Okay. So what was the method of communication for you on  
2 that first day?

3 A. For important stuff, calls, but it was mainly group text. So  
4 everybody -- it was myself and MST3 [REDACTED] from the Coast Guard  
5 on the water. And then it was whoever was in situation,  
6 Ms. [REDACTED] and Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] And maybe a couple  
7 more -- I think a couple people from the office were in  
8 communication. That was in the group chat, but that was about it.

9 Q. Okay. All right. Now bring me into kind of day two and walk  
10 me through your day on the second day.

11 A. Day two, we got there at 6:00 in the morning, got the boats  
12 in the water. Well, day two was a little different, because  
13 Gallagher was now there, and they were basically -- they had the  
14 brief and everything in the morning, the tailgate meeting. And  
15 they're like, we're going to run the operations from now on.

16 So they had a couple more boats, I think a couple more NRC  
17 boats. Jacksonville Spillage Control was still there and I think  
18 maybe a couple MER boats, Moran Environmental Response boats  
19 there. So there was a couple more boats there in the morning.  
20 And I think they had a, maybe not a semitruck full of boom yet,  
21 but they had more boom as well.

22 But then we got underway. And basically, Gallagher wanted to  
23 see the area, so they split up into different areas. Like some  
24 went towards the boat, some went to look for what -- get -- just  
25 get the local lay of the land. And that was immediately done the

1 first day on the second morning.

2 Q. Were any groups or divisions established by day two?

3 A. That's -- yes, I'd say.

4 Q. And what was the -- how did they break it down, the work?

5 A. So I'd say one person went and did on-water recovery  
6 operations, one went and did what's the critical habitat, just  
7 getting the lay of the land, like is it all marsh grasses out  
8 there. Then another one was looking at, I guess for a better  
9 staging area or launch points for boom or things like that.

10 Q. Okay. So that was your kind of objectives for day two?

11 A. Yeah, that's --

12 Q. Did -- and then -- so they had an on-water recovery group,  
13 and they had a -- did they have a shoreline group, or did they  
14 break it up geographically?

15 A. There was no shoreline group than -- MST3 [REDACTED], he'll be  
16 a better one, because I know he went with John. I'm not sure if  
17 it was day two or whenever he went with John Spenik (ph.) and did  
18 shoreline.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. But I'm not sure what days that was so --

21 Q. So you were primarily involved with on-water recovery?

22 A. On-water, yes.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So I couldn't -- he knows that better than me that he went  
25 and did that.

1 Q. Okay. Sorry to interrupt there; I'm just trying to get an  
2 understanding for the organizational structure. All right. You  
3 can go on with your activities on day two then.

4 A. Day two, it was more the same. It was just media was  
5 everywhere. I think at low tide that day, I remember a media boat  
6 drive -- we were recovering oil coming -- basically heading the  
7 same way towards Lanier Island down the Frederica River -- and a  
8 media boat just drove right -- with someone doing like a live  
9 broadcast right on the bow of the boat and drove right through the  
10 oil. And it was like 50 feet from us watching us recover oil.  
11 And it was frustrating.

12 So we're trying to get them cleaned up oil and get them out  
13 of the area safely so they're not spreading it out. But it was  
14 just hectic. There was more -- there was a lot of boats on the  
15 water, a lot of people just looking around at the boat.

16 Q. Did the -- was there any differences in the recovery methods  
17 on day two?

18 A. No, it was still the same. Day one, we suggested that they  
19 need to get more better resources in there, especially different  
20 types, so like skimmers, things like that, that could work with  
21 recovering the heavier types of oil. But no, it was mostly the  
22 same.

23 Q. Okay. And when were -- when did the -- did they request  
24 those resources?

25 A. I'm not sure. But I know Gallagher was also requesting the

1 same -- recommending the same resources out in the field that we  
2 were.

3 Q. About how long was it before skimmers arrived on scene?

4 A. I think Jacksonville Spillage Control had the first one on  
5 scene; it was probably day three.

6 Q. Okay. What -- do you remember what type of skimmer that was?

7 A. I want to say just small -- it was a small little drum  
8 skimmer and had -- and it was -- they called the boat the love  
9 tub, because it was basically like a bathtub. And it had a frac  
10 tank that stood in the middle of it. And it was basically connect  
11 a hose to the drum skimmer and sucked it right into this  
12 250-gallon frac tank.

13 Q. Do -- and that brings me to another point -- do you know if a  
14 lightering plan was developed?

15 A. I could not tell you.

16 Q. Can -- when that tank filled up, what was the -- what did  
17 they do with the product?

18 A. Bring it back to the staging.

19 Q. Bring back to staging?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay. So do you --

22 A. But I don't even know if that was -- if that tank was -- if  
23 that skimmer was actually ever used.

24 Q. Oh, okay.

25 A. Because it just wasn't -- you can't really run a drum skimmer

1 in choppy water out in the middle of the ocean.

2 Q. And -- so what was the water like during the recovery  
3 operations those first couple days?

4 A. There was always a strong current. It was really muddy and  
5 murky. It was sometimes hard to pick up where the oil was and  
6 where it wasn't, because just all the sediments still -- I don't  
7 think the *Golden Ray* had settled completely, because you could  
8 still see it going over until it reached the full 90.

9 So there was a lot of mixture of the sediment and oil and so  
10 it was hard to see on the surface. But I'd say after like day two  
11 you could -- your eyes would start to hone-in and pick up where is  
12 the oil and which is just mud or something like that.

13 Q. Were there any safety concerns about the vessel still  
14 settling down and having response boats so close?

15 A. Yes, there was. There was still like two tugs that were  
16 actively -- I don't know if they were -- I think -- I don't think  
17 they were pushing on it, but they were basically holding it and  
18 holding it steady. Those were from Moran.

19 So we didn't really get up close to the boat. I'd say the  
20 closest we got to the boat was like 50 feet. But other than that,  
21 we stayed back 50 feet and tried to recover oil best we could from  
22 like 50 feet off the boat.

23 Q. Okay. So on day two, did you do anything other than just  
24 look for oil and use sorbent pads to pick it up?

25 A. A lot of communication, a lot of just trying different

1 techniques to -- they set up this kind of like metal poles on  
2 either side, basically like a shrimp rigger and set up with one  
3 boat, so just trolled kind of through the water. And they were  
4 just trying different techniques of where -- of how to pick up oil  
5 more effectively with the resources that we had.

6 Q. Was any one method more effective than any other?

7 A. I'd say the most effective was still the two boats pulling  
8 boom between them was the most effective.

9 Q. And that was still about a 10 to 20 percent recovery?

10 A. Yeah, if that, probably.

11 Q. If that; okay.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Now, any other differences on day two?

14 A. Difference on day two, yes, they got the people out of the  
15 water or off the boat in the evening. When we were leaving, I  
16 think they got the final person off the boat. And so that was big  
17 relief. So search and rescue with the recovery, they got  
18 everybody out alive. So that basically ended that evening, so --

19 Q. Okay; so then day three, it could go into just --

20 A. Day three and they focus on pollution.

21 Q. -- pollution and salvage effort, mitigation and salvage  
22 response --

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay. Were any other suggestions made up to this point on  
25 how to change tactics or new resources to bring in?

1 A. Yes, they were discussed continuously. So I was on the  
2 boat -- I think it was on day two, it was still myself and Kyle  
3 Paporello still down there from MSU Savannah.

4 And I was on with Ferrell LaFont (ph.). We constantly would  
5 just run things past each other the whole day, recommendations.  
6 And we'd pass them up through our -- he'd pass them up through his  
7 chain of command, I would pass them up through my chain of  
8 command. And that's the way it was basically going.

9 Q. Did it feel like your recommendations were being heard?

10 A. Initially, yes.

11 Q. And did you have any concerns with how the response was going  
12 at this point?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay. Anything else to report about day two?

15 A. No, not day two.

16 Q. All right. Now kind of from this point forward, take me up  
17 into -- if the Ops were the same, just let me know that Ops  
18 continued the same up until and then a point when there was a  
19 change, and then talk about that change in the operations.

20 A. Okay. I'd say -- so over the next couple days, we noticed --  
21 we expanded the boom around Bird Island, because we noticed impact  
22 through the yellow -- it was yellow or orange boom; I think it was  
23 orange boom initially -- the orange boom had turned all black.  
24 And we noticed showing impact on Bird Island, so we extended the  
25 boom around Bird Island.



1 Q. And that was just orange containment boom essentially?

2 A. Yeah, just -- I think it was 21- or 24-inch boom is what they  
3 had there, I think I want to say 21-inch. So they extended that a  
4 little bit more. So and then they eventually fully encapsulated  
5 Bird Island, I think, like a week later, once all the resources  
6 got there. Once it had sufficient amount of resources, we're  
7 booming and everything that whole island.

8 But I'd say operations pretty much remained the same. We  
9 were able to pretty much pinpoint that low tide, every single low  
10 tide that oil would be discharged out the vessel. So pretty much  
11 at low tide, we were half-hour before low -- half-hour, hour  
12 before low tide, we were always prepared and geared up with all  
13 the boats full of fresh supplies, like absorbent boom and  
14 everything, basically to try to contain any oil that was coming  
15 off.

16 Q. And were there any skimming operations at this point?

17 A. No. I think they had a couple Marco -- I'm not sure -- there  
18 were Marco skimmers. I'm not sure what day they got there. So  
19 they had a couple Marco skimmers, and they basically had two guide  
20 boats. And then I think there were 200 to 300 feet segments of  
21 boom that they basically got it in a V pattern, or --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. -- yeah, a V.

24 Q. Then walk it into the skimmer?

25 A. And walk it into the skimmer. That was the plan. But I

1 don't think that, that was used effectively until the 13th which  
2 was that Friday, Friday the 13th.

3 Q. Okay, so just almost a week into the response, a little short  
4 of a week. Okay.

5 A. Because we had -- it's -- I'd say the first two days is when  
6 we saw a lot coming at low tide. And then it gradually started to  
7 get lower and lower. And it almost had the -- so the first day,  
8 you could see spots of it that looked like lube oil in, mixing  
9 with HFO, so it made us think that we were getting like bilge oil,  
10 it was like just stuff from the bilge out there the first couple  
11 days, and that just slowly tapered off. Well, it didn't taper  
12 off, it just slowly started getting less and less. And then the  
13 13th, we had quite a big discharge then as well.

14 Q. Okay. And with that big discharge, did any operations change  
15 tactics?

16 A. Yeah. So with that discharge that happened, I -- towards the  
17 later end of the day, I want to say around 4 or 5 o'clock,  
18 basically it was at low tide again, oil just started coming off  
19 the stern of the boat. And they had a skimmer there and that V  
20 boom, and it was working really well. And then the decision was  
21 made to recover all boom and everything and all vessels that had  
22 already been out that day due to incoming bad weather on Sunday.

23 Q. Sunday. So this was a Friday, the 13th?

24 A. This was a Friday, yeah.

25 Q. And then Sunday, the weather was supposed to come in?

1 A. Um-hmm.

2 Q. And so they -- instead of recovering the oil, they decided to  
3 stage the resources offshore?

4 A. Yes. And that came from Ferrell, who got that from someone  
5 in Gallagher. And I immediately called back to Ms. [REDACTED] and  
6 Mr. [REDACTED] and I think Chief [REDACTED] to see where that decision  
7 had come from.

8 But they were all kind of in the dark on where that decision  
9 had come from to immediately pull off. But I think about 20  
10 minutes later they got back to me and said, yeah, that's the  
11 decision that the Unified Command had made. And so we stayed in  
12 place for the 20 minutes. But then once I got that phone call  
13 saying that yeah, that was the decision that the Unified Command  
14 made, we pulled off and stopped recovery efforts then and picked  
15 up all the boom that was in the water and pulled it all back to  
16 the Sidney Lanier staging.

17 Q. So even the boom that was protecting Bird Island?

18 A. Even the boom that was protecting Bird Island. I think there  
19 was around 1,200 feet of boom still -- it wasn't really doing much  
20 around the boat, because just the current was way -- I think it  
21 was -- and then that was all pulled in as well.

22 Q. Where -- and where was the boom located on the boat?

23 A. Oh, there -- it wasn't anywhere near the boat.

24 Q. Oh, okay.

25 A. It was probably like three-quarters of a mile off the bow,

1 and then three-quarters of a mile off the stern. It was just --  
2 no one was really tending to it, it was just still sitting there  
3 since the first day. No one really messed with it.

4 Q. So they put some boom off the stern of the vessel and some  
5 off the bow?

6 A. Yeah, the first day. And then it just kept just kind of --  
7 the current just kept on pushing it further and further away each  
8 day.

9 Q. And no -- but was it anchored?

10 A. It was anchored, yeah.

11 Q. Okay. And no one was tending it?

12 A. There may have been people tending it, but I wasn't.

13 Q. And about how much boom was it on?

14 A. It was 600 feet at the stern and 600 off the bow.

15 Q. Okay; 600 feet each?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Was it ever discussed to boom around the entire vessel?

18 A. Yes. Day one, it was discussed. But we didn't have  
19 appropriate boom that first -- and it was infeasible the first  
20 couple days, because they had tugs on there and so many people  
21 coming and going that it wouldn't be feasible to put boom around  
22 the boat the first couple days. And -- but after the Moran tugs  
23 left, there was definitely growing talk like, I know I passed up,  
24 like this boat needs to get boomed off.

25 Q. Okay. So you felt like the boom -- the boat should've been

1 boomed off?

2 A. Absolutely.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. To help contain. Because we had no idea at night if there  
5 was oil coming off at that -- we assumed there was at low tide, at  
6 the nighttime low tide, but there was no oil discharge happening.  
7 But we had no way to tell, because we would show up in the morning  
8 and be like oh, this place looks like it got hit with oil  
9 overnight or --

10 Q. And so kind of up to the 13th, when the resources were pulled  
11 for the storm, incoming weather, what was the impact from the oil  
12 around -- in the -- the shoreline impacts into other impacts?

13 A. So it was hard for me to tell from the boats, because we  
14 didn't really have like flat-bottom boats, we couldn't get in the  
15 shallow water. But from what I could tell, a lot of it around on  
16 Lanier Island at the head of it, and then this whole marshy  
17 sediment from the Morningstar Marina, basically all the way up  
18 to -- up the Lanier Island towards the boat, and then a lot of it  
19 down the Back River.

20 And then there was some down past Bird Island, not Quarantine  
21 Island, whatever the other island is right here, this had a lot  
22 of -- this marsh right here off this island had a lot of impact, I  
23 could see visibly from just the boats going by.

24 Q. Okay, so right by Brunswick Point there?

25 A. Yeah, right on Brunswick Point on this chart.

1 Q. Okay. And then on the Lanier Island, the whole shoreline  
2 from Morningstar Marina, heading south to the tip of the island,  
3 was marked, and then over by the Back River, the entrance in some  
4 part into the island was marked. Anything else?

5 A. That was just -- because it wasn't really my job to go and  
6 look at shoreline impact.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I think they had SCAT. So up at that point, that's just what  
9 I could see from the water.

10 Q. What you could see from the water; okay.

11 A. And we weren't even getting that close. You just see a line.

12 Q. Were you aware of any concerns from any of our partner  
13 agencies about the impacts?

14 A. Yes. They had concerns, but we were just doing our best to  
15 try to contain the oil to prevent -- recover it basically on the  
16 water before it could impact the land and mitigate the effects.

17 Q. Okay. And then to the best of your knowledge, you felt like  
18 the concerns of our partner agencies were voiced and received?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And did the Unified Command do their best to respond to those  
21 concerns?

22 A. For how complex the scenario was, absolutely.

23 Q. Okay. So now, we're at the 13th. And the resources are  
24 pulled. And I understand that a storm was projected but no storm  
25 really manifested?

1 A. Yeah; I don't remember, but I don't remember it being that  
2 rough on Sunday.

3 Q. Okay. So there may have been some weather, but it wasn't as  
4 bad as it was supposed to be.

5 A. Exactly.

6 Q. So what day did operations resume?

7 A. I think we went out Saturday again, but I don't remember. I  
8 have to go look at my 214s. But --

9 Q. So it wasn't a very long -- once they realized the weather  
10 wasn't going to be as bad as they thought, they started putting  
11 resources back in?

12 A. Yeah, everything got put back.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And I think there was even more boom placed that -- around  
15 Bird Island. And then I'm not sure if it went back up. The  
16 segments probably didn't go back up towards the -- on that --  
17 around the boat at that time. But -- they -- I don't remember. I  
18 think they may have been working on a plan then on the top side of  
19 the vessel, and they placed a segment of boom up there, but around  
20 the vessel and tied it to a couple points on the vessel. But I  
21 don't remember what day that was.

22 Q. Okay. So did they ever boom off the entire vessel?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Okay. But they tried a couple times to boom off portions of  
25 it?

1 A. Yeah; it was basically just the top side of the vessel, and  
2 it was just a small segment.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And it wasn't effective at all. It wasn't --

5 Q. It wasn't effective at all?

6 A. -- it -- no, it was just --

7 Q. And why was it not effective?

8 A. It was -- it's hard to -- it was basically because I think  
9 the changing tides and everything where it was, it was kind of  
10 like -- it was either like the boom was going to get -- is getting  
11 pulled one way, and then the tides would shift, and then it would  
12 be right back the other way and right next against the ship. It  
13 wasn't really -- and the oil wasn't coming off the ship that  
14 close; it was coming more of like 50 feet off in the boom, even  
15 though we tried to get it, because the anchors, they couldn't  
16 really anchor it then either there or --

17 Q. So it was kind of a combination of the placement of the boom  
18 and the environmental conditions?

19 A. I think it was more of a half-ass effort around the boom. I  
20 think it -- I think we could've done a better job if we devoted  
21 more time towards it.

22 Q. Okay. And so moving forward, did the operations change at  
23 all from that point forward once they got back on scene?

24 A. Yes. I'm not sure what day it is -- what it was -- but they  
25 stood up -- there had been a whole lot more resources that



1 arrived. Lewis Marine, OMI, Clean Harbors. And so they had  
2 basically the staging area that Sidney Lanier had become too big,  
3 that now they had the Mackay staging over on the Lanier Island at  
4 that launch then. So they basically stood up all operations over  
5 there.

6 Q. So that would be the launch on the west side of Lanier Island  
7 on the Mackay River?

8 A. Yeah. So then once they stood up that Mackay staging,  
9 that's -- I transferred over from -- the Lanier from doing  
10 on-water, I -- they transferred me over to Mackay River. So with  
11 the Mackay River -- Mackay staging, our goal was, I think they  
12 called it the shoreline impact and the GRS or GRP group.  
13 Basically, there had been strategies developed for what's the  
14 environmentally sensitive areas.

15 And so our job was, if there was another big discharge like  
16 the one that happened on the 13th or even bigger, that we would  
17 have boom in place. So basically, there were a whole bunch of  
18 deck barges. And they could fit 500, 600 feet of boom on their  
19 barges.

20 And they went and basically put boom out at different areas  
21 that were considered environmentally sensitive, so protecting the  
22 Plantation Creek was one, the Back River, the head of Lanier  
23 Island had already been oiled, this little confluence here between  
24 the Back River and Mackay River at -- closest to the vessel, and  
25 then a whole bunch of areas over on St. Simon's Island. And then

1 there was this inlet here next to the Jekyll fish pier, a couple  
2 areas down here along the Intracoastal Waterway, and then a couple  
3 areas down here at Cedar Creek that were all determined to be the  
4 best places to place boom.

5 Q. And where did those priorities come from?

6 A. I think -- those came -- so it was Cameron Kerr from  
7 Gallagher. And he said that he was working with the environmental  
8 unit. So whoever wasn't in the environmental unit at the ICP had  
9 developed those.

10 Q. Okay, so it came from the Environmental Unit within the  
11 Unified Command?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And so I think we had like 20,000 feet of boom for all those  
15 places. And so basically, the crews, a lot of them were from  
16 Louisiana, so not used to tides and everything like that. And so  
17 basically, they went out and practiced setting boom every single  
18 day, in case another discharge happened. Because I'd say after  
19 the 13th, we were seeing a drastically -- drop in amount of oil.  
20 It was basically like a light sheen or very little recovery  
21 product coming (indiscernible) --

22 Q. Okay. So after the 13th about what was the approximate  
23 discharge per day?

24 A. Oh, very minimal.

25 Q. Gallon? Less?

1 A. Yeah, a gallon or two.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Just a small rainbow sheen, nothing recoverable.

4 Q. Okay. And then did that continue on like that or did it  
5 change?

6 A. It continued on like that for probably like 10 days or so.  
7 And then one day, I was just coming out of the Back River, and I,  
8 I think it was the 27th, and I smelled fuel. So I radioed up  
9 to -- or I sent a group -- by this time we had, I think it was  
10 either WhatsApp or there was quite more -- a bit more Coasties on  
11 scene, so I knew who was up by the vessel. And I radioed up, and  
12 be like, hey, I smell oil, is there something coming up out of the  
13 vessel? And so they went and looked at it. And sure enough,  
14 there was cargo product coming out there.

15 And then by the time that they even report it, you could see  
16 just a big chunk of oil going down the Back River. And then it  
17 was already too late; it already impacted the shoreline there in  
18 the Back River. So we got to that a little bit late. But I  
19 guess -- there were a couple vessels up by the boat, but I guess  
20 they just didn't see it.

21 Q. Okay. And then so many days of nothing, people weren't  
22 probably watching for this closely?

23 A. Yeah. I can't really speak to that, but that would be my  
24 guess.

25 Q. Up until that point, were your operations about the same,

1 booming and --

2 A. It was about the same, yeah. They ended up leaving the boom  
3 out. So the first couple days, they would just leave the boom --  
4 just go and place the boom out in the morning and then recover it  
5 all in the evening, because they were afraid of it getting torn  
6 apart by the tides or something like that. That was Gallagher.

7 And then so basically, I'd say after like 4 or days of that,  
8 they realized that it wasn't a good strategy and that the boom  
9 wasn't getting torn up and thrown along the shoreline. So they  
10 basically kept it out 24 hours, so they'd basically go and have 10  
11 boats go in 10- and 20,000 feet of boom. And you'd have -- every  
12 morning, there would have to be readjustments to the boom. So  
13 they'd just go and readjust it and get it in the right positions.

14 Q. Okay. Were there any impacts to the shoreline in places  
15 where there was boom?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. So was -- some of those impacts, were they observed in the  
18 morning after the boom had been pulled?

19 A. No, it was all either prior impacts or from the first week.  
20 A lot of it was in the Back River, where there had already been  
21 prior impacts. And they put -- tried to divert -- there would be  
22 diversion boom to basically divert the boom to a collection point.  
23 The collection point was more like a shell bank, where there  
24 wasn't a grass or a marsh. So it was just something that --  
25 sacrificial.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Because there's not -- it's not that sensitive. Because  
3 there would be -- along the shoreline, there's 10-foot segments of  
4 just shells just piled up as -- like 10 feet in the air from just,  
5 I guess years and years of being deposited there, just oyster and  
6 clam shells. And so that's where the goal was, to divert all the  
7 oil into that so we could collect it there and basically sacrifice  
8 that spot versus all the grasses and marshes.

9 Q. And then remove the oil shells?

10 A. Yes, remove the oil shells.

11 Q. Okay. And then up until the 27th, which we'll talk about in  
12 a minute, but up until that point, had you made any  
13 recommendations for different strategies or different resources to  
14 be brought in?

15 A. So I was at the Mackay staging. There was quite a bit of  
16 boats. I'd say there was probably 20 boats. I'd say about 10 to  
17 12 of them were in the water each day, and the other ones, they  
18 were a lot of skimmers, a lot of sidewinders and Marco skimmers.  
19 And they were just sitting there on standby basically, in case  
20 something did happen. So from my point at Mackay, I feel like we  
21 had a lot more resources than we were ever using.

22 Q. Okay. And that was --

23 A. And they weren't really being managed well, but there was a  
24 lot sitting around.

25 Q. Could there -- was there work for those resources to do, or

1 at this point, were there just the resources got there a little  
2 too late for the work?

3 A. At this point, there wasn't work for them to do, but in a  
4 couple days, there would be on like the 27th.

5 Q. Okay, so the 27th?

6 A. Well, on the 27th, they weren't really used, because I think  
7 we caught it too late. And all the boats that were at the Lanier  
8 staging, the Sidney Lanier staging, they all -- as soon as there  
9 was oil spotted, the boats were there in 10 minutes, and they were  
10 all recovering.

11 They had the V -- because I think at the Sidney Lanier  
12 staging, they still had two of the Marco skimmers that were there  
13 and the two guide boats for them. And they were there just  
14 recovering the boat and the oil as best they could.

15 Q. Okay. About what time was the oil discharge observed on the  
16 27th?

17 A. It was after lunch. Because -- yeah, it was -- so it was  
18 like right after lunch, so around 12:30 to 1:00. So --

19 Q. Okay. And what were the response activities once it was  
20 observed?

21 A. The main two boats that they used were tried -- those --  
22 basically, the two -- six vessels that were in two V  
23 configurations, they tried to get them to collect the bulk of the  
24 recoverable product, then had basically two boats with absorbent  
25 boom between them go and pick up behind those two skimmers,

1 whatever the skimmers picked up and --

2 Q. Okay. So how did they have the skimmers positioned? From  
3 the -- so you got the vessel. The discharge is coming from the  
4 stern.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Where's skimmer number one?

7 A. Yeah. So the vessel is right here. The oil is kind of  
8 trailing off towards the Back -- it was trailing off towards the  
9 Back River, this one was, because the wind. So they were --

10 Q. And Back River is just west/southwest of Lanier Island?

11 A. Yeah. So they were -- so they had two vessels like this and  
12 then one -- then the skimmer back here, and then boom, boom -- I  
13 have --

14 Q. About how close?

15 A. I have pictures on my phone if -- I can get it to you.

16 Q. And we can get those later. But how close was the skimmer to  
17 the vessel?

18 A. As close as they could get with the current -- so the current  
19 was kind of swirling it around, like the barge and everything up  
20 there. And I think there's photographs that show it. And I know  
21 Nick --

22 Q. I had seen some of those. It looked like there was a pretty  
23 strong (indiscernible) right in that area.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. And so I think Nick DeBrum (ph.) was up there. And he was  
2 like yeah, you can see it on the inside and outside of it. And --

3 Q. So how effective was that first skimmer of recovering  
4 product?

5 A. Not very effective, because the oil was just going all  
6 different directions. It was just -- they did the best they  
7 could, I think, with the difficult circumstances that the water  
8 had.

9 Q. Okay. And then the second skimmer was staged just behind it  
10 to try to pick up anything it could?

11 A. Just behind it, yeah.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And then they had a whole bunch of just the boats going  
14 around with either paired up or by themselves individually with  
15 the troller style.

16 Q. Just trying to pick up anything else --

17 A. Pick up the skimmers --

18 Q. -- the skimmers missed.

19 A. -- were missing.

20 Q. Okay. And then what were the impacts of the oil that got  
21 outside the containment in the operations?

22 A. I have no idea. Scott would have a better idea on that.

23 Q. Okay. But most of that oil headed up kind of northwest-ish a  
24 little bit towards Lanier Island and over by the Back River?

25 A. Yes.



1 Q. Okay. All right. And so the 27th, there's kind of a big --  
2 a decent size burp there.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. But it's not much different than the early days, correct?

5 A. Yeah, I'd say the 13th was probably still the most that we  
6 saw.

7 Q. Up to this point?

8 A. Yeah. It was just we hadn't seen anything since the 13th  
9 basically anywhere near this size. So --

10 Q. So it wasn't a --

11 A. -- 2 weeks. Yeah.

12 Q. -- significantly different than the early response, it just  
13 was such a lag between the days?

14 A. Yeah, 2 weeks; yeah.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. We didn't really see anything.

17 Q. And then what happened after the 27th?

18 A. Then the 30th, we had a big discharge.

19 Q. Was that bigger than any before or --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So I'd say the 30th was the biggest, and then probably the  
23 13th, and then the one on the 27th I would rank the top three  
24 instances.

25 Q. Top three --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. -- out of the days you worked it. Okay.

3 A. Then the 30th, they had a big discharge. So I'm not -- I  
4 think around 2 or 3 o'clock is when they started sending all the  
5 messages out, saying that they need -- so I had all the skimmers  
6 and everything. Because I think I was the only Coastie out of --  
7 I was the only Coastie at that time out of Mackay staging.

8 So basically, I relay to Gallagher, who hadn't got the -- our  
9 communication that we were doing, like internal communications,  
10 like this group message that we had with -- between all Coasties  
11 on the wire was working fantastic. Because Gallagher -- we'd have  
12 all the information -- I could tell what he's doing right out here  
13 on -- at the boat and everybody else, because we're sending  
14 pictures, and updates, and everything. It was great  
15 communication.

16 So as soon as they saw there was oil coming out, I showed the  
17 picture to Gallagher, and they were like, oh, let's get a couple.  
18 And I think Cameron was like, all right, let's get a couple  
19 skimmers out here to go out here and help them. So we went out  
20 and helped them, couple -- basically a J2S -- I hopped on one of  
21 the J2S skimmers with [REDACTED] (ph.). I think he's -- for  
22 Gallagher, he's a reserve MST2 as well.

23 So we hopped on there and went out and started recovering the  
24 oil. And Cameron stayed back. And he went and placed all the 12  
25 boats that they had been using for the boom and everything like

1 that, made sure all that boom was correctly in place and  
2 everything like that. So whatever that 20,000, 26,000 feet, and  
3 made sure all the GRS places were all covered properly.

4 Q. Okay. So up to this point, there's about 26,000 feet of boom  
5 deployed throughout the area?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Okay. And from the 27th to the 30th, was there much  
8 discharge?

9 A. No.

10 Q. No? Kind of went back to that no real discharge?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. One to two gallons?

13 A. I wasn't on water recovery, but I think from what my memory  
14 serves me from seeing all the text messages, it's like a light  
15 sheen, if that, or maybe even nothing coming off the boat.

16 Q. Okay. And so on the 30th, was the -- how would you grade the  
17 response once the discharge was observed?

18 A. It was a fast response, but it was a very chaotic response,  
19 because you have -- I'd say by the time we got out there with the  
20 skimmer, because we had to go a little bit slower, it took about  
21 30 minutes.

22 There were boats -- because this discharge is different, it  
23 was on outgoing tide. So you see there's a couple buoys out here,  
24 and you see boats way out here collecting two buoys away, way  
25 offshore when there's -- when I would get up here by the boat, and

1 I'm seeing there's oil still coming up the boat right here. So --

2 Q. So it was initially heading east out to sea --

3 A. Out to sea, yeah. It was very chaotic, because there were  
4 boats a couple miles offshore, just trying to recover it, and they  
5 weren't really staying up near the boat where all the oil was,  
6 which I found strange.

7 But I guess as I start -- as I was getting there more and  
8 more, I did see there was oil way offshore a couple miles. So  
9 they were still recovering recoverable product. But I think it  
10 was the NRC *Liberty* and *Recovery* were the two offshore supply  
11 vessels they had. They were out there.

12 But the bigger one, I think it's the *Liberty* -- I don't  
13 remember the name -- but whatever the bigger one NRC had, it  
14 was -- they had a skimmer in the water, and it was just  
15 ineffective. I don't know if they were moving too fast or the  
16 water was -- the current was just too slow, but the oil would --  
17 you'd see them in the pocket of oil, and then it just entrained  
18 right over all the boom. And it was very disheartening to see.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. But I'd say the J2S skimmer I was on, it had a 250-gallon  
21 frac tank. So they did -- it had two sponsons on there, like  
22 metallic sponsons. And I think they called it a Sidewinder  
23 skimmer. I wasn't familiar with the term, but that's what they  
24 called it.

25 So it had two metal sponsons -- I don't know what metal they

1 were, aluminum or something like that -- and basically stretched  
2 out to a V pattern off the bow of the boat 25 feet. Basically --  
3 they did a good job operating it. We filled up our frac tank,  
4 mostly with water, but I'd say there's probably 20-30 gallons of  
5 oil in there. So --

6 Q. Okay. Do you have any idea what the estimate of that  
7 discharge was on the 30th?

8 A. No idea, but it was substantial.

9 Q. Okay. And then the tide shifted, correct, and then the oil  
10 started to come back in?

11 A. Yeah. So the skimmer I was on, we -- when we fill up our  
12 frac tank, the sponson actually broke off, so it -- so we had to  
13 get two vessels to come in, because it flooded with water, and  
14 pull it back up on deck. And so after that, I was -- it was  
15 probably like 6 o'clock at that time, and we had to head back in,  
16 because our boat was broken.

17 Q. Getting dark probably I would imagine too.

18 A. Yeah, it was -- I think we were normally wrapping up  
19 operations around 7:00 at that time, so it was starting to get  
20 dark. But yeah, the tide had basically shifted. And most the  
21 boats then, everybody started basically corralling up near the  
22 boat.

23 But the oil was still coming out the vessel at that point.  
24 And I know we would be giving word to stay back. So we had a  
25 couple skimmers up there against the vessel initially, but then

1 they got divers to go down underwater. So we stayed back to give  
2 the divers safe operating room, because I think they were going to  
3 plug the tanks or something like that.

4 Q. Okay. Was there ever any nighttime operations?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay. And on the 30th, was there visible shoreline impacts  
7 from that discharge?

8 A. That day? No. But we knew there were -- because a lot of it  
9 was going out to sea, and a lot of it was going -- you basically  
10 see the slick going -- it was heading right down the Brunswick  
11 River, right towards Bird Island was, but basically right in the  
12 middle of the channel. And you could just see it. But I didn't  
13 go back towards Sidney Lanier Bridge; I went the opposite way  
14 towards the Mackay, where we launched from. But you could see it  
15 when I was going by the boat. You could see just the slick going  
16 right down the middle of the Brunswick River, on the way back in  
17 when tide changed.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. So you -- I knew there was going to be impact, but I couldn't  
20 tell on the 30th. But the next day, it was --

21 Q. Do you know what those impacts were the next day?

22 A. Yeah. So the next day, first thing in the morning, I went  
23 with [REDACTED] from Gallagher. We went over to the Jekyll  
24 Island pier, and immediately we saw shoreline impact. So we had  
25 basically, I think 150 feet of boom, hard boom, basically aligned

1 with absorbent boom protecting this I guess marsh back here on  
2 Jekyll Island.

3 Q. Right by the Jekyll Island pier?

4 A. Yeah, just right by Jekyll Island pier to protect that. And  
5 it was just all black. And then we went to go --

6 Q. The boom was black or the marsh was black?

7 A. The boom was black.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. On both sides, which was --

10 Q. Was there any impact to the marsh?

11 A. I don't know. It's hard to get back into that marsh.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. But when we were there, we went to remove the boom. And we  
14 got approached -- I wish I would've taken a picture of the lady's  
15 arms -- but she's like, I got oil up and down my arms. And she's  
16 like -- we gave her sorbent pads and everything to help try to  
17 wipe off the boom -- all the oil off. But she's -- her feet were  
18 just caked, and the bottom of her shoes were just caked with oil.

19 Q. Where was she at?

20 A. Right by -- right here at Jekyll Island, right by this inlet  
21 right here. And there was oil up and down her arms from trying to  
22 just rub it. And her -- basically, the bottom of her shoes had  
23 probably like half-inch thick and just caked oil on it.

24 Q. What was she doing to get oil?

25 A. Just walking through the beach, didn't even notice. And she

1 didn't know it was oil, because it was just like sand. So she  
2 went to scrape it off, she said, and it just got all -- and she  
3 was trying to get it all off on her arms. And it just spread oil  
4 all over her arms.

5 Q. Okay. So the beach was oil --

6 A. And the beach, the beach had definitely -- was -- you  
7 couldn't see it, but she was like, this is where I walked, and  
8 there was oil.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And so immediately, I told her -- gave her -- so they had  
11 business cards and everything to report oil, wildlife, or if you  
12 have oil on you, or call the NRC and all these numbers, and  
13 everything like that. So I gave her one of those cards and told  
14 her to make a report.

15 Q. Call the actual -- the Natural Response Center or NRC the  
16 OSRO?

17 A. The National Response Center and make a report, and basically  
18 try to give her the best advice we could to wipe all the oil off,  
19 and gave her supplies that we had on the boat to help clean her  
20 off of oil.

21 Her husband was there, but her husband didn't have any oil on  
22 him as well -- I'm guessing her husband, but there was a guy with  
23 her who didn't have any oil on her -- on him. But --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So that was immediately, first thing in the morning. I think



1 we probably launched a little after 7:00. So that's the first  
2 place we went, saw the impact there.

3 Then we went into the Back River and then down the Plantation  
4 Creek right across there. We didn't see much impact. We didn't  
5 see any other impact until we got to Cedar Creek. Cedar Creek got  
6 hit really hard.

7 The boom that they had out there was just -- actually, I --  
8 never mind. I don't think they had any; there was no boom at  
9 Cedar Creek. It -- because it wasn't -- NOAA, I guess, had given  
10 us a whole

11 Q. A trajectory?

12 A. Yeah, basically a -- each boat, it was -- had like this 20-  
13 page thing of all the trajectories. And none of it had it  
14 impacting anywhere near Cedar Creek or down way past where the oil  
15 eventually got past --

16 Q. Okay. So it wasn't identified as a need to boom it?

17 A. Yeah. So it wasn't identified as need to boom it. But Cedar  
18 Creek got hit hard, I'd say probably back a quarter mile. This --  
19 the one side of the bank just got hit hard with oil. It was very  
20 heavily coated. It -- the smell of oil was very persistent back  
21 there.

22 There were a lot of -- my concern was where there was a lot  
23 of birds flying around in that area. So immediately reported that  
24 back. And I think the -- I'm not sure if it was [REDACTED] or Cameron  
25 with me at that time, but they reported that back as well.

1           But that was -- and then we went down -- first, we went down  
2 to look for shoreline impact. We went a little bit along the  
3 Brunswick River. I think this is the south bank of the Brunswick  
4 River. And we didn't see any shoreline impact. So we basically  
5 stopped at Sidney Lanier Bridge for the day and went and  
6 double-checked everything else and how all the other booms were up  
7 this way then towards there.

8           And by the time that -- and we did call crews over here. So  
9 they put more hard boom. They basically put more hard boom up to  
10 basically exclusion boom to try to keep this environmentally  
11 sensitive area. And then I think we staked it with -- because you  
12 could see still sheen, and tar balls were still coming off of this  
13 oil in the Cedar Creek. So we basically staked it with pompoms on  
14 the marsh and staked it down with pompoms. And so the pompoms  
15 would be collecting the oil that's coming off the grass and  
16 everything.

17 Q.   Was that effective?

18 A.   Yes, it was effective.

19 Q.   Okay. Were any other alternate strategies discussed?

20 A.   At that time, no. We lined it with -- I'd -- so it was  
21 absorbent boom and snare boom. I'd say the snare boom was  
22 drastically more effective than the pompom -- or the -- than the  
23 absorbent boom was, snare boom was more effective.

24 Q.   Were there any other impacts reported that you didn't observe  
25 from that?

1 A. That day, so that would've been the 1st of October --

2 Q. 1st of October.

3 A. -- no. But we hadn't gone to the other side of the Sidney  
4 Lanier bridge, because we see impact on here. So -- and I figured  
5 SCAT would've been out there too. I'm not sure what area SCAT  
6 went to.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. But -- so I just reported the October 1st impact, heaviest in  
9 Cedar Creek and then up here in -- on Jekyll Island. And I guess  
10 there were multiple reports because there was somebody on Jekyll  
11 Island who was on the group chat with. And he was saying that  
12 there was tar balls and they were finding quite a bit of tar balls  
13 on Jekyll Island.

14 Q. Okay. And then were -- was there ever any reports reported  
15 up the -- more farther up the Brunswick River after the Lanier  
16 Bridge?

17 A. Yes. So those all came back MST1 [REDACTED]. He was -- so he  
18 was -- I did a couple of daily overflights the first couple days.  
19 But then basically, [REDACTED] basically keep the continuity so he  
20 could see all the changes. He went up there every single day from  
21 then on.

22 And he'd send -- we had live pictures of everything going on,  
23 so he went up in that aircraft on the 2nd. And he's immediately  
24 sending us pictures down by the state park -- I don't know the  
25 name of it offhand -- whatever the -- there's a state park down

1 here, well past here.

2 And so -- and he's just sending us pictures where you can see  
3 just the marsh just looks inundated with oil and everything like  
4 that. Even from the air it looked bad -- you can see it looked  
5 bad.

6 Q. So that was up the south Brunswick River --

7 A. Yeah -- well --

8 Q. -- where it branches off the Brunswick River?

9 A. Yeah. So this is the East River going up towards towards --

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. So yeah, it was Brunswick River, way down here, well past the  
12 Colonel's Island Point -- the Colonel's Island Terminal. He was  
13 like -- it's directly across -- I forget the name of the state  
14 park that's basically right -- you could see the ramp, wherever  
15 the ramp is right here on the map. In these pictures, he was --  
16 this is where its heaviest spot.

17 So I was with Cameron and we immediately went back there.  
18 And as soon as we got to just south -- so we went past Colonel's  
19 Island and basically fast bail all the way up here. So we left I  
20 think from the Mackay staging area, and it was just inundated with  
21 oil, extremely heavy. As I say, 100 yards in some places, you  
22 could just see oil back there. And there was birds all playing in  
23 it. And yeah, I'd say it stopped at about where the heaviest spot  
24 of oil was, about quarter of a mile from here.

25 I got -- I have a whole bunch of videos of it too that I saw.

1 And it went up -- and then kind of lighter up when we got to the  
2 Colonel's Island. And our job wasn't SCAT; we were just basically  
3 assessing the shoreline because I think we were the first ones  
4 basically. I think they were calling it a rapid assessment team,  
5 basically, is what we were acting as that day, so just to get  
6 initial assessment of what it looked like.

7 Q. And then you could radio back what was needed?

8 A. And radio back, yeah, so they could get SCAT out there if it  
9 was true. And then we went up here. Because initially, I think  
10 on the overflight, they were saying -- he was saying, it's all  
11 back west of the Colonel's Island facility.

12 But as we made a slow bail, we couldn't find anything on the  
13 north bank of the south Brunswick River, only on the south bank is  
14 where we were finding only shoreline impacts. And we went up east  
15 of the Colonel's Island facility, it started, I guess around this  
16 point -- so what's that, around a half-mile, you could see heavy  
17 impact again, same as what we were seeing up there. Then I'd say  
18 it probably stopped about a half-mile before he got back up to the  
19 Sidney Lanier Bridge.

20 Q. Okay. And what were the remediation strategies for that?

21 A. So the only remediation strategy that ended up coming up with  
22 that was applying Sphag Sorb, which is sorghum moss basically  
23 ground up into a fine powder. Then basically, it was applied via  
24 boat, via -- basically they took trashcans, filled them up with  
25 bags of sorb moss, and took a leaf blower, put a Gatorade bottle

1 on the end of it, and sprayed the first 3 feet -- 3 to 5 feet is  
2 what they were able to reach.

3 Q. And that's a binding agent, correct?

4 A. Yeah, it basically adhered to all the oil. And then it was  
5 very ineffective -- I didn't think it was very effective. It  
6 basically adhered to the grass.

7 And we'd only have a couple-hour windows because the tide  
8 each day is so drastic, it just comes up so fast and falls so  
9 fast. You only have a couple hours a day to really apply it. And  
10 when the tide comes up, it basically all washes away.

11 Q. Okay. And then --

12 A. And it's still -- and it was supposed to stop -- so the idea  
13 behind the applying was, I was in the environmental unit -- it  
14 wasn't in any of these meetings -- but what was conveyed to me out  
15 in the field was, it's supposed to stop transfer of the oil to  
16 wildlife.

17 And so basically -- I have a whole bunch of videos I can show  
18 you on my phone. Basically after the spraying each day, I'd go  
19 and swipe it with an -- with the back of my hand basically because  
20 they said that's a realistic -- basically lightly tap a blade of  
21 grass, and oil was still all coming off of my hand. So --

22 Q. Okay. So you didn't think it was very effective?

23 A. It just stopped the transfer, is what was told it was  
24 supposed to do.

25 Q. And how --

1 A. And it was only the first 3 to 5 feet, it wasn't back 100  
2 yards into the marsh in some places.

3 Q. And was it oil the 100 yards back in the marsh?

4 A. It was, yeah.

5 Q. Okay. So significantly --

6 A. It was confirmed.

7 Q. -- a lot more ground oil than what was spraying anyway?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So it was basically determined that we would do more damage  
11 to the marsh by stomping through it. And it was discussed out in  
12 the field, like, in situ burn, but I don't think it -- and it was  
13 recommended back to there, but I don't think it made it out of  
14 environmental. I'm sure it was shot down immediately; I'm not  
15 sure.

16 Q. Okay. You don't know where --

17 A. No, but --

18 Q. You don't know --

19 A. -- I know the only approved remediation method was the Sphag  
20 Sorb.

21 Q. Okay. And after the big burp from the 30th and those  
22 impacts, was there any other major oil that came out -- that  
23 discharged from the vessel?

24 A. No. You'd have a couple tar balls. You still had the oil  
25 recovery group. They were still up there circling the vessel each

1 day. And I think they were recovering like a couple tar balls  
2 every now and then. But mostly, I was focused on my group I was  
3 overseeing.

4 So the remediation -- so it was like there was cleanup crews  
5 on Jekyll each day picking up tar balls and then cleanup crews  
6 on -- or spraying the sorghum moss and applying all that. And  
7 that's what I was basically doing the next couple weeks.

8 Q. Okay. But from that point on, there was kind of the on-water  
9 recovery group started to kind of wind down once it realized that  
10 there was -- there wasn't a lot more discharging?

11 A. I think they -- I believe they still kept the resources  
12 there; but I'm not the correct person to ask about that, because I  
13 wasn't out there.

14 Q. Okay. Got it. And then about how long did the remediation  
15 efforts operation go on?

16 A. So I stayed -- I demobed on the -- for the first time on the  
17 20th of October, and we were still spraying sorghum moss. Some  
18 days, we'd get like 150 bags of sorghum moss applied via -- by  
19 like 10 boats, and then other days, we'd only have like 30 bags  
20 applied, because it was all dependent on the tides and how we were  
21 able to access it. But I know we hit most of the areas at least  
22 two or three times.

23 Q. Was it ever discussed that this was an ineffective method?

24 A. Oh, it was passed. I passed that up. But there was a couple  
25 Gallagher guys who thought it was very effective, Owen Voigt being



1 one of them. He was out there. He thought it was -- he thought  
2 this thing was the best thing ever.

3 Q. Did he say why?

4 A. No. But he just kept on praising the wonders of Sphag Sorb.

5 Q. And then when you demobed on the 20th, did it look like there  
6 had been progress made on the remediation, or did -- was the  
7 ground still pretty oiled?

8 A. It was still pretty oiled, but it wasn't as fresh because it  
9 was just -- I think it was just natural weathering had taken its  
10 course over those almost 3 weeks since it --

11 Q. And it's a natural remediation?

12 A. Yeah, a natural remediation.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. I wouldn't say the Sphag Sorb was any effective.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. But yeah, on the 20th when we demobed, I -- they actually  
17 shut down the Mackay staging area and combined everything to the  
18 Sidney Lanier staging then again. And they sent a lot of people  
19 demobed that day as well.

20 Q. Okay. And then did you go back after the 20th or --

21 A. Yeah, I went back. Actually, in January, I just got back  
22 last week. And then -- yeah, so I did a 2-week cycle from the 1st  
23 of the year through last week.

24 Q. And what were your -- what was your role during that cycle?

25 A. So overseeing the transfer of salvage from Donjon-SMIT to T&T

1 or seeing that transition. And then -- so SCAT is also going out  
2 on Tuesday and Thursday. So I would go out and -- there was only  
3 one SCAT team out, so I'd go out and do SCAT on Tuesday and  
4 Thursday.

5 Q. And how much better would you say the environment looks from  
6 when -- your first time out and then this time out?

7 A. Oh, night and day difference, yeah.

8 Q. And have they --

9 A. Looks a lot better.

10 Q. -- have they still been using the Sphag Sorb?

11 A. No, the Sphag Sorb I think stopped basically. I don't know,  
12 but from what I was told basically a week after I left is when the  
13 Sphag Sorb stops.

14 Q. And what's their primary remediation method then, after the  
15 Sphag Sorb; just natural?

16 A. Yeah, just natural remediation.

17 Q. But it's been working it seems?

18 A. It's been working, yes.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Yeah, the only place that looked worse was Bird Island. So  
21 we walked -- we did SCAT on Bird Island one day. And -- well,  
22 they actually did -- we call it a RAT, because we didn't have a  
23 state representative with us. So we had RAT on Bird Island, it  
24 was like on Monday, because they wanted to see what it looked  
25 like, see if we can actually get out there and SCAT it.

1           And it looked clean, like no oil. And then we had the high  
2 spring tides that night, and the next morning when we get up there  
3 on, I think it was like 2 days later, for SCAT, there's oil debris  
4 everywhere up on SCAT -- up on Bird Island --

5 Q.    Okay. So it had come from somewhere else?

6 A.    -- so the tide had just -- it had been caught up in the  
7 riprap, or the rack lines had been transferred and picked up while  
8 the oiled rack had been dragged up to Bird Island and everything  
9 like that.

10 Q.    Okay.

11 A.    So then they sent out cleanup crews and everything out there  
12 on the next day to go clean up Bird Island. And that's still in  
13 January.

14 Q.    Okay. So all things considered, do you think that our  
15 partner agencies are satisfied with the level of the response?

16 A.    I don't want to speak for them, but I'm -- there's a couple  
17 things that I'd change in hindsight, but I think we did a pretty  
18 good job.

19 Q.    And it looks -- does it look like there's any part of the  
20 environment that's not going to fully recover?

21 A.    I think we did more damage than good in Cedar Creek by  
22 placing that hard exclusion boom in there in Cedar Creek. It  
23 caused a lot of damage to the grass. And it looks like a lot of  
24 it died and a lot of mud actually fell. Because every single day,  
25 when we go back to Cedar Creek then, you could see the boom was up

1 on shore and everything and basically pulling the mud bank down  
2 into the water.

3 I think we did more damage maybe in Cedar Creek than we did  
4 good by having that -- the hard boom is what caused it. I don't  
5 think the absorbent boom or the snare boom caused it. I think it  
6 was just the hard boom just brushing up against that mud bank at  
7 low tide. I think we did a lot of damage there.

8 Q. And that's not a protected habitat, correct?

9 A. I don't know about -- I couldn't speak on that at all. But  
10 Cedar Creek, like I said, there was more damage caused by the  
11 response, but that's the only other place.

12 Q. Okay. And that's just some other marsh grass?

13 A. Yeah, just basically segments of the marsh, like the mud and  
14 everything just fell into the water there.

15 Q. And that was that location that you mentioned earlier that  
16 nobody was expecting, correct?

17 A. Yeah, that was where we found on the 1st, Cedar Creek.

18 Q. Got it.

19 A. And it was hit pretty hard. There was a lot of oil in there.

20 Q. Yeah, got it. So it could be tough to decide that -- how  
21 that area truly recovers. Got it. Anything else about your  
22 efforts in the response?

23 A. No, that pretty much sums it up. One thing that I would like  
24 to see is -- the first couple days, we had -- there was video  
25 cameras. So if you walk off the pier at Sidney Lanier staging,

1 you were inundated with media.

2 So a big thing that I would like to see is somebody set up  
3 security, be like, you cannot enter here. The first 2 days, you'd  
4 get -- as soon as I walked off the pier and they see somebody in  
5 the Coast Guard uniform, and they'll -- [REDACTED] had this as  
6 well -- you're getting three cameras in your face and people  
7 asking you questions, everything like that. And that's really  
8 hard to do. And their crews were all in there and everything like  
9 that, and you just have to continuously try to back them up.

10 Q. Was there a joint information center set up?

11 A. There was, but they were still -- a lot of them were still  
12 coming here.

13 Q. Where was the JIC set up at?

14 A. I couldn't tell you, but I know it was set up.

15 Q. Okay. So -- but they were avoiding that, going right to the  
16 responders?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Okay. And then the ICP was already at Embassy Suites too, so  
19 they were just going right to the launch?

20 A. Yeah, just trying to get footage I guess. And out in the  
21 water, they were still there as well. But I'd say after like 3 or  
22 4 days, the media attention kind of died off a lot.

23 Q. Do you know if -- so there's a safety zone in place; do you  
24 know the boats that were out there, did they have any success in  
25 mitigating the media out there?

1 A. Yeah. So the Coast Guard boats stayed. I think there was at  
2 least one out there at all times, 24 hours around the clock, but  
3 sometimes two. And they were chasing people off there constantly,  
4 constantly. It was a half-mile initially, and then they reduced  
5 it down. But the first couple days, they were chasing a lot of  
6 boats out there, and it was definitely effective.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Now, it's all contractor, it's not our -- contractor boats  
9 out there now 24 hours. But they basically tell them they need to  
10 leave.

11 LT [REDACTED]: All right. Well, I appreciate your time, and if  
12 I have any other questions I'll reach out to you. But if you have  
13 anything else to add?

14 MR. [REDACTED]: No.

15 LT [REDACTED] All right. Well, thank you so much. And that  
16 concludes this interview.

17 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:           CAPSIZING/SINKING OF THE *GOLDEN*  
                                  *RAY* IN THE BRUNSWICK RIVER,  
                                  GEORGIA, ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2019  
                                  Interview of [REDACTED]

ACCIDENT NO.:               DCA19FM048

PLACE:                       Savannah, Georgia

DATE:                        January 29, 2020

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

[REDACTED]  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeffrey  
Transcriber