



National Transportation Safety Board
Marine Accident Brief
Determination of Probable Cause
Sinking of Fishing Vessel Heritage

Accident no.	DCA-12-LM-007
Vessel	Fishing Vessel <i>Heritage</i>
Accident type	Sinking
Location	Alitak Bay, about 3 miles from Lazy Bay, off southeastern end of Kodiak Island, Alaska
Date	January 25, 2012
Time	0600 Alaska standard time (universal coordinated time – 9 hours)
Injuries	None
Environmental damage	8,000 gallons of diesel fuel on board when the vessel sank
Weather	Northwest winds 43 knots, gusts to about 59 knots Air temperature 1.4° F, sea surface temperature 36.5° F
Waterway characteristics	<i>U.S. Coast Pilot 9</i> describes Lazy Bay as a “good anchorage” and Russian Harbor as “a temporary anchorage in moderate weather, in about 8 fathoms, hard sand bottom. There is but little shelter, and strong tide rips are frequent.”

The 67-foot-long fishing vessel *Heritage* (rendering in figure 1) was returning to Lazy Bay to unload a cargo of fish to the fish tender vessel *Tuxedni*. The seven-person complement on board the *Heritage* had been fishing south of Sitkinak Island, about 25 miles south-southeast of Lazy Bay. During the return, which took place in a storm, ice built up on the vessel, causing it to list, flood, and sink. The crew abandoned the vessel about 0600 on January 25, 2012. The accident area is shown in figure 2.

The master stated that, while en route to Lazy Bay, the *Heritage* encountered northwest winds in excess of 50 knots and heavy freezing spray. The master stopped the vessel in Russian Harbor, about 12 miles southeast of the port in Lazy Bay, so the crew could remove ice from the vessel. After ice removal and waiting for slack tide, the master resumed the return voyage across Alitak Bay toward Lazy Bay.

As the vessel transited toward Lazy Bay, the crew continued to remove ice. One of the crewmembers said, “The final time we beat ice we didn’t make a lot of progress and it seemed like we made ice as fast as we could clear it.” The master said that, while crossing Alitak Bay, the vessel experienced 90 mph wind gusts, 10- to 15-foot seas, snow, and fog. Eventually, the crew took a break from ice removal. One of the crewmembers told investigators that, about 20 minutes after the break began, the vessel started listing to port. Another crewmember said that after the vessel began to list he saw the engine room fill with water.

Sinking of Fishing Vessel Heritage

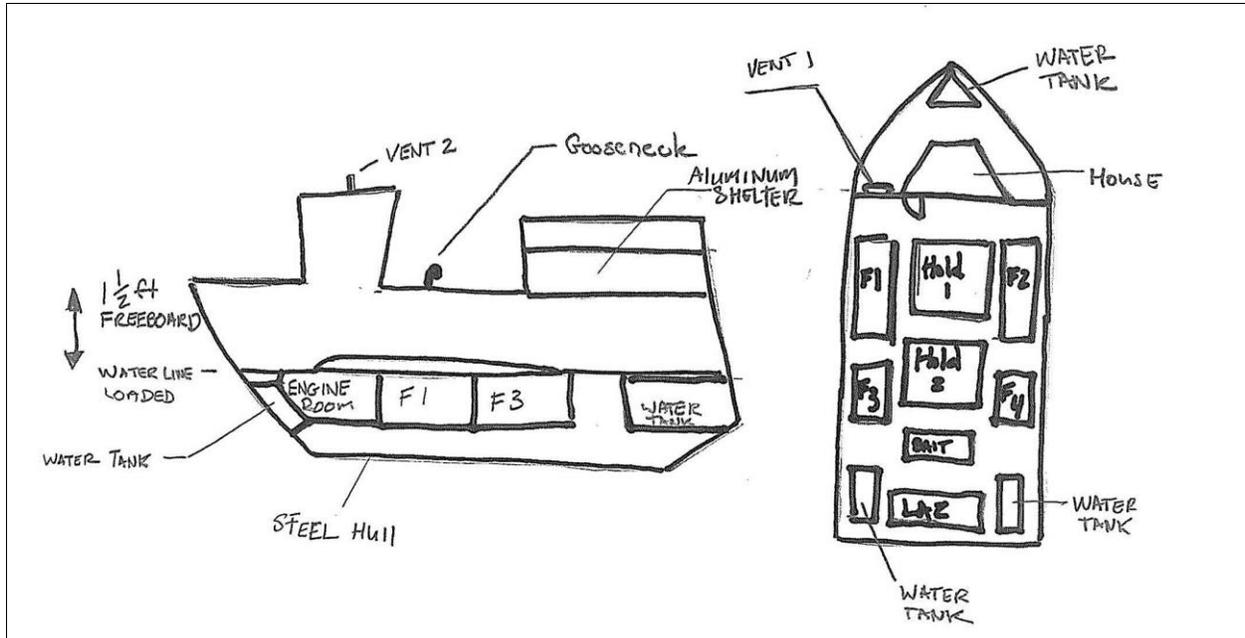


Figure 1. Rendering of the *Heritage* drawn by the master after the accident. No known photos exist of the vessel. Tanks labeled with an F are fuel tanks, and Holds 1 and 2 carried fish.

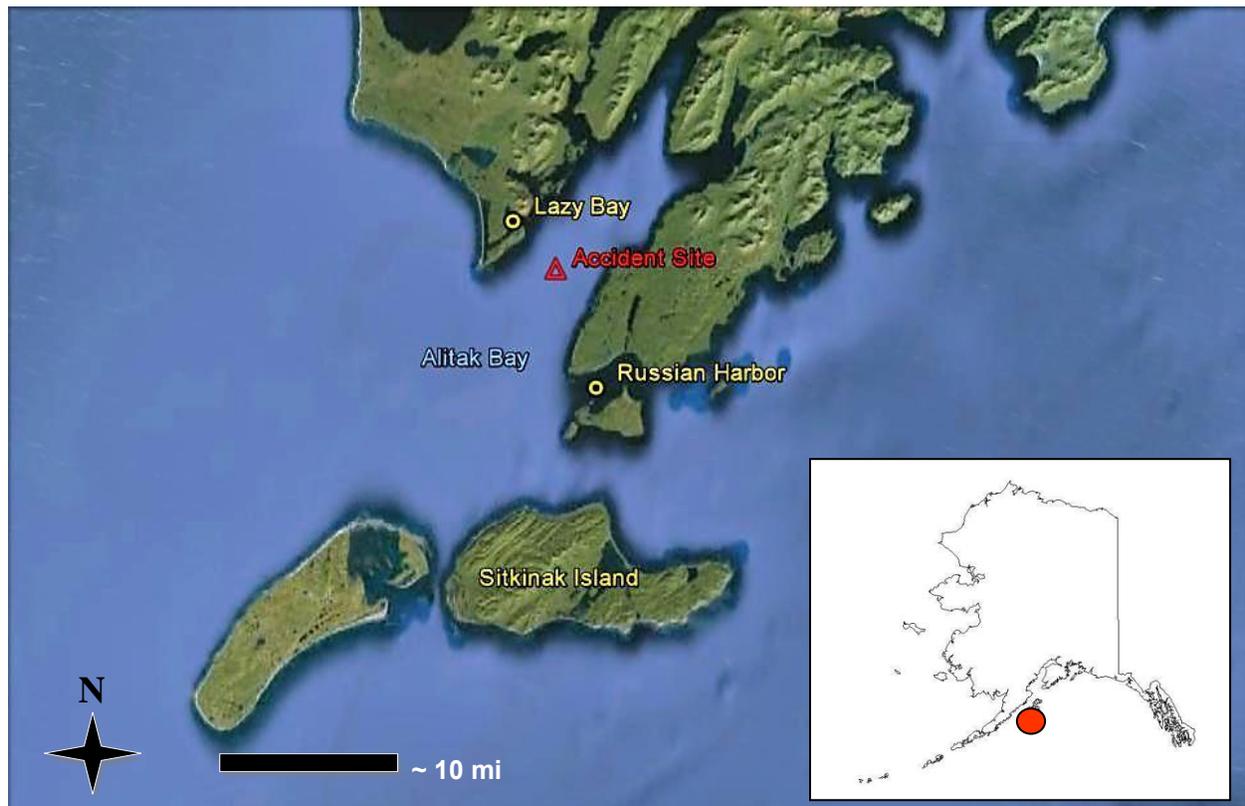


Figure 2. Map of the area in which the *Heritage* transited and sank.

Sinking of Fishing Vessel Heritage

The master made a radio distress call, and then he, the crew, and the onboard National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) observer donned their immersion suits and entered the water about 3.5 miles from Lazy Bay. The master and four of the crewmembers made it into the vessel's liferaft and were picked up by the crew of the *Tuxedni*, with which they were to rendezvous in Lazy Bay. The crew of a US Coast Guard helicopter rescued the final crewmember and the NMFS observer from the water.

Each of the National Weather Service marine forecasts for the area where the *Heritage* operated included a "heavy freezing spray warning" beginning at 0400 on Sunday, January 22, 2012, when the vessel departed Lazy Bay, to the time of the sinking. Sea spray icing occurs when cold, wave-generated spray comes in contact with exposed surfaces and the air temperature is below freezing. Higher wave heights produce more sea spray, which results in greater vessel icing.

Following the accident, the master was tested for illegal drugs. The result was negative. None of the men were tested for alcohol.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause of the sinking of fishing vessel *Heritage* was the master's decision to proceed with the voyage despite known weather conditions that would adversely affect the safety of his vessel. Specifically, the weather conditions caused icing on the vessel resulting in a loss of stability due to added weight on the decks and superstructure.

*Sinking of Fishing Vessel Heritage***Vessel Particulars**

Vessel	<i>Heritage</i>
Owner/operator	F/V Heritage
Persons on board	Seven (six crew and one NMFS observer)
Flag	United States
Type	Fishing vessel (uninspected)
Year built	1977
Official number	582098
Construction	Steel
Depth	10.2 ft.(3.11 m)
Length	67 ft. (20.4 m)
Width	24 ft.(7.3 m)
Draft forward/aft	11 ft. (3.6 m) / 8 ft. (2.4 m)
Gross tonnage	109
Engine	Diesel
Cargo	Fish
Commercial Fishing Vessel Examination decal	Issued April 25, 2011, expires April 25, 2013

For more information about this accident, visit <http://www.nts.gov/investigations/dms.html> and search for NTSB accident ID DCA12LM007.

Adopted: February 1, 2013

The NTSB has authority to investigate and establish the probable cause of any major marine casualty or any marine casualty involving both public and nonpublic vessels under 49 *United States Code* 1131. This report is based on factual information provided by the US Coast Guard from its informal investigation of the accident. The NTSB did not conduct its own on-scene investigation.