

Accident Report

Grounding

Huntress

8 November 2006

Class B



NARRATIVE

At 0500 hours on Tuesday 7 November 2006, the fishing vessel **Huntress** departed its berth in Waikawa Bay, Queen Charlotte Sound.

On board was the Skipper / Owner. He was bound for the regular cray fish grounds which extended south from the eastern entrance of Tory Channel to Rununder Point.

The Skipper worked his 100-cray pots to the south, and then steamed north, back to his 'away' base in Jackson Bay, Tory Channel.

He arrived at his mooring in Jackson Bay at about 1400 hours. He deposited his catch into his holding tanks and then settled down for the rest of the day. He went to sleep at around 2200 hours that evening.

At 0500 hours, on Wednesday 8 November, the Skipper departed the mooring and started working his pots southwards again.

By 1500 hours, he had returned to Jackson Bay and dropped off his catch into the holding tanks. He also went to a nearby bay and dropped off another vessel's cray pots.

At 1530 hours, **Huntress** was steaming west along Tory Channel bound for Waikawa Bay and the berth.

The Skipper was in hand steering keeping to the starboard side of Tory Channel to keep out of the tidal current flow against the vessel. There was a gusty southwest to northwest wind blowing at the time.

At about 1600 hours, the Skipper heard a fish bin blow across the deck. He had a quick glance out the window and then went aft to re-secure the bin. While on deck he noticed the bin needed a clean so started to give it a quick scrub. Shortly after this the vessel grounded on a rock shelf near Wiriwaka Point.

The Skipper reduced revolutions and then engaged neutral as the vessel heeled over to port. He checked the vessel for water ingress but found none present.

The Skipper then called Picton Maritime Radio on VHF channel 16 to ask for assistance. In due course he made contact with other fishing vessels in the area who came to his assistance. Plans were made to tow the **Huntress** off once low water had passed and there was more water available to float the vessel off.

At about 2000 hours, **Huntress** was towed off the rock shelf and into deep water. At no time was any water ingress noted. The Skipper steamed back to the berth in Waikawa Bay. He stayed on board that night to ensure there were no further problems with the vessel.

On 9 November **Huntress** was slipped, where minor cosmetic paint damage was found.

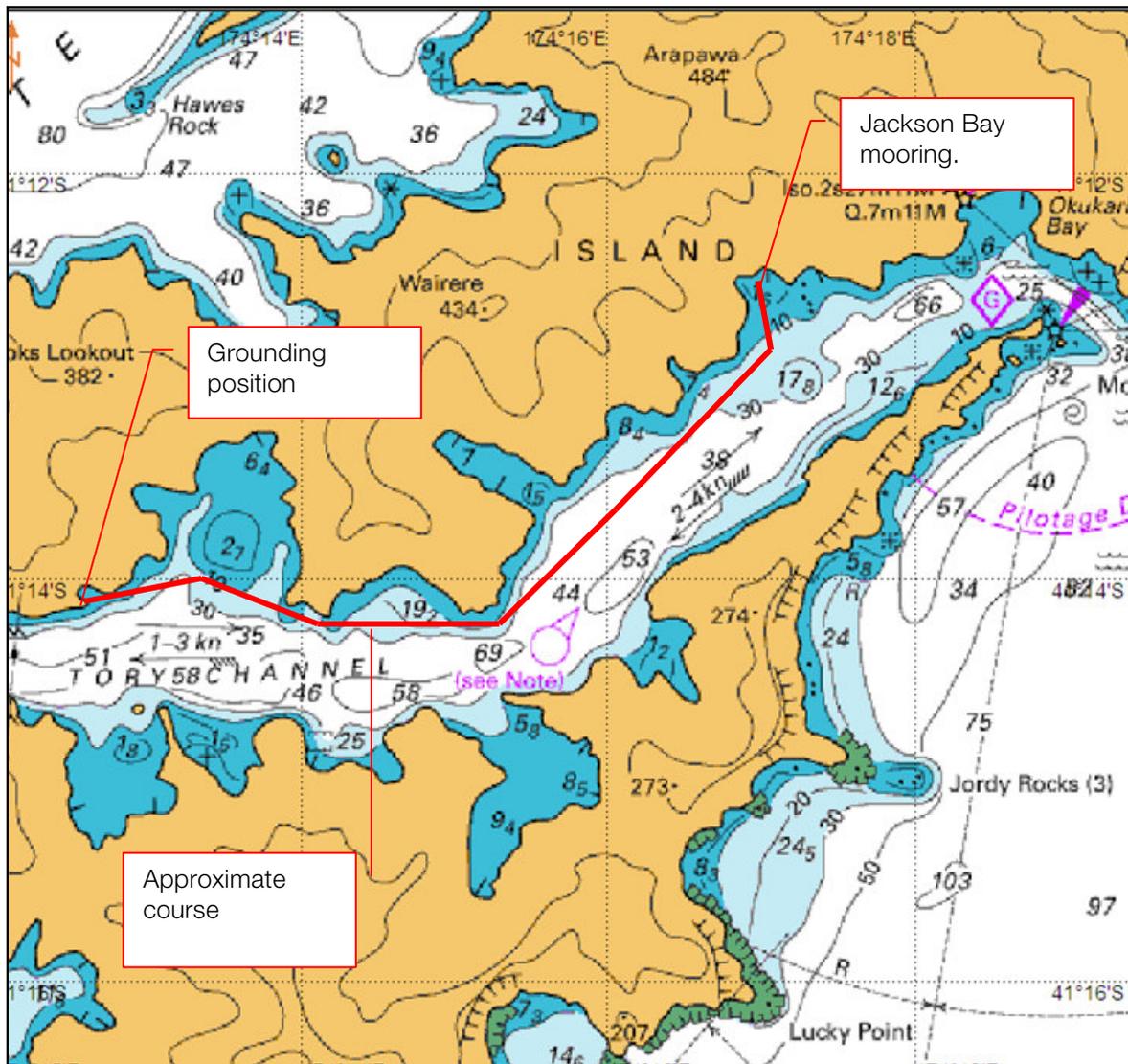


FIGURE 1

Location of Grounding site

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

Evidence

The Skipper was interviewed on 16 November. Further information was gathered from the MetService and Maritime New Zealand database.

Analysis

Huntress is a 10.97 metre wooden semi-displacement vessel. She was designed and built in 1973 by A.J Morgan boatbuilders. The vessel is powered by a 156 Kw caterpillar diesel main engine via a standard fixed pitch propeller.

The vessel held a valid Safe Ship Management Certificate issued by S.G.S due to expire in August 2008.

The Skipper has owned the vessel for 15 years. He has operated the vessel in the same area fishing for cray fish. He holds a Commercial Launch Master's Certificate issued in 1988. He is a very experienced fisherman who is known to be particular about the operation and set up of his vessel.

The Skipper decided to return to port due to a poor forecast for the following day. The forecast for Cook issued at 1232 hours on Wednesday 8 November was for NW 35 knots becoming Southerly 30 knots in the morning.

During his voyage west along Tory Channel the Skipper states that the wind was varying in direction from gusty southwest round to gusty northwest.

The tide at the time of the grounding was almost at low water Picton. **Huntress** was pushing the tidal flow as it headed west along Tory Channel. The Skipper was keeping out of the bulk of this flow by keeping to starboard of the channel and dipping into the open bays along the passage.

The Skipper heard a fish bin blow across the deck due to the gusty wind in Tory Channel. He left the wheelhouse with the vessel situated in a safe position. He was planning to replace the bin in its position then return to the wheelhouse. This did not happen as he stayed on deck longer after deciding to scrub part of the bin.

The position of the vessel was not safe enough to allow for this extended period away from the wheelhouse.

During these daylight and good visibility passages down Tory Channel, the Skipper does not operate a radar or any alarms on the echo sounder or GPS chart plotter.



Fig 1, Huntress aground on Wiriwaka Point



Fig 2, Huntress aground.

FINDINGS

The Skipper left the wheelhouse to attend to a loose bin on the aft deck.

He did not maintain a continuous navigational watch to ensure the safe passage of the vessel.

He had not planned to be away from the wheelhouse for so long, but got sidetracked with the cleanliness of a fish bin.

The tide at the time was acting against the vessel. The direction of the tidal flow can vary in Tory Channel as a result of the twisting nature of the topography.

The wind was also fluctuating at times, changing from the port bow through to the starboard bow.

The vessel was in a safe position for the Skipper to leave the wheel for a short time but not for the 5 to 6 minutes that passed while on deck.

While the Skipper was on deck the vessel was influenced by tide and wind resulting in the vessel being set to starboard and onto a rock shelf at Wiriwaka Point.

Fatigue, drugs or alcohol are not believed to have been factor in this accident.

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Skipper be censured for his failure to navigate safely in this situation. He clearly should have either: -
 - (a) Left the bin where it was.
 - (b) Tied it down properly from the start.
 - (c) Not scrubbed the bin.
 - (d) Stopped the vessel to ensure its continued safety throughout any activities on deck.
 - (e) Navigate the vessel further out into the channel to allow a greater safety margin.

VESSEL DETAILS

Ship Name:	Huntress
Ship Type:	Fishing Vessel
Certified Operating Limit:	Coastal
Port of Registry:	Picton
Flag:	NZ
Built:	1973
Construction Material:	Wood
Length Overall (m):	10.97
Maximum Breadth:	
Gross Tonnage:	
Registered Owner:	Vaughan Hokianga
Ship Operator/Manager:	Vaughan Hokianga
SSM Company	S.G.S
Accident Investigator:	Domonic Venz