

REPORT

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: January 22, 2024

From: Lisa Leblanc, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
File: 05.1035.10

Item #: 2024-29

Subject: Report back to Council on September 11, 2023 motion regarding Samson V oil spill

RECOMMENDATION

THAT council receive this report for information and consider the matter of the Samson V oil spill concluded.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to respond to Council's September 11, 2023 motion regarding the June 20, 2023 Samson V oil spill, and to advise Council that the cleanup and remediation of the spill has been concluded.

BACKGROUND

On September 11, 2023 Council passed the following motion:

Whereas on July 20th an oil spill occurred in the Fraser River with the source being identified as the Samson V Museum which is owned and operated by the City of New Westminster; and

Whereas oil contamination in the Fraser River can have significant impact on the environment, protected fish species, habitat and shoreline; and

Whereas the public deserves a full explanation regarding the circumstances which led to the oil spill as well as the costs related to the cleanup.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT staff be directed to produce a public report regarding the July 2023 oil spill which emanated from the Samson V Museum; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED this oil spill public report include the following core components:

An overview of the negative environmental impacts caused by the Samson V oil spill to the Fraser River and surrounding communities

The full list of government agencies, regulators, community partners, environmental non-governmental organization involved in responding to the Samson V oil spill;

Full costing of the environmental cleanup including an estimate of staff time;

An estimate of any fines that may be levied by regulators and senior orders of government;

Analysis as to circumstances which triggered the Samson V oil spill released into the Fraser River;

DISCUSSION

On June 20, 2023, an oil spill was discovered emanating from the Samson V Maritime Museum. That day the Canadian Coast Guard attended the site to ensure its proper cleanup and remediation. The City immediately began cleaning up the spill.

On June 22, 2023, the City of New Westminster received a formal directive from the Coast Guard to cleanup the river and remediate any hydrocarbon hazards Samson V continued to pose to the environment. This directive regulated the magnitude of City response to the oil spill; including those engaged to complete the work. By August 6, 2023, the cleanup was completed to the satisfaction of both the Coast Guard and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Should the City undertake any further investigation into the cause of the spill and any ongoing environmental impacts, this would be done at its own initiative and not as a regulatory requirement.

Details of Canadian Coast Guard Directives

Coast Guard directives were as follows:

1. Clean all Bunker C oil from the shoreline, water and woody debris floating in the water at the affected area;

2. Ensure all bilges of the vessel have been cleaned of remaining Bunker C oil as well as any compromised tanks. Secure a contractor by 5pm Saturday July 22 to begin this work.

City measures taken in response to Coast Guard directives were as follows:

1. City staff worked with Canadian Environmental Emergency Response, the Coast Guard and Western Canada Marine Response Corporation (WCMRC) to ensure all Bunker C oil was removed from the water.

The initial cleanup response on Thursday and Friday (July 20 and 21) captured the majority of the product from the water with the only remaining product on site attached to floating woody debris in the water that was collected Sunday July 23.

By end of day Sunday July 23, no fuel was visible in the affected area. To be sure, the area was monitored through low and high tides until Monday morning (July 24) when an oil boom was removed from the river to demobilize the site.

All parties – Canadian Environmental Emergency Response, the Coast Guard and WCMRC – were satisfied that no further action was required to clean the river, shoreline and any floating debris. All told approximately 189 liters of oil escaped into the Fraser River all of it was recaptured.

2. By noon July 22, the City secured qualified contractor NUCOR Environmental Solutions to clean remaining Bunker C oil from the bilge areas of Samson V. The Coast Guard was advised as per their directive and city staff worked with NUCOR, Canadian Environmental Emergency Response and the Coast Guard to ensure work proceeded in an acceptable fashion. NUCOR staged the site for cleanup on July 24 and 25, and began decanting oil from the vessel and cleaning the bilge areas on June 26. An extra precaution was taken to place a boom around Samson V during the remediation but no product escaped during cleaning.

Wednesday morning (July 26) a vacuum truck and remediation equipment began operating from the fire lane between the River Market and Inn at the Quay; New Westminster Fire & Rescue Services were alerted to accommodate the work in a safe and acceptable fashion. As the lane belongs to the River Market, the City obtained their permission to work from this area. The Inn at the Quay was also alerted to the work as were property management for both River Sky residential towers. City staff placed signage along the esplanade to alert the public to the work and pedestrian traffic was controlled but not blocked. Wheelchair accessible ramps were placed over the hoses to ensure continued accessibility along the esplanade. All work took place between 7am and 8pm in accordance with New Westminster Noise Bylaw 6063, 1992.

The cleaning and remediation was completed by August 5 with the Coast Guard certifying the work on August 6.

Upon receiving notice from the Coast Guard that all directives had been satisfied, City staff considered the cleanup complete and set to preparing Samson V Maritime Museum for reopening on August 12. Altogether, the museum was closed for just over 3 weeks resulting in minimal impact to public operations.

Staff Response to Specific Components of Council's Motion

Component #1: [Provide] "An overview of the negative environmental impacts caused by the Samson V oil spill to the Fraser River and surrounding communities";

Council are advised that the Canadian Coast Guard issued remediation orders and monitored city response to the spill along with Environment and Climate Change Canada. Both agencies have reported back that they are satisfied with the cleanup. No further orders have been issued requiring an environmental assessment or additional measures to be taken by the City. An End of Spill Report was issued to the British Columbia Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy on October 17, 2023 (Attachment 1).

Should Council direct staff to conduct further investigation related to the spill and its impacts it would be at the initiative of the City and require an undetermined budget for project management and professional services. Staff have not investigated these costs.

Component #2: [Provide] "The full list of government agencies, regulators, community partners, environmental non-governmental organization involved in responding to the Samson V oil spill;"

The following were involved in the response:

- Canadian Coast Guard - Enforcement
- Environment and Climate Change Canada – Enforcement and Regulation
- Canadian Environmental Emergency Response – Federal regulatory guidance
- Western Canada Marine Response Corporation – Remediation company that cleaned up the environmental spill site at the direction of the City.
- NUCOR Environmental Solutions – Remediation company that cleaned up the oil spill within Samson V at the direction of the City.

Component #3: [Provide a] "Full costing of the environmental cleanup including an estimate of staff time;"

The following fees and staff hours were involved in the cleanup:

- Environmental Cleanup fees – \$35,080.32, this is the fee for the river and shoreline cleanup by Western Canada Marine Response
- Ship cleaning fees – \$158,704.26, this is the fee to clean the oil from the bilge areas and the remediate the source of the leak.
- Hydrocarbon filter system – \$30,195.74, this is a system installed on the bilge lines to filter any residual hydrocarbon from the bilge areas.
- Staff time directed to the spill cleanup are as follows:
 - 50 hours Museums and Heritage Services Manager time to project manage site remediation and work with contractors on site.
 - 18 hours Engineering operations staff time to support material removal and initial emergency response
 - 6 hours museum staff time in supporting initial spill emergency response.

Component #4: [Provide] “An estimate of any fines that may be levied by regulators and senior orders of government;”

Staff have received notice from the Federal Government that no fines will be levied against the City for this spill. The Province of BC has not issued any fines to the City nor have they suggested any fines will be levied. Staff are still awaiting a reply from the province to confirm acceptance of the End of Spill report submitted October 17.

Component #5: [Provide an] “Analysis as to circumstances which triggered the Samson V oil spill released into the Fraser River;”

It is certain the hydrocarbons came from oil tanks still containing fuel from Samson V's commissioned service years. The fuel lines leading from these tanks to the vessel's boiler ruptured causing the fuel to leak into the bilge areas. Oil was subsequently pumped from the bilge areas into the Fraser River.

A thorough investigative report from a consultant is required to provide certainty on the cause of the ruptured fuel lines. A comprehensive analysis would require the services of a naval architect or engineer to complete an investigation and provide a professional appraisal of the factors leading to the spill. Estimated costs to obtain these services have not been researched as staff had considered the matter resolved once all remaining environmental threats were mitigated.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Total costs for the cleanup of the oil spill have been \$223,683.32. The financial implications to conduct further environmental and/or structural investigation related to the causes and impacts of this spill have not been investigated.

OPTIONS

1. THAT Council receive this report for information and consider the matter of the Samson V oil spill concluded.
2. THAT Council provides other direction to staff.

Staff recommends Option 1.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – October 17, 2023 End of Spill Report submitted to the British Columbia Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

Rob McCullough, Manager of Museums and Heritage Services

This report was approved by:

Lisa Leblanc, Acting Chief Administrative Officer