

The NewsRoom

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Mystery Barge in Alaska's Cook Inlet

A local dredging company brought up more than they expected recently when they unearthed portions of a towing chain and bits of rebar and concrete from a mystery barge sunk in the Port of Anchorage. The company is dredging part of the port as part of an expansion project. The wreck, located about 1600 feet from the dock, is buried under five feet of silt. No one was aware that the wreck was there so they called the Minerals Management Service, the federal agency responsible for identifying shipwrecks.

The Alaska Shipwreck Database maintained by MMS, lists only one wreck, the barge "North Cape" which sank in Cook Inlet near Anchorage on November 1, 1966. MMS is exploring that and other theories as to the identity of the mystery vessel and is working with local officials in the identification of the wreck. Since it is in the way of a planned port expansion, the owners will be responsible for removing it if title can be determined.

MMS regulates the exploration and development of oil and gas resources on the federal outer continental shelf. The MMS's Alaska Region maintains an extensive shipwreck database.

The MMS shipwreck database provides the most comprehensive compilation of Alaska shipwrecks available. The database lists shipwrecks that have occurred in Alaska from earliest Russian times (1741) to the present compiled from an extensive literature search. [The electronic database is available on the Internet.](#)

Wrecks are added to the database if the owner reports or if there is some other record such as a newspaper story. The information found in the database includes the date of the wreck, vessel name, cause of wreck, the general location of wreck, and sources of other pertinent information including links to other shipwreck sites. The database is the culmination of a lifelong interest in shipwrecks by MMS socioeconomic specialist Michael Burwell.

MMS is also undertaking a comprehensive shipwreck study in the Gulf of Mexico this summer. A team of world-renowned scientists will venture into the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico on an [18-day research mission](#) to investigate the long-term effect of manmade structures on the deep sea, and conversely, the effect of the environment on those structures. The multidisciplinary group, overseen by the Interior Department's Minerals Management Service (MMS), will depart Port Fourchon, Louisiana on July 29 aboard the NOAA contracted research and exploration vessel *HOS Dominator*.

[Additional information is available on the web.](#)

The Minerals Management Service is the federal agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages the nation's oil, natural gas, and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf in Federal offshore waters. The agency also collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands. MMS disbursed more than \$8 billion in FY 2003 and more than \$135 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund annually for the acquisition and development of state and Federal park and recreation lands.

Relevant Web Sites

[MMS Main Website](#)

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