

## New York Harbor Buoy Recovery

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CGC KATHERINE WALKER services aids to navigation throughout New York Harbor, an area where heavy traffic and seasonal ice floes often lead to buoy allisions and sunken hulls. Most hulls and moorings are recovered with the use of a grapnel hook and chain. However, in past years some of these hulls were unable to be recovered, leaving hazards to navigation and a fouling hazard for the existing buoy.

The use of bottom surveys and sonar has helped KATHERINE WALKER locate some of these missing hulls. After location, recovery remained a problem. The hulls had little to no chain attached and attempts to recover them with a grapnel were unsuccessful. Ever increasing drafts on oil tankers and container ships as well as major dredging projects demanded that KATHERINE WALKER continue attempts to recover these hulls. Joint operations with the New Jersey state police, Jersey City Fire Department and the MSST Boston/New York Dive Teams proved to be a solution to this problem. Though dive teams have been used



*Sonar image of sunken hull after bottom survey.*



on buoy tenders for years, the heavy currents, hazardous water conditions and low visibility in New York Harbor posed a new challenge.

Careful planning with the dive team ensured the evolution was safe. Timing the dives around slack water and staging the divers off the Jersey City Fire Boat helped minimize time in the water. To increase safety of the divers in the highly congested waters, KATHERINE WALKER used their small boat as a picket boat and worked with Vessel Traffic Service to minimize traffic near the dive. Using the sonar on the dive boat and a remote operated vehicle, we were able to pinpoint the exact locations of the hulls. Due to the murky condi-

*Once in the water, KW's small boat assists a diver to the marker. Divers were deployed from the decks of the Jersey City Fire Boat, which was better suited for dive ops.*

tions, the dive team and KATHERINE WALKER's crew carefully planned the subsequent recovery. The first dive team descended to the bottom and affixed a Norwegian fender and tag line to the buoy hull. After placing the marker, the dive boat moved away from the buoy location and the KATHERINE WALKER moved in. KATHERINE WALKER's deck force attached a shot of chain around the tag line and lowered it carefully down to the sunken buoy. We then affixed slings to the chain and an additional Norwegian fender. The slings were buoyant enough to mark the buoy location and strong enough to allow retrieval of the chain by the cutter.

With the recovery mooring set up and lowered to the exact location of the sunken hull, the dive team went back to work. Despite zero visibility, the divers were able to affix the chain to the buoy immediately after reaching the bottom. After affixing the recovery mooring, KATHERINE WALKER began to retrieve the sunken hull. Not knowing exactly what was attached to the buoy, the buoy deck supervisor carefully raised the load and monitored the weight on the crane. Before we knew it, a hull popped up to the surface. The hull had obviously been hit by a vessel, was holed, partially flooded and needed to be dewatered prior to coming on board. Despite the damage to the hull and its age, it was in good enough condition to be returned to the buoy depot for refurbishing.

The successful recovery of a lost hull in the murky waters of New York Harbor was certainly an accomplishment. The teamwork displayed between all units involved was exceptional. Each unit learned more about the others' mission and the evolution paved the path for future operations.



*First sight of daylight in several years. Despite heavy growth and a hole that caused it to initially sink, the hull was in good shape and even the light was intact.*