

**Washington State Ferries  
Report of Formal Investigation  
M/V Cathlamet Allision with Fauntleroy Dolphin and Subsequent Grounding  
17 February 2023**

Investigating Authority: Washington State Ferries

Investigation and Report Preparation: Bill Michael, Operations Manager WSF Eagle Harbor Facility

Report Review/Approving Authority: Nicole McIntosh, Chief of Staff

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## **Executive Summary**

During a scheduled run between the Vashon Island Ferry Terminal and the Fauntleroy Ferry Terminal, the MV Cathlamet had an allision (a vessel strike with a stationary object) with the south dolphin on Thursday, July 28, 2022, at approximately 08:13:47 in the morning. At the time of the allision, the captain of the Fauntleroy/Vashon Southworth (FVS) F watch was navigating the Cathlamet. Cathlamet was operating with a complete deck and engine crew per USCG requirements in the #2 sailing position. There was an additional captain, mate, and several deck hands from the FVS "H" watch onboard. At the time of the allision, there were only two vessels to operate in the FVS route, so the third vessel crews either back filled openings in the WSF fleet or spent their watch onboard as extra crew. According to the ship's log, the weather was clear, negligible wind and an ebbing tide.

The FVS H watch Captain took control of the vessel shortly after the allision and docked the vessel at the Fauntleroy Ferry Terminal. All crew (both the assigned crew and the extra crew FVS H watch) evaluated the passengers and each other, then in conjunction with the terminal crew, began to offload the passengers. There was one minor injury to a passenger and one vehicle was damaged and unable to be immediately removed from the vessel. The vehicle was moved to the Eagle Harbor Maintenance Facility and turned over to an insurance adjuster.

The ensuing United States Coast Guard/National Transportation Safety Board and WSF interviews of the deck and engine room crew onboard at the time and the forensics investigation of the onboard data logger indicated that all machinery and control systems were functioning as designed. The navigation systems were also functioning as designed per interviews with the deck crew and the navigation department. Compulsory drug and alcohol tests were conducted 2 ½ hours after the allision. Tests indicated no drugs or alcohol use.

The WSF investigation initially focused on several areas which are referenced in staff interviews below.

- Was the captain in the wheelhouse at the time of the incident? This report has determined that the captain was present and at the helm of the vessel at the time of the incident.
- Was a mechanical malfunction a contributing factor to the incident? Mechanical issues have been ruled out as a cause.

## **The Emergency Operations Center**

The FVS H watch captain, [REDACTED] notified the Operation Watch Center (OWC) of the situation at about 0816, after he had taken over the control of the vessel from Captain [REDACTED], the FVS F watch captain. He also attempted to contact the regional port captain, Captain [REDACTED] about the same time. Director of Operations (DO) [REDACTED] was contacted by the OWC at about 0833. After viewing some photos of the allision, he realized this was a significant marine event. At 0845 he dispatched regional terminal manager [REDACTED] to FAU to take over on scene commander (OSC) responsibilities at Fauntleroy. At about 0847 [REDACTED] stood up the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The rest of the EOC timeline is recorded on ICS form 214 and is in the appendix.

### **Vessel and Crewing Background**

The Cathlamet was built in Seattle, WA in January 1981. The USCG Certificate of Inspection requires the following minimum crew level:

- 1 Captain with 1<sup>st</sup> class Pilotage
- 1 Mate with 1<sup>st</sup> class Pilotage
- 4 Able-bodied Seamen (AB)
- 3 Ordinary Seaman (OS)
- 1 Chief Engineer
- 1 Assistant Engineer
- 1 Oiler

The deck crew for the FVS “F” watch typically begin their day at 0345 on Vashon Island and end their day on Vashon Island at 1145.

The engine room crew typically begins their day at 0700 and ends their day at 1900.

### **The Casualty and Initial Response**

On July 28, 2022, M/V Cathlamet was scheduled to depart Vashon Island (VI) at 0755, enroute to Fautleroy (FAU). GLOBE<sup>®</sup> records that Cathlamet left VI at 0803. The onboard security cameras show Captain [REDACTED] walking across the “Texas” Deck from Pilothouse #1 to Pilothouse #2 somewhat after 0803. The vessel can be seen already underway at this point. Captain [REDACTED] passed the control to the #2 pilothouse from the #1 Pilothouse; the quartermaster got the Cathlamet underway headed to FAU. As the Cathlamet began to get close to FAU, Captain [REDACTED] took physical control of the throttles and helm as is typical, in preparation for the landing. Captain [REDACTED] asked for bow engagement after relieving the quartermaster. At 08:13:47, the Cathlamet had an allision with the south dolphin at FAU dock at approximately 15 knots. The Cathlamet sheared off the dolphin and grounded briefly. At this point the bow engaged (per the data logger) and the Captain began to attempt to back down. At approximately 08:14:30, the FVS H watch captain, Captain [REDACTED], took over control of the vessel and safely landed the Cathlamet in the FAU dock at about 0820.

### **After Docking at Fautleroy**

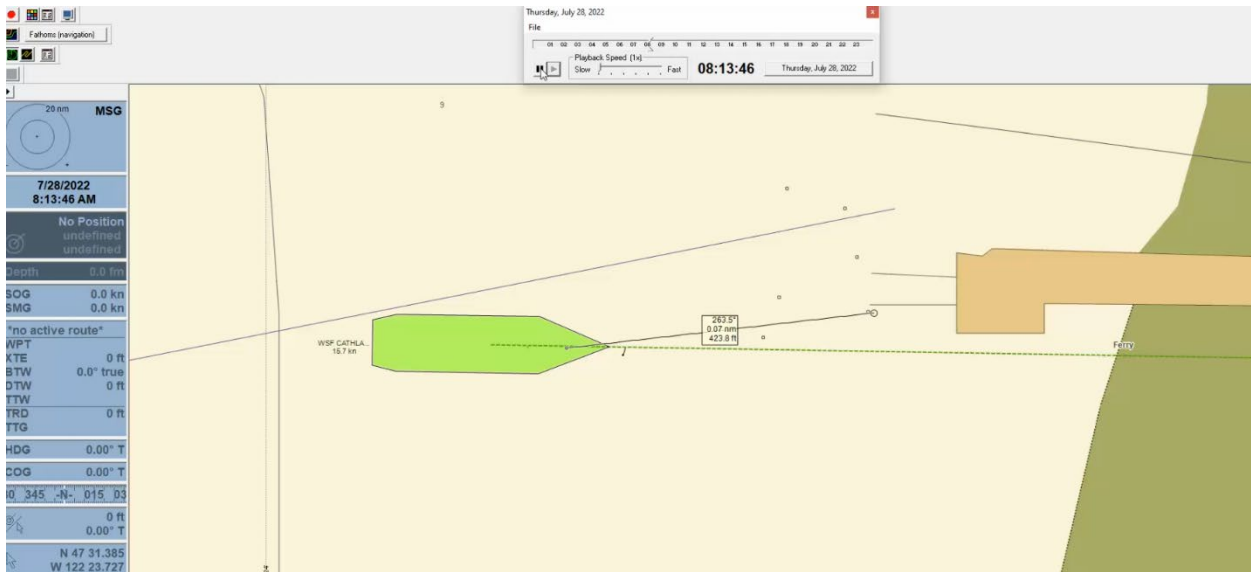
Port Captain [REDACTED] arrived at the FAU dock at about 0930 and checked on the crew and the passenger whose car was damaged in the incident. He began to discuss the incident with the deck officers. WSP was already at the scene when Captain [REDACTED] arrived. The local fire department arrived at some undocumented point. The USCG investigator team arrived on scene at approximately 1000 and set up an interview area in the #1 Pilot House and began taking statements from the crew. The USCG interviews were concluded at approximately 1430. All Cathlamet crewmembers wrote individual statements for the USCG. The Cathlamet trip plan to WSF Maintenance Facility Eagle Harbor (EHBR) was approved by the USCG at about 1500 and the Cathlamet departed FAU for EHBR at 1506. Cathlamet docked at EHBR slip “C” at 1708.

### **Cathlamet GLOBE<sup>®</sup> Position and Data Logger information**

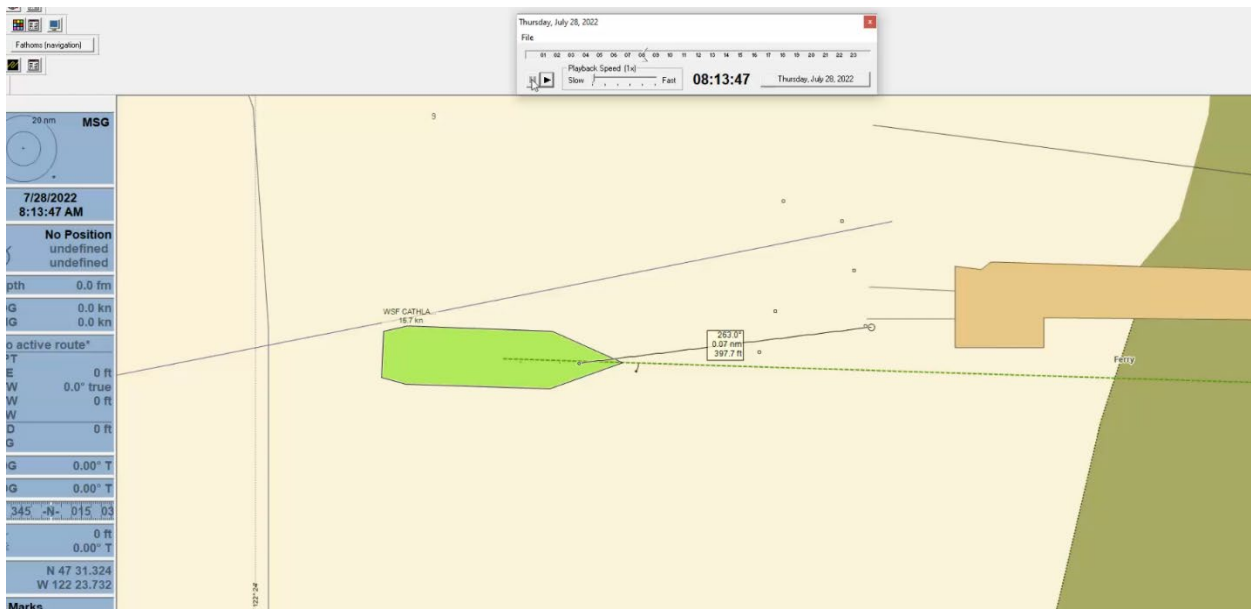
The following pictures show the position of the Cathlamet based on the machinery data logging system.

The first set of pictures are taken with the stern handle at position 8 and the bow handle at the full feather position. The bow and stern rudders levers are centered. This is the normal transit set up for the controls.

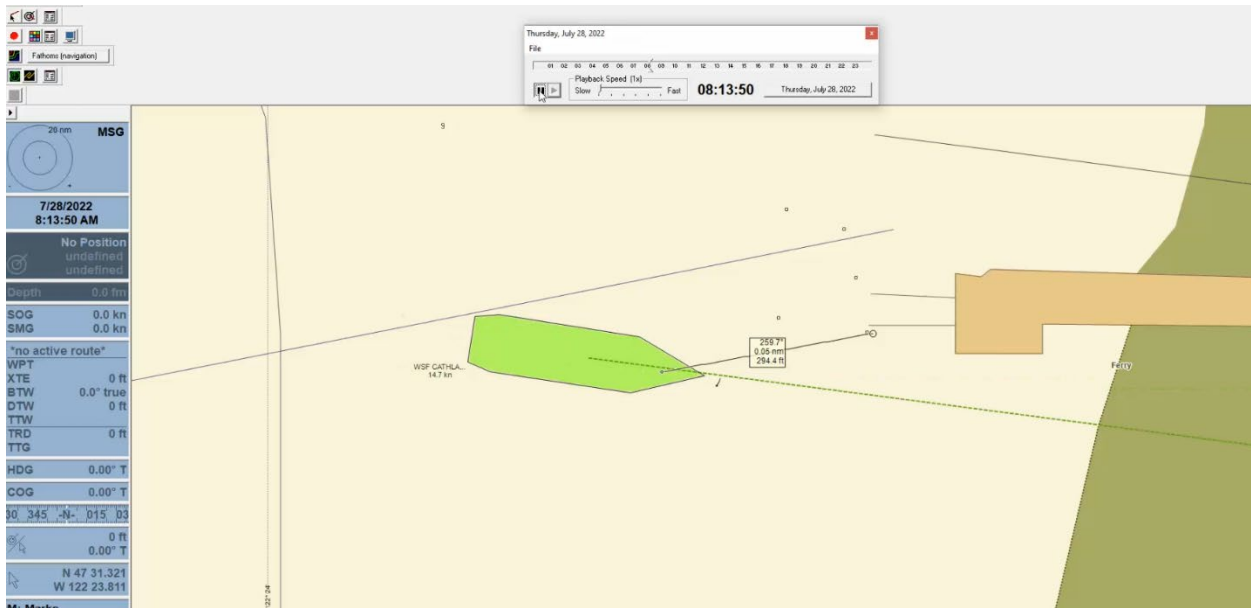
08:13:46 PDT stern rudder moved from center to right 35 deg.



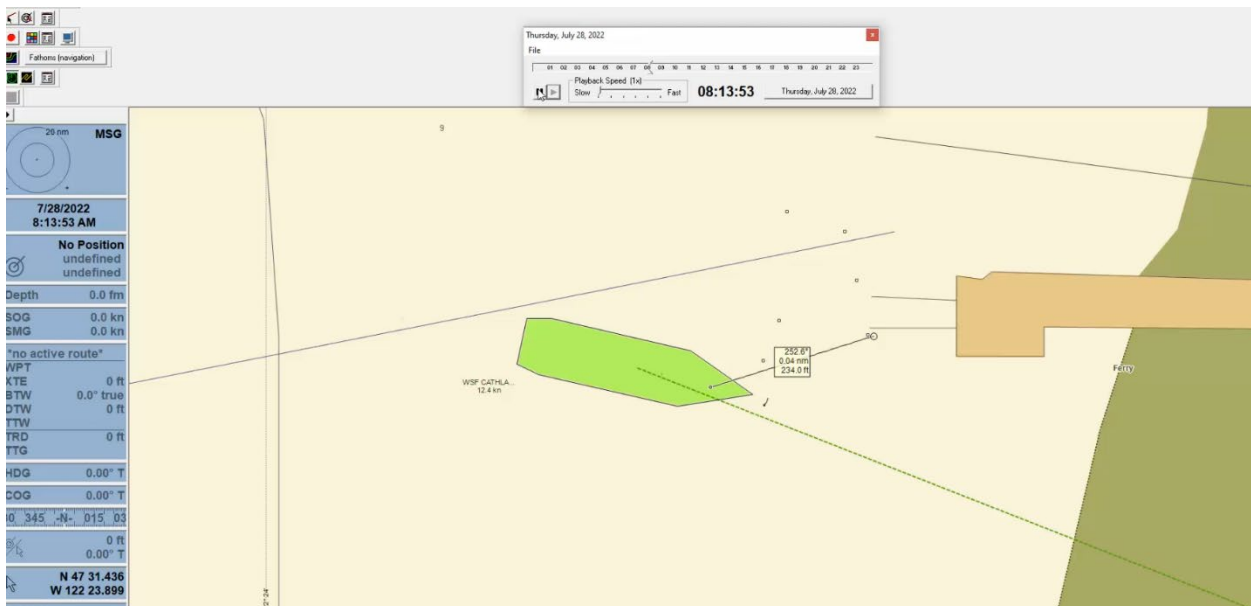
08:13:47 PDT bow handle moved from full feather position (position 10 ahead) to astern.



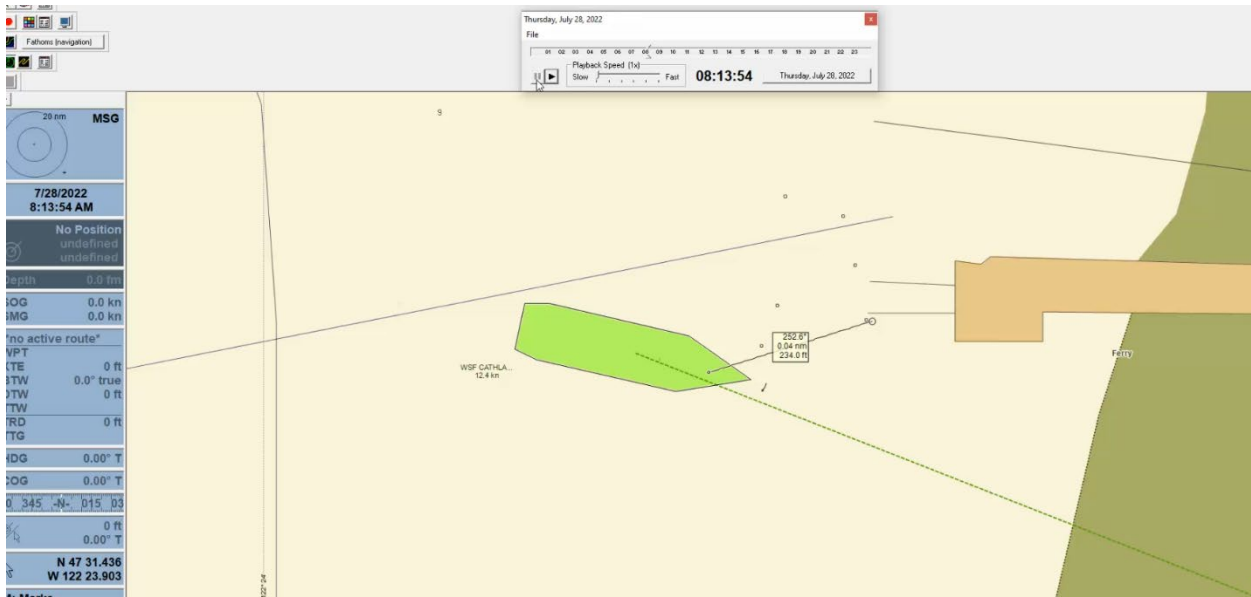
08:13:50 PDT bow rudder angle flops to 35 deg. right. Controller valves turn on to correct rudder.



08:13:53 PDT bow handle moved from 8 to 10 astern.

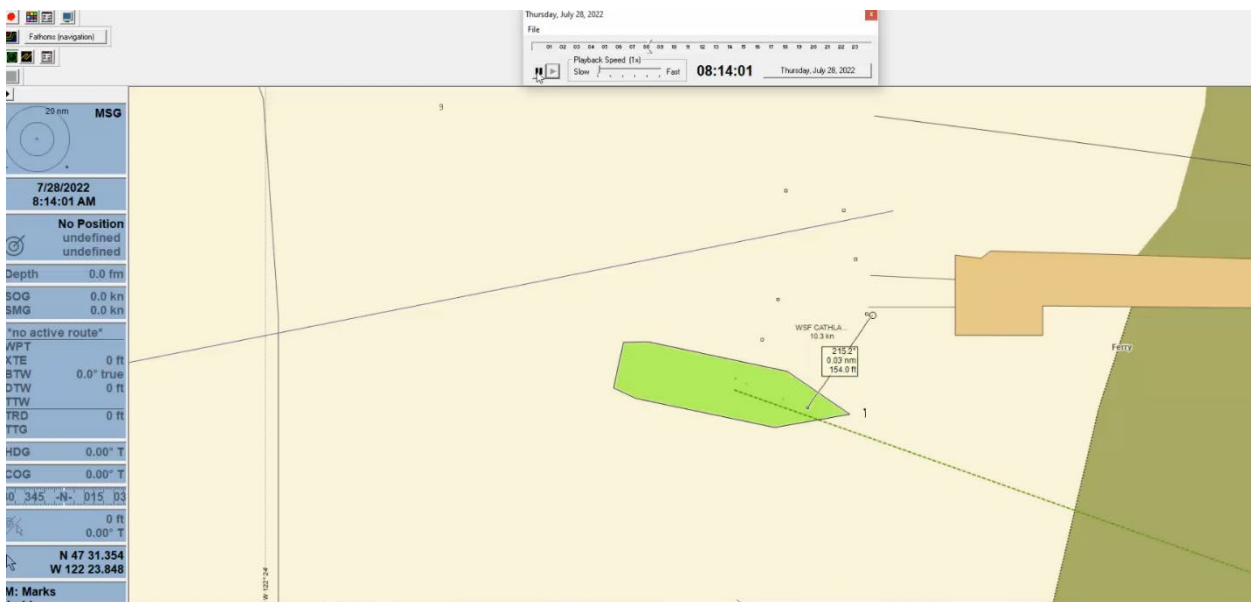


08:13:54 PDT stern handle moved from position 8 ahead to position 10 astern.

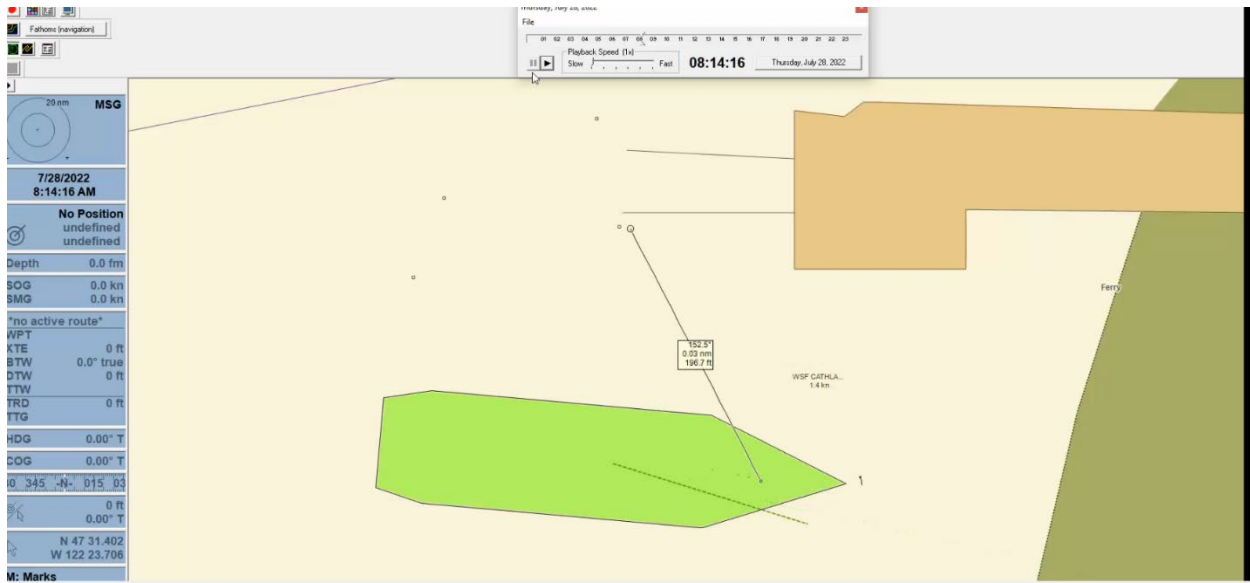


This set of pictures are taken after the bow propeller clutch engages. This is normal operating set up for maneuvering.

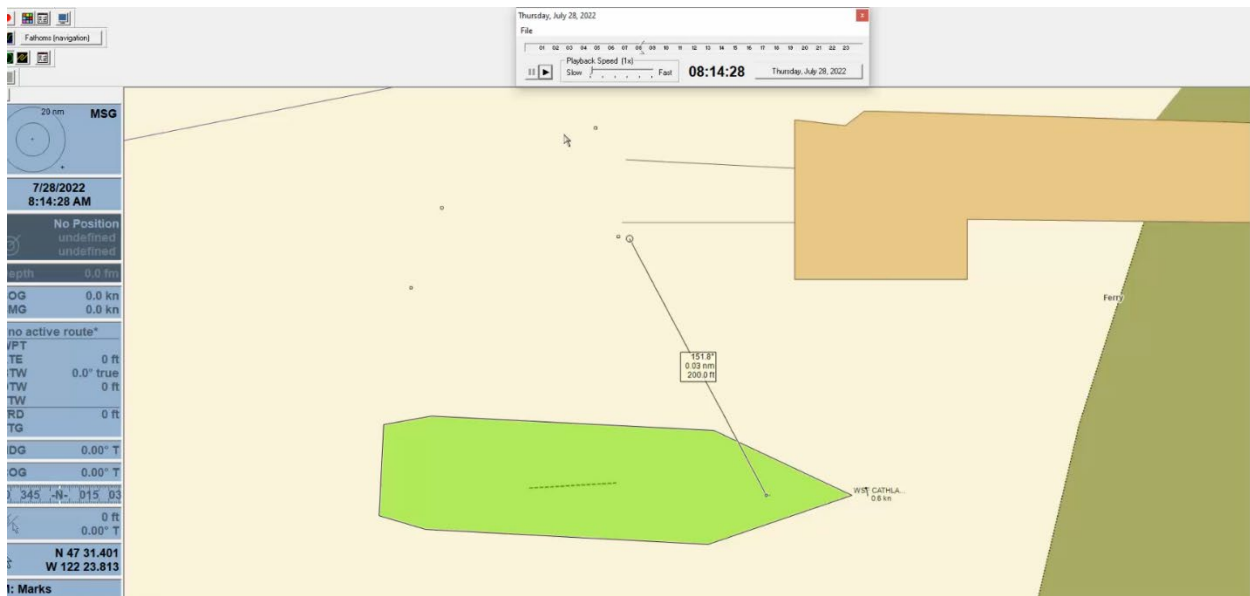
08:14:01 PDT bow propeller clutch engages.



08:14:16 PDT bow handle reduces from 10 astern to zero.



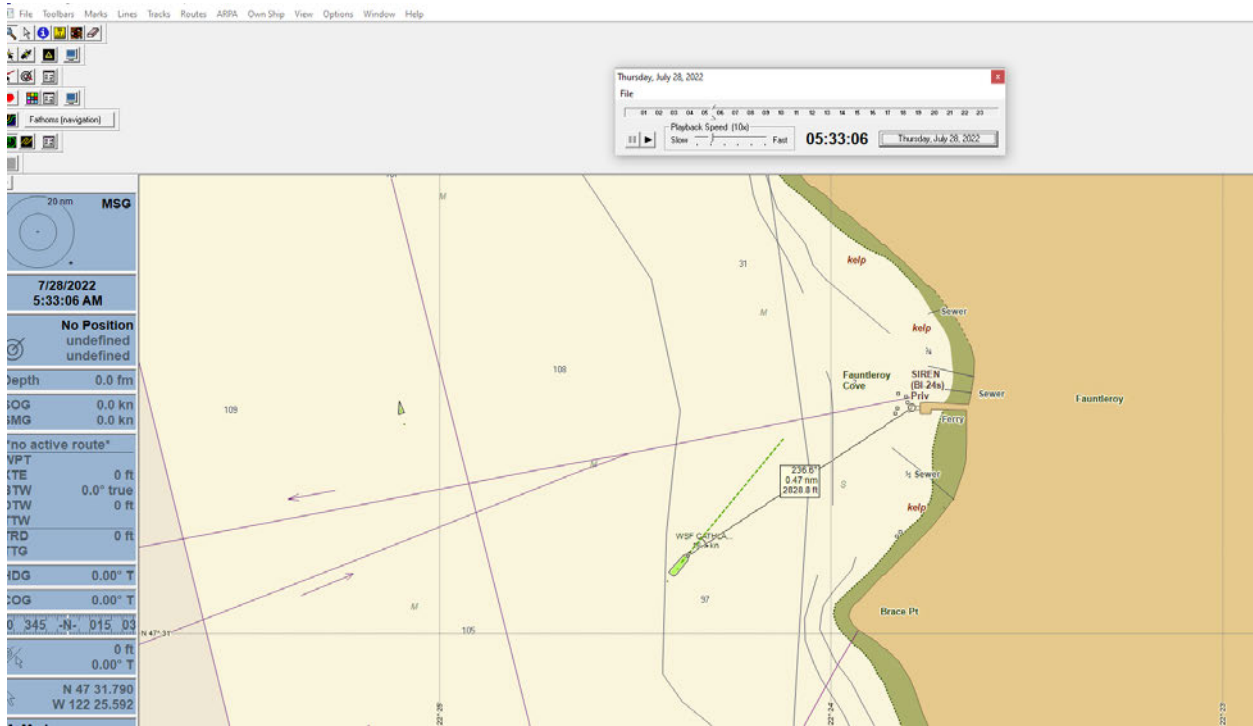
08:14:28 PDT bow handle moves from zero to 3.4 astern.



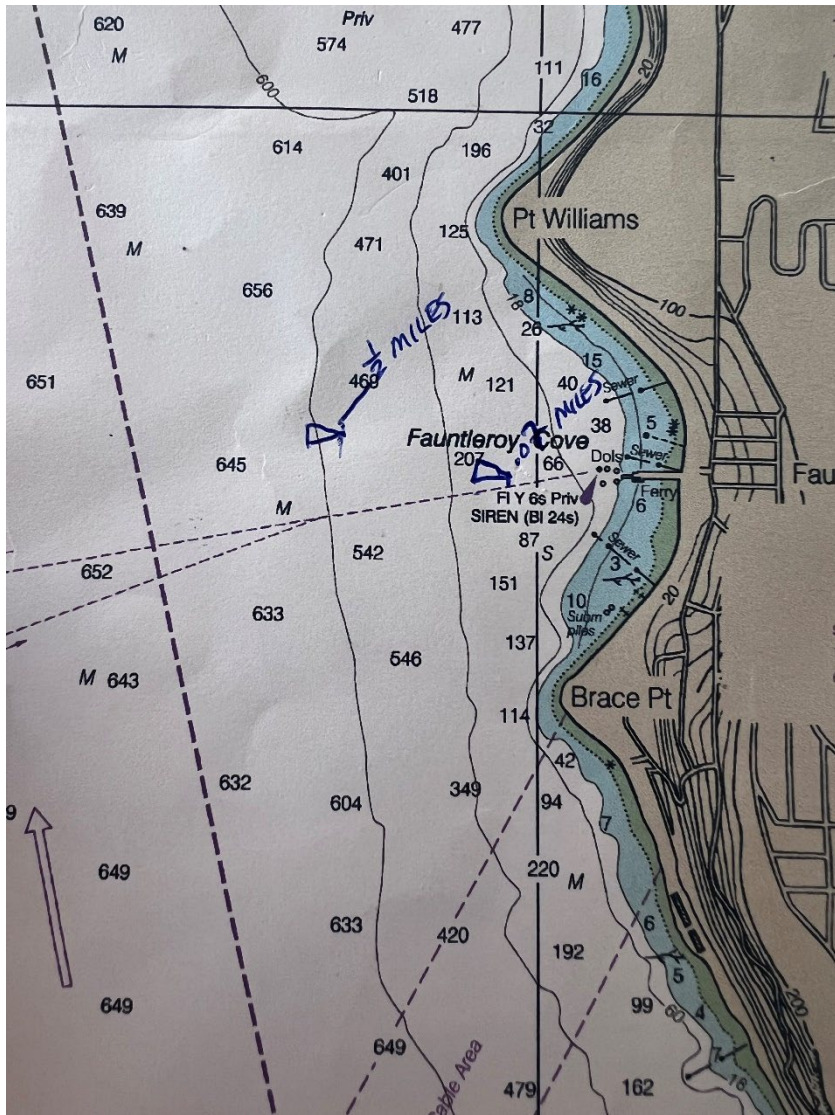


## Deck Officer Takes Control

This shows the Cathlamet 0.5 NM off the Fauntleroy Terminal on an earlier trip from July 28, 2022. Since we don't have any other data, this is approximately when Captain [REDACTED] would have or should have assumed direct control over the maneuvering of the vessel in preparation for the landing.

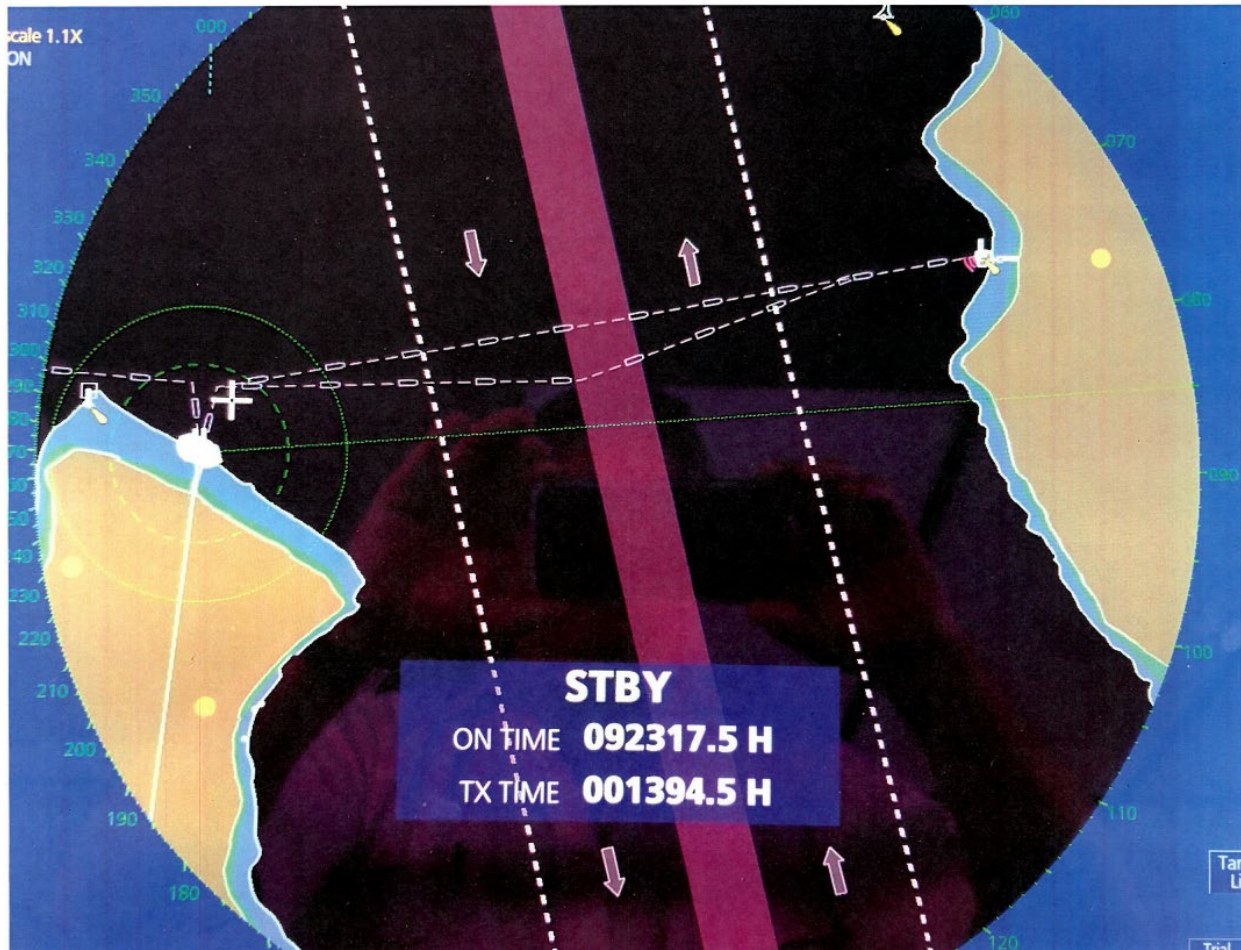


This is a depiction of the distance of where 0.5 NM is and where 0.07 NM is.



### Typical Landing

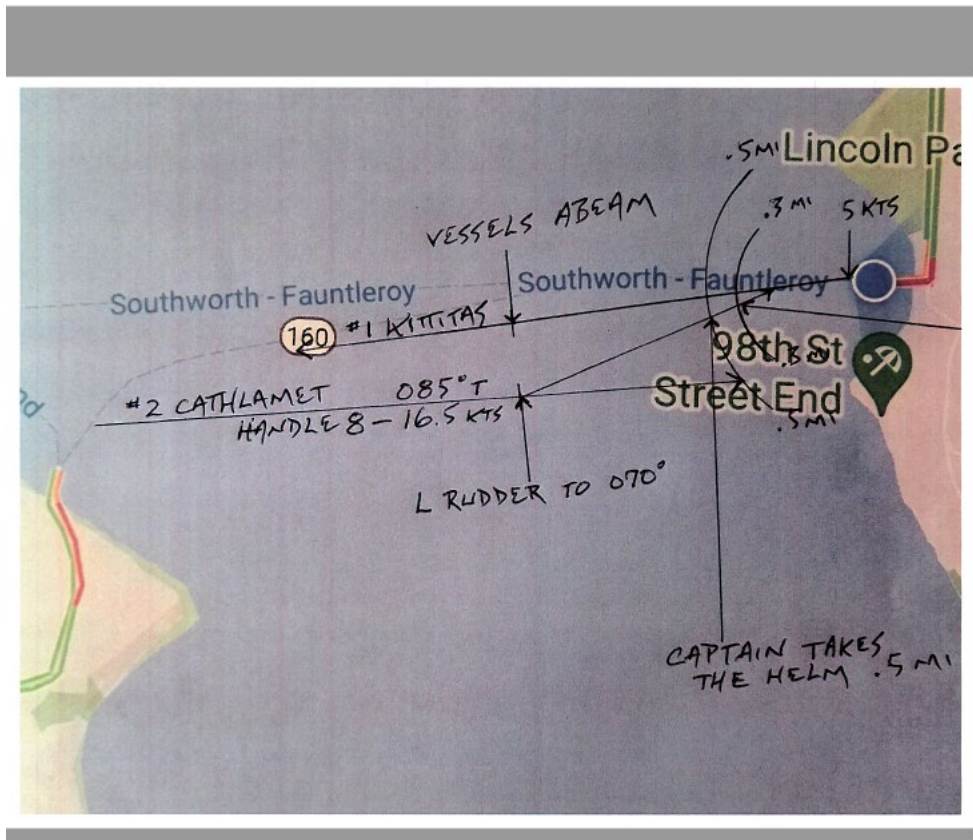
This picture – radar shot – shows two typical landing postures that Deck Officers take when landing at Fautleroy. One is obviously a ‘straight shot’ into the terminal and the other is a south approach. Based on the interview with the Quartermaster, Captain [REDACTED] preferred the south approach. Port Captain [REDACTED] confirmed this was his observation of Captain [REDACTED].





## Typical Landing Part 2

This picture depicts where the Deck Officer would take control of the vessel. This is per Safety Management System (SMS) procedures.



## Video Footage

Showing actual video footage or pictures violates security protocols. However, the following is a timeline of where key people were during the voyage from VI to FAU and several minutes after the allision.

1. 08:03:24 Vessel is underway from VI. You can see the vessel turns to starboard towards FAU.
2. 08:04:12 Captain [REDACTED] departs the #1 superstructure and crossed the Texas deck to the #2 Pilothouse.
3. 08:04:47 Captain [REDACTED] enters the #2 end superstructure.
4. 08:13:48 Cathlamet has allision.
5. 08:14:28 - :48 the two Mates ([REDACTED] and [REDACTED]) leave the #1 superstructure, look around, then go back into the #1 end superstructure.
6. 08:15:14 Captain [REDACTED] leaves the #1 end superstructure and heads to the #2 end.
7. 08:15:15 the two Mates come out and cross towards the #2 end superstructure.
8. 08:15:36 Mate [REDACTED] enters the #2 end superstructure.
9. 08:15:38 Captain [REDACTED] enters the #2 Pilothouse.
10. 08:16:07 Mate [REDACTED] enters the #2 superstructure.
11. 08:17:26 Captain [REDACTED] comes out of the #2 end superstructure, crosses Texas Deck toward the #1 end and is talking on his cellphone.
12. 08:18:49 Captain [REDACTED] comes out of the #1 end superstructure.

## Separately Conducted WSF Interview Summaries

The FVS F and H crew was interviewed between August 1st and September 26<sup>th</sup> by WSF representatives. A Masters, Mates and Pilots union (MMP) representative was present for the deck officers' interviews onboard the Kitsap and Wenatchee. The Inlandboatmens Union (IBU) opted to not be present during the interviews of their members onboard the vessels or terminals.

1. Captain [REDACTED] is the Captain of the FVS H watch and was onboard Cathlamet at the time of the allision. He was in the Captain's stateroom on the #1 end. "When the allision happened, I knew immediately that it wasn't just a bump off a wing wall. I put my shoes on and headed to the #2 Pilothouse. I believe [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (FVS F watch Mate) headed to the car deck. I didn't have my badge; the quartermaster, [REDACTED] let me in. Captain [REDACTED] was at the helm. I could see coming up to Pilothouse we were past the dolphin and out of position. Aluminum anchored boat right off the bow. [REDACTED] got engagement and started to back out. I asked [REDACTED] what happened, he responded he didn't know. I took control, backed out and tested the rudder, saw I had pitch and full control. I put Cathlamet in the slip. I called OPS and gave them a status report. I stayed in the Pilothouse; [REDACTED] was in a state of shock." Captain [REDACTED] added, "normally we take over at about 0900 and run the boat until the Vashon Island tie up." The tie up is approximately 1130 on most days. The H watch Mate, [REDACTED], was in the Mate's stateroom, also on the #1 end when the allision occurred.
2. CM [REDACTED] is the Mate for the FVS F watch. He has been on that watch with Captain [REDACTED] either as a temporary or permanent Mate since June 2021. FVS F watch 'deadheads' from Southworth (SWTH), arriving on or around 0320. Most mornings [REDACTED] sits with the crew in the passenger deck. There is some small talk amongst the crew...everyone is waking

- up. There was no report of any propulsion issues from the Captain on the Graveyard watch (FVS vessel FVS F watch takes over the vessel at 0345). Mate [REDACTED] makes all the landings and departures from 0345 – 0720. At 0720 the vessel is at the FAU dock ready for departure (the scheduled departure is 0715), Captain [REDACTED] arrives and takes over the watch. Mate [REDACTED] makes it a point to confirm that Captain [REDACTED] is aware he ([REDACTED]) has the conn. After [REDACTED] took the conn, Mate [REDACTED] went to the #1 end to use the bathroom and eat his breakfast. “When the allision occurred, I heard the turbos make a sound I hadn’t heard before. I’ve been on the Issaquah’s for about 3 years now. I thought we were aground, [REDACTED] (FVS H watch Mate) and I headed for the car deck, [REDACTED] went to the #2 Pilothouse.” The 2 mates checked on passengers and crew, assisted the EMTs from the ambulance onboard, began the process of offloading the cars, starting paperwork (CG 2692) and then the USCG was aboard starting interviews. [REDACTED] stated that [REDACTED] was blaming the propulsion system, but [REDACTED] felt the Cathlamet was running like a Cadillac, and he added that he had no issues for the 4 previous hours. [REDACTED] stated that the watch they relieved did not report any issues. [REDACTED] relayed the Quartermaster (QM) [REDACTED] is great and does his job. [REDACTED] has transferred control from one Pilothouse to the other. [REDACTED] indicated that [REDACTED] does not always witness landings, he couldn’t remember if [REDACTED] had done so the morning of the allision. On a follow up interview, [REDACTED] stated that he ([REDACTED]) transfers to the offshore Pilothouse with only the QM present. “This is the routine for this watch”.
3. Captain [REDACTED] was interviewed as [REDACTED] had worked as the Mate recently- April 23, 2022. Captain [REDACTED] is the captain of the FVS E watch. He stated [REDACTED] did everything the mate should do. To his knowledge, [REDACTED] never left the Pilothouse when [REDACTED] was navigating. Captain [REDACTED] confirmed that when passing the control from one pilothouse to another, you must have a deck officer in the receiving pilothouse.
  4. Captain [REDACTED] was interviewed as [REDACTED] had worked as Chief Mate on 2 occasions recently, April 8, 2022 and May 13, 2022, both times on the Bremerton – Seattle route. Captain [REDACTED] stated that he found [REDACTED] not in the pilothouse navigating as he should have been – the vessel was in Rich Pass at the time. [REDACTED] told him he was grabbing something to eat. After that Captain [REDACTED] never left [REDACTED] alone on watch.
  5. Chief Engineer [REDACTED] confirmed that everything was operating normally on the day of the allision. No mechanical problems, although there were some nuisance alarms based on the operator’s handling of the controls. The chief has worked on all the Issaquah class vessels. He wasn’t at the controls when the allision happened. The Assistant Engineer was at the controls during the allision. The chief stated that he knew that [REDACTED] wasn’t in the Pilothouse when the Cathlamet had the allision because an off-watch assistant engineer was aboard and claimed he saw [REDACTED] in the #1 end at the time of the allision.
  6. Assistant Engineer [REDACTED] was at the controls at the time of the allision. The assistant engineer let the captain know they were clutched in. He allowed that it felt longer than 2 minutes (to clutch in). He confirmed that everything was working as it should.
  7. Assistant Engineer [REDACTED] was sleeping on the Cathlamet; he was working the night watches as assistant engineer. After the allision, he came out of the stateroom he was staying in and saw Captain [REDACTED] walking around shouting expletives. Based on the timelines and video evidence, this was after the allision. He also confirmed the plant was running well. “We’ve been mechanically sound in the engine room”.

## USCG/NTSB/WSF Joint Interviews

1. Quartermaster ██████ was in the #2 Pilothouse when the allision occurred. During the joint interview, ██████ acknowledged that ██████ was in the Pilothouse for the trip across – “he relieved me for the landing at FAU.” ██████ further stated “after I was relieved, I went to the chart table to review a report from a Mukilteo boat...something felt off, I looked out and saw where we were at, I immediately started towards the captain at the helm, I don’t recall what I said...then we hit the dolphin. ██████ turned to me and asked, ‘What happened? What happened?’ I think he began to back down. Captain ██████ came in shortly after the allision and took control. He (██████) landed the boat.”
2. Captain ██████ responded to each question, “On the advice of my attorney, I decline to answer the question.” The USCG investigator, the NTSB Investigator and the WSF investigator asked several questions pertinent to the allision. Captain ██████ declined to answer all questions. On the advice of his attorneys, Captain ██████ did not surrender his master’s License voluntarily at that time. The captain was not interviewed separately by the WSF investigator, due to his immediate resignation and retirement on July 29, 2022.

## Captain ██████ Background

The captain of the FVS F watch, ██████, began his career at WSF June 1985 as an OS. He advanced to AB in 1987, Mate in 1992 and Captain in 1995.

An overview of his work history as a deck officer is as follows:

- Relief Mate March 1998 – June 2000
- On Call Deck June 2000 – August 2000
- Relief Mate August 2000 – September 2007
- Captain FVS E Watch September 2007 – September 2009
- Relief Captain September 2009 – September 2018
- (temp) Relief Mate January 2017 – April 2017
- Captain FVS F Watch June 2018 – September 2021
- Captain BRE C Watch September 2021 – January 2022
- Captain FVS F Watch January 2022 – July 2022 (retired)

An overview of his training history indicates he has met the requirements to maintain his license and endorsements required by WSF and the USCG to operate in the Puget Sound. His last captain’s license and pilotage renewal on May 5, 2019, included a radar endorsement effective until August 12, 2024. There have been no other navigation trainings recorded in his training file.

An overview of his Human Resources file shows that he has had a dependability concern resulting in an Oral Warning on November 26, 2018, a Written Warning on November 24, 2020, and a suspension for dependability from October 13 -15, 2021.

## Facts:

1. MV Cathlamet was operating with a fully staffed and USCG documented crew, per the Certificate of Inspection (COI).
2. MV Cathlamet’s navigation equipment was operating as designed.
3. MV Cathlamet’s mechanical condition was operating as designed.

4. The QM [REDACTED] was distracted from his primary responsibility of acting as a lookout, by reading a report about the Suquamish operating on the Clinton to Mukilteo run. The report was sent out with the directive for each Captain to review with their crew, but Captain [REDACTED] opted to just have crew read the missive, rather than go over it with his crew and discuss.
5. Bow engagement. This is not logged in either of the logs, but the Chief and Assistant Engineer confirm that bow engagement was asked for.
6. Bow engagement occurred after the allision, at the approximate time the MV Cathlamet went aground.
7. Captain [REDACTED] has violated SMS policy DECK OPER 0030 Captain observing all landings and DECK OPER 0040 Ensuring that a deck officer is present in the offshore pilothouse prior to departure. Captain [REDACTED] has violated 33CFR, Chapter I, Subchapter P, Part 164.11 Navigation under way: General.

This rule states, in part:

*The owner, master, or person in charge of each vessel underway shall ensure that:*

*(a) The wheelhouse is constantly manned by persons who:*

*(1) Direct and control the movement of the vessel; and*

*(2) Fix the vessel's position.*

*(b) Each person performing a duty described in [paragraph \(a\)](#) of this section is competent to perform that duty.*

AB [REDACTED] is by all accounts a capable, competent quartermaster (QM). However, he is not by the definition of QM competent to direct and control the movement of the vessel. The QM rating is not equal to a licensed deck officer. The QM merchant mariners document (MMD) does not have the same standards for issuance as the merchant mariners' credential (MMC), which all deck officers must satisfy the aforementioned CFR. The word competent in this usage means that they have completed the necessary USCG requirements to fulfill the CFR for navigating a vessel underway.

8. Captain [REDACTED] was the Staff Master for the vessel and disregarded established minimum safety and operating rules.

### **Opinions and Recommendations**

1. It is unclear whether Captain [REDACTED] followed SMS DECK OPER 0030. What is clear, the MV Cathlamet did not slow its speed as it approached the FAU dock per the Safety Management System and prudent navigation.
2. WSF training standards for the deck officers currently being conducted meets domestic standards. The domestic standards are below internationally accepted standards for vessel bridge watchkeeping. WSF previously met modified international standards in its own training group, but the USCG requirement for compliance was relaxed to a large degree in 2012/13. To reduce training costs, this now non-mandatory training was eliminated and shall be reinstated Beginning Summer of 2023. A significant part of the international standards (commonly known as STCW) is a practice referred to as Bridge Resource Management (BRM). BRM is a very robust



training that reinforces the roles, responsibilities, and rights that each member of the navigational watch has to themselves and their shipmates.

3. All vessels should have Voyage Data Recorders (VDR) installed. This eliminates the confusion of what everyone thinks happened during an emergency. With a robust VDR system, any incident will have an evidentiary level of information on what was said by whom, what the plant was doing at the time, what navigational commands were given and when. The current data logger system is useful for troubleshooting machinery equipment status and/or failures only.
4. There should be more visitation by operational management to reinforce the WSF BRM policy once implemented.
5. According to SMS process (DUIR 0305) The Staff Master is to ensure that work performance issues on the assigned vessel are being appropriately monitored and reported. Captain [REDACTED] was the Staff Master; there is no DUIR that addresses the evaluation of work performance of Staff Masters. Captain [REDACTED]'s behavior on April 8,2022 and May 13,2022, as indicated by Capt. [REDACTED] in his interview, should have been reported and/or documented. This may have led to an intervention, further investigation, suspension and/or possible assistance. It should be noted that the interviews indicate that Capt. [REDACTED] was at the helm during the time of the incident.
6. It can be concluded that Captain [REDACTED] lost situational awareness while standing at the helm landing the vessel. His asking, "what happened?" to his QM supports that he was unaware of his situation while navigating. Based upon the interviews and information before us, the reasons for this loss of situational awareness are unknown and are also the subject of speculation. The drug and alcohol tests came up as negative, thereby excluding these causes. Because Capt. [REDACTED] refused to answer any of the questions presented to him during this process, we cannot draw a definitive conclusion as to the cause of his loss of situational awareness. However, we can conclude that his loss of situational awareness was the primary cause of this incident, and that absent this loss of situational awareness, the allision would most likely not have occurred.