



San Cuvier in trouble

SAN CUVIER WRECK REMOVED



San Cuvier finally came to rest under the isolated rocky cliffs well inside the rocky outcrops and reef



High and dry San Cuvier was about to go nowhere fast

The former Sanford's fishing vessel *San Cuvier* has now been cut up and removed from her resting place beneath the cliffs between Torere and Opape east of Opotiki in keeping with instructions from Environment Bay of Plenty.

The *San Cuvier* was wrecked on July 27, 2008 with the loss of two of her crew, skipper Rick Josephs, 38 and deckhand Damien (Beef) Wyatt, 35 after the vessel ran aground in stormy conditions. Two of the survivors, aged 15 and 22, were winched to safety and taken to Whakatane Hospital where they were treated for minor injuries and released.

"This part of the coastline, while remote, is special to the

people living and working in the area," says Eddie Grogan, EBOP water management manager. "The area holds significant places of conservation value with important local wildlife and kiamoana gathering areas of importance to local iwi," he said.

Removing the 28 year old steel hulled fishing vessel was considered the only option because of where she finally came to rest. Driven by the storm and 10m swells, she was lifted over rocks and an outer reef before coming to rest against the inshore rocks some distance from deep water, meaning it could not be refloated. The area is very isolated making access difficult. It takes two hours to walk to the site before tidal flows make



The light stuff was removed first



Cutting up the wreck was deemed the only option left for effective removal



The Mi-8 operated by Heli Harvest.

the area impassable. Cutting up the wreck and removing it by helicopter was the only option.

The work was carried out by the Nelson based Diving Services New Zealand Limited who are specialists in underwater construction, in water ship repairs, maintenance, rig servicing and salvage. The task of removing the wreck was made all the more difficult because of the location and the need to work around tides, company's chief diver said. Equipment and personnel had to be transported in and out daily using a small helicopter and to remove the small bits, gantry, winches and machinery. All the concrete and insulation in the fish room had to be chipped out, bagged up and flown out.

The task of moving the big bits was contracted to Heli Harvest Limited of Auckland, one of New Zealand's leading heavy lift helicopter operators. Specialists in the lifting and placement of external loads of up to 5,000kg, the company operates two large Russian Mil Mi-8MTV-1 more commonly known as Mi-8 helicopter's from their maintenance base at Taupo Airport. While mainly seen in both selective timber harvesting and fire fighting these helicopters, which have two pilots, are able to carry out a wide range of precision lifting. Their large lifting capacity is made possible because the main lifting pendant passes through the airframe connecting directly to the main engines chassis. This removes the risk of stretching the airframe or cabin structure.

Once the remains were cut up into sizable lumps by gas and plasma cutters, the Mi-8 lifted them to a local paddock where they were further reduced and disposed of as scrap.

"Thanks to the collaborative efforts of the harbour master's team, Sanford Limited, local iwi and other organisations, the coastline has not been contaminated either by fuel, oil or wreckage residue," said Grogan.

Photos courtesy of Diver Services and Heli Harvest.



The big bits as they came ashore

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