

Ship Report Transcript

Tuesday, July 9, 2024

By Joanne Rideout

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It's time for the Ship Report the show about all things maritime. I'm Joanne Rideout. It's Tuesday, July 9th, 2024.

This week, we're hearing excerpts from my interview with Craig Kohler. He's an administrator for the National Data Body Center, an agency that operates under NOAA. That's the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Weather Service, to maintain a network of data buoys and land based data stations in U.S. coastal waters and around the world.

They transmit data to satellites, and anyone can access buoy data by going to the NDBC website and looking up a particular buoy on a world map. NDBC has buoys in our coastal waters here in the Pacific Northwest, and one in particular off the mouth of the Columbia River, 46029, that was recently put back in service after a brief hiatus. Buoys transmit info about weather and sea conditions.

Today, we'll hear more from my interview with Craig Kohler.

JR: I know how hard the weather is on everything out there. So this buoy stopped working. And what happened to the buoy that took it out of service? Let's start with that.

CK: Okay. All we know at this point is all transmissions from the buoy ceased abruptly on November 28th of 2023. So we don't we can't there's many things we can't tell remotely about what happened on, but. We can tell. Like when a buoy goes adrift because we do get positions even after the mooring fails and it starts drifting. But on this case, we. It stopped transmitting, so we weren't getting any kind of like, what's the health of the power system or any other information. So that's all we knew what happened at that point.

So I think then you might be aware of what we've done to try to get this station back in service.

JR: No, I'm not at all aware of any of that. That's that's part of what I want to talk with you about. So did the buoy, 46029, did it break loose and end up like on the Long Beach Peninsula somewhere or how did you find it? Or was it was it in its spot?

CK: It was in its spot. And and to give the Coast Guard credit, we we have a great partnership with them. And they did several overflights of the area from Air station Astoria and gave us images of the buoy on station. Oh, okay. Okay. So then what I guess this seems like a really big deal to get it. They're so heavy. I mean, to get it out of the water and then figure out what's wrong with it. So let's talk about that, that process of how that how you got it back into working again. Okay. So we keep obviously, information about the health of our different systems and we start planning out our maintenance a year ahead of time. And this we was actually not on the list of stations to be serviced in 2024, but that, you know, it's a flexible it's it's somewhat of a flexible schedule. So when about, you know, again, we we start planning now, we're planning now for up 25. So going back a year ago we weren't planning on doing or 6 to 9 then, you know, we started making plans. We have to get contracts in place for vessels as we know it doesn't supply us, know what vessels we have to get commercial vessel capabilities that have the ability to work about I like you said, it's heavy. There's certain equipment that specialized that's needed to recover our buoys and deploy moorings and things like that. So when I when this when it went

out in November, there was immediately interest from the Coast Guard, from the congressional staff and from your area and getting that station restored. So our maintenance crews typically don't start till spring are planned maintenance crews is. So we contacted the Coast Guard to see if we could get it restored earlier. Unfortunately, the two bully tenders in your area were both in the shipyard getting maintenance done and weren't going to be available until May. But the Coast Guard was able to give us the U.S. Coast Guard cutter order out of San Francisco. And so we worked with them. We sent a team out there, we sent equipment out there, and unfortunately, they experienced a casualty on the way up the coast of California, going up to Oregon. So that trip was unsuccessful and the team came back and the equipment came back. So finally, on our planned maintenance crews, in this case, it was our Atlantic servicing crews. But the that that vessel came out of Seattle, we loaded it up to start the crews in San Diego. It went down to some stations off the coast of Mexico, went through the Panama Canal, did our servicing that we had planned to do in the Atlantic, came back through the Panama Canal and then worked its way up the West Coast. And that's when we were able to we had equipment on board that we needed and we were able to get to four, 6 to 9.”

And that was Craig Kohler from the National Data Buoy Center talking about buoy 46029, that was out of service for a while, and the process that they had to go through to get her back working again.

I thought this was really interesting because it highlights something that I talk about a lot here on the ship report, and that is the invisible and complex nature of most maritime work: the complicated solution to the matter of a malfunctioning data buoy and maximizing the use of the ship hired to do that repair for NDBC is something that we just never witness on land.

We only notice it when the boys are not working. And most people outside the maritime industry probably didn't even know the boy was even out there, much less out of service. So 46029 went back into service in mid-June after being out since last fall and yesterday afternoon was transmitting this data, among other measurements. Location 20 nautical miles offshore from the Columbia River Bar, water depths 131 meters. That's about 439 feet. Winds from the north northwest at 14 knots. Air temperature about 60 degrees, water temperature about the same.

And the wave height and wind data information is especially important for mariners. Those buoys also appear on nautical charts so vessels can use them as navigation markers to help determine their location.

Again, if you'd like to take a look at these buoys, at the data that they're transmitting, and pictures of them, just Google NDBC National Data Buoy Center, and you can go to their website. There's a map of the world, click your way to the Columbia River, and find 46029. She's out there transmitting data, doing her job, 24/7 and that is a great boon for mariners.

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