

'Perfect Storm' ship sunk, becomes part of artificial reef

May 10 2017



In this May 30, 2000, file photo, U.S. Coast Guard Lt. William Moeller of Northford, Conn., poses for a photo in front of the USS Tamaroa. Moeller was aboard the Tamaroa during the 1991 rescue of five Air National Guardsmen who

ditched their helicopter as they were trying to rescue the crew of a fishing boat during a fierce storm. The storm and the events surrounding it were recalled in the book "The Perfect Storm" which was made into a motion picture. Officials say they plan to sink the ship Wednesday, May 10, 2017, off the New Jersey and Delaware coasts so it can become part of an artificial reef. (AP Photo/Ed Bailey, File)

The ship made famous in the book and subsequent film "The Perfect Storm" has been intentionally sunk off the New Jersey and Delaware coasts so it can become part of an artificial reef.

The sinking of the Tamaroa, a 205-foot (62-meter) Coast Guard vessel, took place Wednesday morning. The sinking initially was scheduled to occur several months ago, but was repeatedly delayed by rough seas and other related issues.

The vessel was sent down about 33 nautical miles (61 kilometers) off the coast of Cape May, New Jersey. It was deployed in water more than 120 feet (36.5 meters) deep after patches were removed from holes that were pre-cut into its hull, according to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

The pre-cut holes were part of the extensive work that had to be done before the ship could be sunk, including the removal of interior paneling and insulation as well as emptying and cleaning the vessel of all fuel and fluids.

The ship turned on its side as it slowly went down in the calm water, then turned straight up as the bulk of the vessel went under water. It then disappeared from view as a person on board a neighboring vessel thanked the Tamaroa for its long service.

A tugboat had started hauling the Tamaroa from a Norfolk, Virginia, shipyard on Monday afternoon and it slowly made its way up the Eastern Seaboard on Tuesday without any issues.

The Tamaroa was first commissioned by the U.S. Navy in 1934 under the name Zuni and saw action during World War II when it helped tow damaged vessels across the war-torn Pacific Ocean. It was transferred to the Coast Guard and renamed in 1946, then continued to serve until it eventually was decommissioned in 1994.

The vessel's most notable mission came in October 1991, when three strong storm systems came together off the New England coast, generating 40-foot (12-meter) waves and wind gusts of more than 70 mph.

The Tamaroa's crew helped save three people aboard a sailboat that was caught in the storm. They also rescued four of five crewmen of an Air National Guard helicopter that ran out of fuel during a similar rescue mission and had to be ditched in the ocean.

Both events were documented in Sebastian Junger's 1997 book, "The Perfect Storm," and a movie of the same name starring George Clooney.

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