

LESSONS LEARNED

OPERATIONS AROUND CCG HOVERCRAFT

As result of close quarters encounter with CCG Hovercraft diver during incident VI4-2007

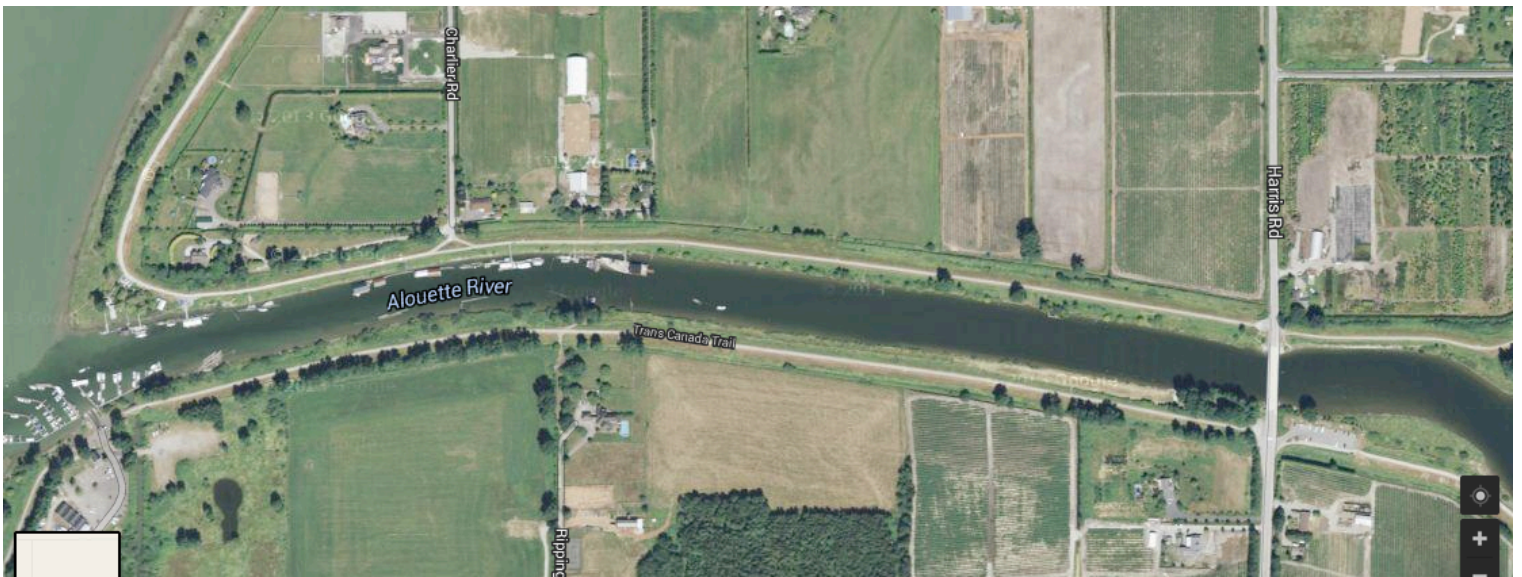
Lesson:

If tasking/operations that involve maneuvering in the proximity of the Canadian Coast Guard Hovercraft, ensure significant distance, no less than 500 ft, is maintained until clear commands are given. This include passage by the Craft especially if any potential of dive operations may be in effect. Dive umbilical may be of floating or non-floating type extending up to a length of 300 ft.

Obtain clear acknowledgment/feedback/confirmation via a communications system, typically VHF 04a marine if situation brings approach of vessel within potential range of 500 ft. Note, while Craft is in operation, verbal communications may be constrained due to Craft engines.

Background: (Reason for this notice)

During early evening of 4th August (BC Day - Civic Holiday), Hovercraft Siyay, along with RCMSAR-7, were tasked to person in the water in Alouette river.



Person was reported as swimming across the river on the eastern side of the (Harris Rd) bridge.

Hovercraft Siyay's furthest approach possible was the western side, identified with the tree clump on the South and West side of Harris rd bridge.

RCMSAR-7 (Ng - open RHIB) was used for the tasking. RCMSAR-7 entered river mouth and communicated with Hovercraft of location. Instructions received from Craft to search upriver 1-2 cables. Further comms confirmed as approaching of Craft from astern at ~ 1 cable back. RCMSAR-7 proceeded dead slow due to vessels and boathouses along the river side and no local knowledge of the area. One deadhead observed mid-channel as approaching Craft and bridge. When approached abeam and slightly ahead of the Craft, diver bubbles and dive tender were identified and immediate called for all stop/neutral commands to helm. RCMSAR-7 drifted forward and clear to the west side of the bridge. Visibility of dive tender were obscured by structure of the Craft's forward bulkheads and Port nozzle.

Any current, if any appeared to be very slightly flowing up river. This was observed by the water plants on the eastern side of the bridge. A limited search was performed but, due to water plant growth no further than 1 cable was possible. Visually, other persons with dogs playing in water could be observed up river.

Due to the nature of the geography, local conditions, and Hovercraft range of visibility created a close quarters situation event. Radio comms, although clear between RCMSAR07 and H/C Siyay, missed the acknowledgment, as well as visually H/C Siyay unable to see approaching traffic (RCMSAR) as approaching from aft.

Post discussion:

Met with Hovercraft Base OIC at first opportunity to review RCMSAR's point of view and concern about close quarters. Intention to share information broadly within own RCMSAR units as well as all other Units.

Although this document is a result of a specific incident, it also is intended to more broadly make aware of operations in general that involve the CCG's Hovercraft.

- 1) Ensure feedback/acknowledge intentions and requests with Hovercraft using the agreed to communications channel. Typically VHF 04a.
- 2) Do not encroach Hovercraft by less than 500 ft, unless directed and cleared to do so.
- 3) Approaching Hovercraft from astern if by situation, advise/acknowledge location and confirm permission to proceed. Ideally, never approach from astern. (Much like approaching a helicopter).
- 4) Never approach Hovercraft if the side approached propulsion fan is in motion.
- 5) During dive operations diver may be up to 300 ft from Hovercraft on a tethered air supply/communications line. Dive operation may be deployed from any point off the Craft.
- 6) Hovercraft may or may not have the opportunity to hoist diver flags. Flags displayed are 'A' and red w/diagonal white flag.