

Search Continues For Possible Tsunami Debris Spotted Off Grays Harbor

Local News

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WESTPORT, Wash. - Federal, tribal, state and local partners are working closely to monitor waters off of Washington for a large dock that was reported drifting offshore on December 14. There has been no confirmation of the object and it has not been re-located since its initial report. The object is reported to be similar to a dock that beached in Oregon in July. On Friday evening, fishermen aboard Fishing Vessel *Lady Nancy* reported a large object floating off the coast of Washington state, approximately 16 nautical miles northwest of the Grays Harbor entrance. NOAA is working to determine the object's trajectory based on the reported location. Washington State Emergency Management Division is coordinating the state efforts to address this object. Following its Marine Debris Response Plan, the state identified resources and brought in partners to prepare for the response. The state contacted federal and tribal partners to review the planned response. As needed, the Quinault Indian Nation will work with the state in response efforts, as will NOAA's Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, Olympic National Park, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Since Friday, the U.S. Coast Guard has continuously broadcasted a Safety Marine Information Broadcast alerting mariners of this floating debris. Sector Columbia River/Air Station Astoria, Ore., conducted five searches for this floating debris, with an HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter, searching a combined area of 317 square miles. The Coast Guard will continue to work with NOAA, Washington state agencies and the Quinault Indian Nation to track this floating debris. NOAA's Marine Debris Program has been leading efforts with federal, tribal, state and local partners to collect data, assess the debris and reduce possible impacts to natural resources and coastal communities. The government of Japan estimated that the tsunami swept about 5 million tons of debris into the Pacific Ocean and that about 70 percent sank quickly. The remaining 1.5 million tons dispersed far across the North Pacific Ocean in an area roughly three times the size of the lower 48 states. Modeling indicates that the bulk of the debris is likely dispersed north of the main Hawaiian Islands and east of Midway Atoll. Marine debris is an ongoing problem with everyday impacts, especially around the Pacific, and natural disasters can make the problem worse. Anyone sighting this object or other significant debris that may be from the tsunami is asked to contact local authorities and report it to DisasterDebris@noaa.gov. As of December 13, NOAA has received approximately 1,432 official debris reports, of which 17 have been confirmed as definite tsunami debris. For the latest information on tsunami debris please visit <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/tsunamidebris> and <http://marinedebris.wa.gov>