

4/7/21 (Mayor Facebook & Website)

UPDATED, 6/16/21: This was posted on Facebook prior to the spill of coal ash in May.

Jax Beach Mayor Hoffman and I had the opportunity to visit the Barge Bridgeport up close today, courtesy of US Coast Guard Sector Jacksonville. Thank you and what an impressive bunch our Coasties are.

Of course, we take this seriously and the City has heard from many ABers. In regular contact with the USCG and others, I am confident there is not an environmental threat at this time. The barge has been grounded in sand 1 mile off the coast of Hanna Park for the last two weeks, after hitting the jetties and coming to rest outside the shipping channel in its current location. The vessel hull was damaged, and there was water intrusion but NOT to the cargo compartment. The cargo is contained like "a box inside a box." Recent weather conditions have not caused shifting. The vessel is cordoned off by buoys, tugs are there 24-7, and it is stable. Divers have inspected the hull and cargo compartment. Salvage and removal are being coordinated by the barge owner with heavy equipment to be placed out there in the next few days, and with close monitoring and cooperation of many governmental agencies, to include USCG, ACE, COJ, FDEP, OSHA, and NOAA.

Again, no discharge or threat to the environment (air, water, beaches, or marine life) from the app. 3000 tons* of Agremax cargo or the vessel's diesel tanks has been reported. Agremax is heavy stuff, used as an ingredient for road sub-base, landfill cover, roofing material, and concrete. The City will soon be posting an official update on our monitoring of this issue, the safe removal of cargo, and the "floating" of the barge to tow it for repairs. If the situation changes, we will report on it. We will also learn more as the cargo is removed. All lines of communication are open. Of course, we all want the barge and its cargo moved, as quickly and safely as possible. But, FYI, this is probably going to take weeks, not days.

I am satisfied that, with so many eyes on this situation and close coordination, we are getting the best information available. I can be reached at eglasser@coab.us.

* This is a typo and my error. I meant 12,000 tons, which was an approximation as I recall.

4/24/21 (Mayor Facebook & Website)

UPDATED, 6/16/21: This was posted on Facebook prior to the spill of coal ash in May.

These photos depict the continuing, complex operation one mile off the Jacksonville coast. This operation is the "vessel to vessel transfer" of Agremax cargo off the Bridgeport barge that hit the Mayport jetties and ran aground a little over a month ago. Weather conditions, tides, ocean swells, and safety protocols continue to determine the timeline. City, local, state, and federal officials continue to monitor and receive daily updates on the salvage operation and the deployment of assets. Here in Atlantic Beach, we are also in personal contact.

To allay any environmental concerns, we remain confident in the information received to date, and there are no discharges/threats reported to the ocean, maritime life, or beaches. All safety precautions are in place for personnel on site. While the exterior of the barge was damaged in

the initial incident, all the cargo that was boxed inside has remained contained. As of last week, app. 2700 tons of the Agremax had been transferred. The salvage team will transfer enough weight to safely reposition and float the barge and then tow it to its destination. I wrote about the material in my last post, but Agremax is known to have construction and road applications. This operation is still gonna take a while. Our lines of communication are in place. If you have questions, let us know and we will seek the answers.

May 27, 2021 (Mayor Facebook & Website)

This post is an update to report an adverse development concerning the Bridgeport Barge salvage operation. As you may know, this barge ran aground in sand some distance off the shore of Hanna Park Beach and Atlantic Beach in late March, after being damaged when it hit the jetties. The cargo onboard was Agremax, a material used for road and construction projects, among other applications. The responsible party is Dann Ocean Towing, Inc. with response efforts being handled by Global Diving and Salvage, Inc., a MER company. All efforts are being closely monitored on a daily basis by many government stakeholders.

Unfortunately, weather conditions have made the complex salvage operation for transferring the Agremax off the barge particularly challenging. Following shifts in the barge's position, hatches covering the cargo fell off earlier this month, with much of the remaining cargo released into the ocean. None of the diesel aboard was discharged from the vessel. For information, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regards the disposal of Agremax as solid waste. It is not regulated as hazardous waste. Any unauthorized discharge could be addressed as solid waste, and its impacts could be addressed at the appropriate time by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), who has primary oversight re: the Agremax. I am not an expert on solid or hazardous waste so will not engage in discussion of these topics.

Health, safety, and the public's welfare are of utmost concern to all parties. Government oversight is being coordinated under a unified response team that includes the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), FDEP, State Emergency Response group, and Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC). All updates and the response of Dann Ocean are being coordinated through this team and other stakeholders. The City of Atlantic has no response, oversight, regulatory, or enforcement role, but we have good communication with all parties so we can be responsive to the public's concerns.

In their coordination with Dann Ocean, FDEP is assuring they take all necessary steps to protect the coastline and provide a status on the ocean floor. As of May 26th, there have been no signs that any cargo has washed ashore, as verified by FDEP, and there has been no basis to trigger any advisories or cautions. As FDEP conducts its full assessment, a necessary baseline will be established to determine any potential impacts at the site.

This is the website with daily updates about the Bridgeport response:

<https://www.bargebridgeportresponse.com/> Residents or media persons with questions are

encouraged to contact Jim Lawrence directly at (203) 550-2621 or by email at JLawrence@mtinetworkusa.com.

June 6, 2021 (Mayor Facebook & Website)

Greetings -

The Bridgeport Barge that is visibly grounded off the coast was in the news after it ran aground back in March. I have posted on it a few times, and most recently I posted on May 27 about an adverse development where an unknown amount of the cargo - Agremax - was discharged into the ocean.

We (the City) are absolutely monitoring for any updates or advisories, but do not have an oversight, regulatory, or enforcement role, and we are not a primary source for information. FDEP does not consider it hazardous waste and has issued no advisory at this time. There may be an enforcement action later, based on the discharge of the cargo as solid waste and its impacts. These are not our calls in Atlantic Beach.

Although there was reporting on the barge and its cargo after it ran aground, WJCT was the first to reported on the spill, and I am glad that this is in the public domain, because it is definitely of public interest. Yes, there is debate on the material, but that is not under the City's purview.

June 11, 2021 (Website by Staff)

FDEP has advised the City of Atlantic Beach that testing was recently performed at the barge site for baseline purposes, and that the results will be reported to the City when they are available. FDEP further advises that beach sand has been tested and no contaminants were found.