

Report: 2 derelict barges in Flushing Bay & large source of styrofoam pollution

Importance: High

All,

This report and request is being submitted by Riverkeeper in partnership with two citizen groups: the “Guardians of Flushing Bay” and “ the “Empire Dragon Boat Team” (350 members combined). It is addressed to multiple recipients as jurisdiction may be shared by multiple agencies and services. Please relay this message as needed.

Two unidentified and abandoned deck barges are stranded in Flushing Bay next to fixed navigation aid “12”. One of the barges has broken in half and half of that barge has drifted to a second location – approx. 100 yards SSE of green buoy “11”. Please see photos following text.

These barges are unsecured and have shifted position on several occasions recently – probably during unusually high tide cycles. They represent an immediate extreme risk to commercial and recreational vessel traffic. When (not if, but when) they refloat and shift position again they could drift anywhere in Flushing Bay or the adjacent East River and would endanger the commercial dinner boat operations, commercial cement barges and tugs, petroleum barges transiting the East River, shore facilities such as private and commercial marinas, and the recreational boaters in the area, etc.

Riverkeeper has learned that the USACE was notified and has visited the site/barges but has indicated that the it (USACE) does not plan to remove the derelict barges. However it is our understanding that recovery of debris and abandoned vessels which pose a threat to commercial navigation is specifically the responsibility of the USACE and that dedicated funding exists for this purpose.

Perhaps an assumption has been made that ownership of the barges cannot be determined because they are unmarked. However a quick review of Google Earth indicates that these two barges (identifiable by the materials on deck throughout the entire period) were secured from as long ago as 6/17/2010 until very recently alongside **Ferrara Brothers Building Materials, 12005 31st Avenue, Flushing, NY 11354.** Using the Google time slider one can see that on 9/5/09 no barges were secured at Ferrara’s western shoreline but on 6/17/10 there were four secured there (see the screen grab below). On 9/20/2010 there were three. On 7/18/2011 only two. From 2/12/2012 until 11/5/2012 there were three. And from 3/2/2014 until the current Google Earth image there were two alongside the Ferrara facility. Sometime after the last Google Earth image was taken the two barges somehow came adrift, first stranding at light “12” and more recently half of one barge drifting across the navigation channel to its current location SSE of buoy “11”. This Google time series connects the barges to some degree with Ferrara Brothers (they are likely the owners or certainly know the owners), shows that the Ferrara Brothers site stored a variety of barges over time and actively managed the location where the barges were moored, and finally that the derelict barges now stranded in the Bay are moving.

In addition to the extreme immediate risk these barges present to all vessels in Flushing bay and the East River they are also an active large source of Styrofoam pollution. Blocks of white foam have fallen off the deck of one of the barges and are strewn all around Flushing Bay (see photos below). Flushing Bay is an emerging recreation area. Our partner groups tell us that 1,000 people currently paddle on the Bay. Flushing Bay is no longer “out of sight, out of mind.” At this time, when there is inter-agency

discussion about the urgent need to prevent plastic pollution, will NYC and the agencies/services copied above will sit by and wait until all the foam blocks fall over side and spread around the harbor?

Riverkeeper and partner groups request that these derelict barges be salvaged and removed immediately - before this season's tropical storms and fall gales are upon us – both of which often result in higher than normal tides and high winds which would likely cause these derelicts to float again and enter commercial shipping channels. We also request that the foam blocks remaining on one barge and the foam blocks strewn about the shoreline of Flushing Bay be retrieved immediately.

6/11/2015 (4 images/Riverkeeper)



6/17/2010 – Google earth – 4 barges alongside Ferrara Brothers. Two of the four are the ones now adrift and abandoned.



6/11/2015







5/9/2015

