

THE MAKING OF A DERELICT VESSEL

WHERE DO DERELICT VESSELS COME FROM?

One might be under the impression that it is possible to easily establish the profile of a derelict vessel (DV) in the making: a boat without propulsion, reef growing on the rudder, the owner would have a scruffy beard.

But in fact, many boats with that exact profile have had a long eventless career as a perfectly good home for many people.

In my 25 years experience in boat salvage I can say that, in truth, the one common denominator for 90% of DVs is that at one point they broke loose, ran aground, and were allowed to remain there long enough to become “totaled”. This is how DVs are made and that's where the County is spending tax money in wreck removal.

The best solution to reduce the number and impacts of DV's is to intervene immediately when boats break loose, stabilize the situation, and plan for rehabilitation or removal.

In Key West Harbor there is no shortage of volunteers willing to assist in such situations: US Coast Guard, FWC, Professional Salvors, and Good Samaritans

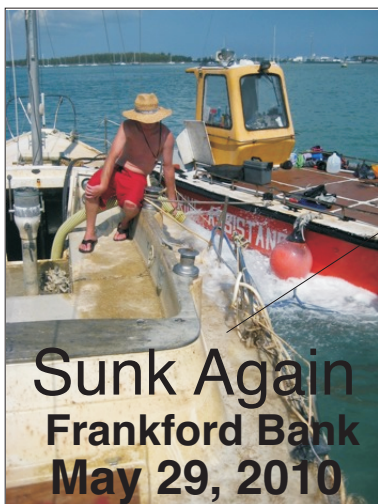
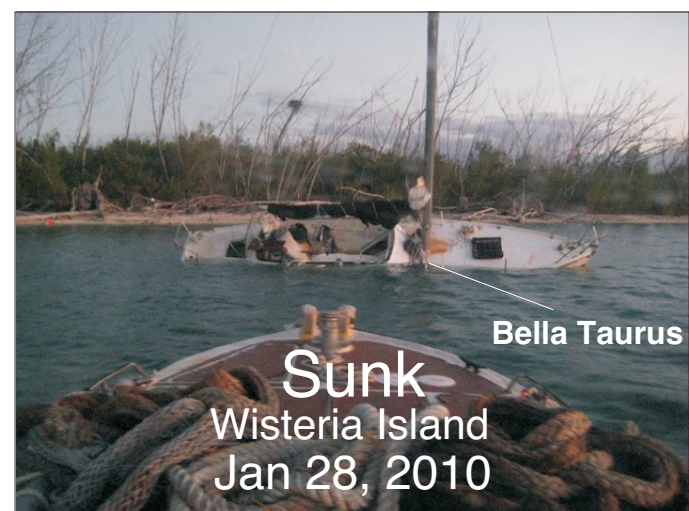
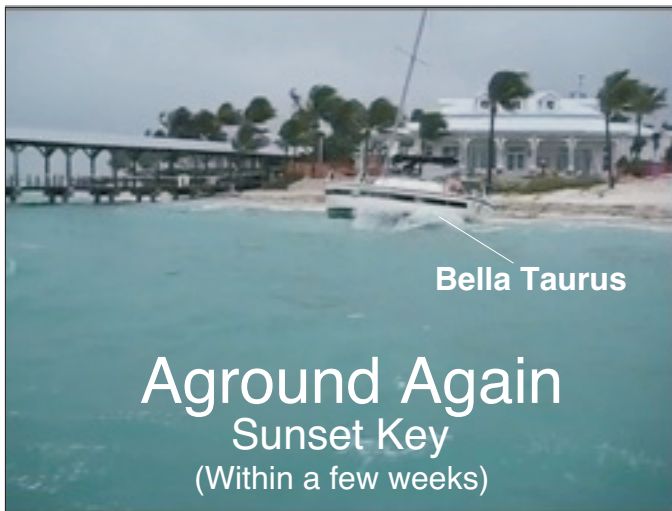
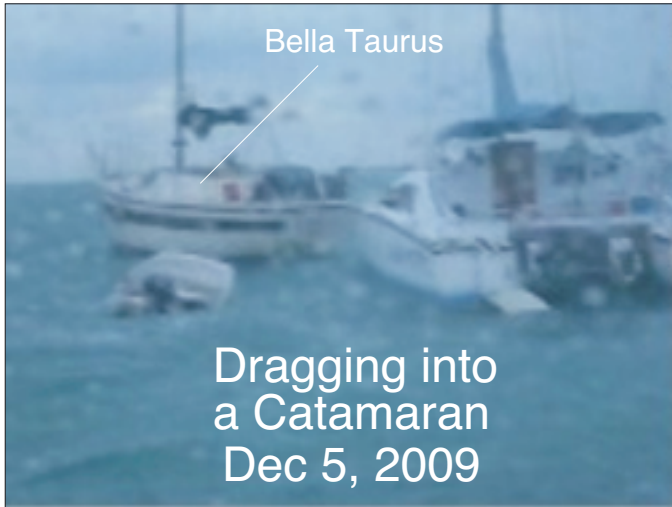
Currently no such action can occur, however, as there is nowhere to secure those drifters. Whether Red-Tagged or not, drifters are allowed to roam free for months, creating havoc in the anchorage areas until they finally sink, costing considerably more in wreck removal than they would have had they still been floating.

In order to properly “manage” the anchorage zones, the County needs to plan for those contingencies and create a minimum of infrastructure consisting of a few “Emergency/Law Enforcement Moorings” in each troubled area to abate the risks and costs associated with improperly secured vessels.

See following pages for photographs illustrating this point.

EXAMPLE 1 - THE "BELLA TAURUS"

A perfectly good boat started its derelict vessel career after leaving the City's mooring field for financial reasons. The owner was unable to properly secure his boat and the boat ran aground repeatedly until the hull was so damaged it sank to the bottom. It damaged other boats, caused damage to the seabed and ultimately cost the County thousands of dollars for the wreck removal. All that was needed was a temporary mooring to give the owner time to purchase proper ground-tackle and a little pressure from law enforcement.



Bella Taurus



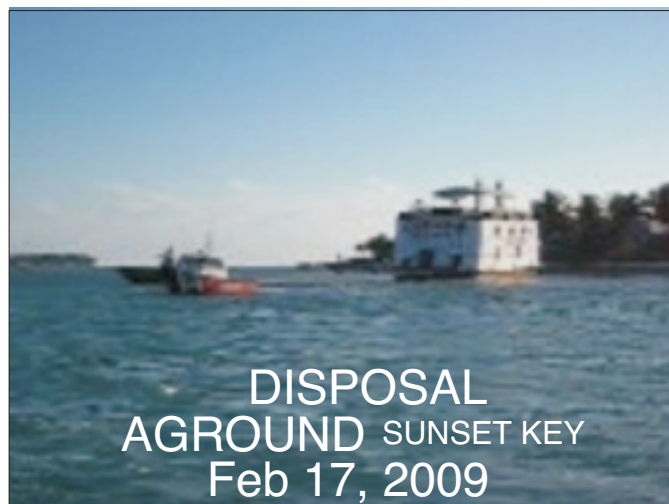
EXAMPLE 2 - THE CASINO BOAT “PAIR-O-DICE”



The “Pair-O-Dice” twice broke loose from its mooring. On Feb 17, 2009 it ran aground on Sunset Key. FWC had the boat towed to a marina. However, the dockage was \$700/day. To abate this extravagant daily cost, the boat was destroyed after approximately ten days. (The cost to the County: Over \$100,000)

If the legal process to determine the fate of the vessel had taken place while the vessel was secured to an Emergency Mooring, more time would have been available to find a solution which would have protected both the County and the owner’s interests.

At least one of the Emergency/Law Enforcement Moorings should be able to secure a large yacht.



EXAMPLE 3 - THE “MOTHERSHIP”

As shown in the boatyard photo, the boat has no rudder, no mast, no propulsion. However, it was a floating home for thirteen years for Pascal and her fourteen year old daughter. They recently sold the boat. The new owner was unable to secure it at its new location near Rat Key. It drug anchor for a week and finally sunk against a dock at Trumbo Point. This again proves that the cause of dereliction is not how the boat looks or operates, but rather how poorly or how well it is anchored.

There were repeated VHF communications between the U.S. Coast Guard, local Salvors, and the Navy Police during the time the “Mothership” was dragging around, but the fact is there was nowhere to secure it. This boat should have been secured to an Emergency Mooring to protect other boaters and dock owners, allow law enforcement time to assess the situation, and save the County the added costs of removing a sunken vessel rather than a floating one.

