

October 14, 2026

MIR-26-33

Collision Between Tanker *Isla de Bioko* and *Ginny Stone* Tow

On April 27, 2025, about 2056, the towing vessel *Ginny Stone* was building a tow of seven barges on the left descending bank of the Lower Mississippi River and the tanker *Isla de Bioko* was upbound on the river when the tanker and *Ginny Stone* tow collided at mile 110.7, near River Ridge, Louisiana (see figure 1 and figure 2).¹ One barge in the *Ginny Stone* tow sank, and the remainder of the tow broke apart and drifted downriver. One of the barges collided with the moored bulk carrier *Bulker Bee 30*. There were no injuries, and no pollution was reported. Damages to the barges, *Isla de Bioko*, and *Bulker Bee 30* were reported at \$1.9 million.



Figure 1. Left to right: *Ginny Stone* on April 30, 2025, and *Isla de Bioko* on April 29, 2025.

¹ (a) In this report, all times are central daylight time, and all miles are statute miles. All speeds are speed over the ground unless otherwise specified. (b) Visit [ntsb.gov](https://www.ntsb.gov) to find additional information in the [public docket](#) for this NTSB investigation (case no. DCA25FM033). Use the [CAROL Query](#) to search investigations.

Casualty Summary

Casualty type	Collision
Location	Lower Mississippi River, mile 110.7, River Ridge, Louisiana 29°56.65' N, 090°13.28' W
Date	April 27, 2025
Time	2056 central standard time (coordinated universal time –5 hrs)
Persons on board	24 (<i>Isla de Bioko</i>), 10 (<i>Ginny Stone</i>)
Injuries	None
Property damage	\$1.9 million est.
Environmental damage	None
Weather	Visibility 10 mi, partly cloudy, winds south-southeast at 4 kts, river calm/glassy, air temperature 75°F, water temperature 65°F
Waterway information	River; width 1,100 ft, depth 100 ft, current est. 6 mph, river stage 16.2 ft at Carrollton (New Orleans)

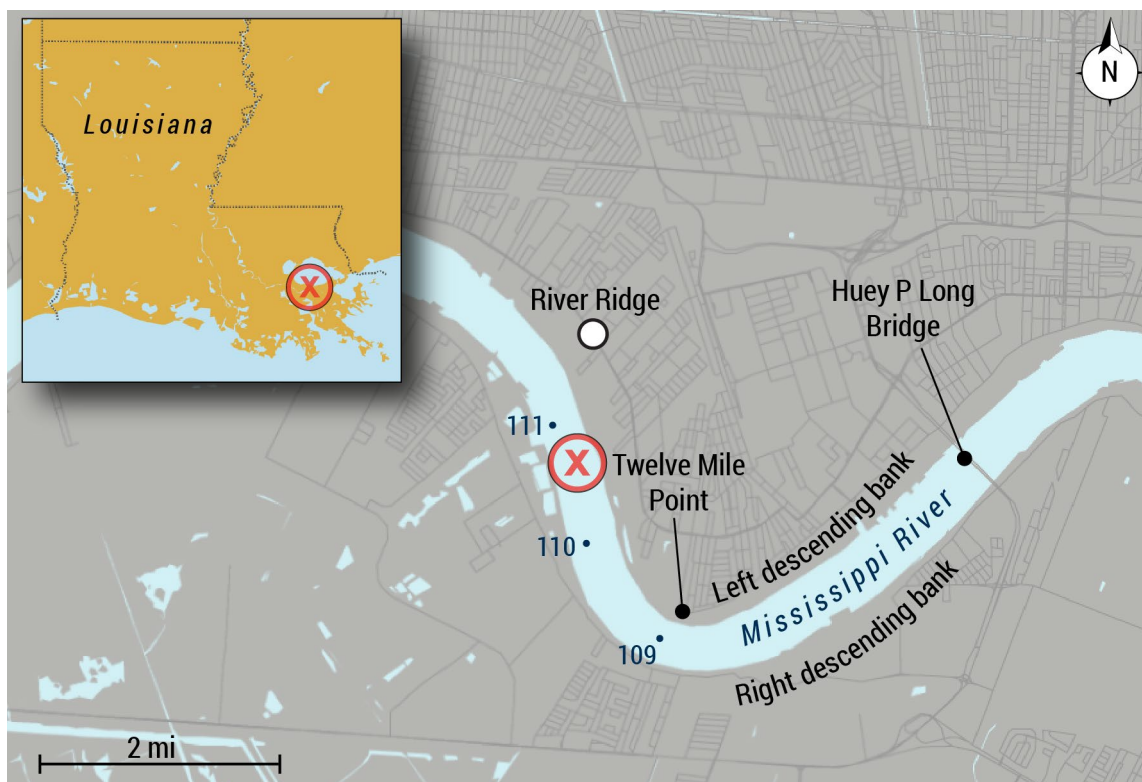


Figure 2. Area where the *Ginny Stone* tow collided with the tanker *Isla de Bioko*, as indicated by a circled X. (Background source: Google Maps)

1 Factual Information

1.1 Background

The 200-foot-long, steel-hulled towing vessel *Ginny Stone* was built in 1974 and was owned and operated by the American River Transportation Company. The vessel was typically operated in line-haul service.² Propulsion was provided by three diesel engines, each rated 3,000 hp and connected to a propeller via diesel reduction gears. Three steering rudders and six flanking rudders provided steering.³

The 610-foot-long, double-hulled chemical tanker *Isla de Bioko* was built of steel in 2016. It was owned by Grand Shipping S.A. and operated by MOL Tankship Management Pte. Ltd. The vessel had a single rudder and a single propeller directly driven by a slow-speed diesel main engine rated at 11,358 hp.

1.2 Event Sequence

On April 27, 2025, about 1925, the *Ginny Stone* arrived at mile 110.7 on the left descending bank of the Lower Mississippi River to pick up 12 loaded barges to be made into a tow at the nearby Sarah Fleet fleeting area.⁴ Assisting in building the tow were two fleet boats, the *Capt Duffy* and the *Terrel Williams*.⁵

On the left descending bank, there were three barges that were already connected abreast. The captain of the *Ginny Stone* tied up starboard side to the port outermost barge and used the towing vessel's port engine ahead and a "little bit" of starboard rudder to hold the barges into the bank. Afterward, the *Terrel Williams* and *Capt Duffy* delivered three barges to the tow, and a mate and deckhand from the *Ginny Stone* worked to secure the barges to the tow. At 2035, the *Terrel Williams*

² An inland *line-haul boat* is a large towing vessel with high horsepower used for picking up and dropping barges at various ports along a river, typically handling larger tows over longer distances.

³ *Flanking rudders* are used to provide greater maneuverability when a towing vessel and its tow are navigating river bends (flanking) with a following current, and to provide enhanced control when operating a vessel astern.

⁴ The inland towing industry refers to the shorelines of Western Rivers as the left and right banks when traveling (facing) downriver. The left bank is called the *left descending bank*, and the right bank is called the *right descending bank*.

⁵ *Fleet boats*, usually small towboats, are used to move barges around fleeting areas and to assemble tows.

moved a seventh barge, *IN 176117*, into place, aft in the starboard string (see figure 3).

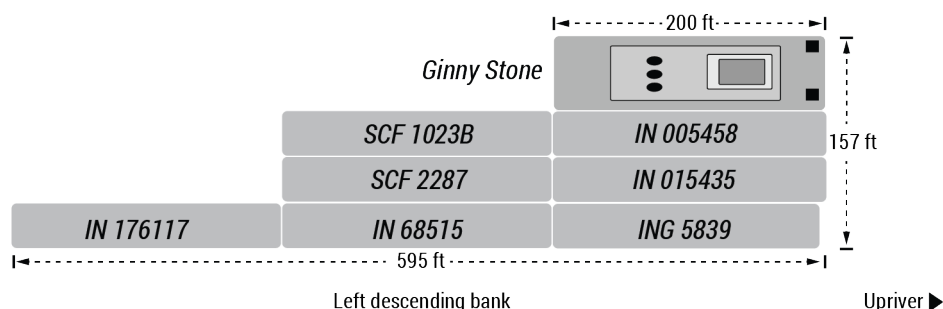


Figure 3. *Ginny Stone* tow arrangement at 2035 after the seventh barge was added (scale approximate).

Across the river on the right descending bank, just north of Twelve Mile Point, there was a fleeting area where bulk carriers would moor to mooring buoys and conduct cargo operations with barges midstream. While the *Ginny Stone* tow was being built, there were three bulk carriers moored to the buoys: the *Stellar Lady* (upriver) at mile 110.7, the *Bulker Bee 30* at mile 110.4 (middle), and the *Red Fin* at mile 110.1 (downriver).

At 2044, the 9,000-hp, 180-foot-long towing vessel *Marquette Mariner* got underway about half a mile downriver, at mile 110.2 on the left descending bank, en route to a location about 3 miles upriver to pick up additional barges. The *Marquette Mariner* was pushing a tow of 10 barges; the tow's total length was 960 feet, and its width was 105 feet. The barges at the head of the tow were box-shaped (did not have rakes). The *Marquette Mariner* captain announced over the bridge-to-bridge radio frequency (channel 67) that the tow was getting underway.⁶ The captain told investigators there was no traffic of concern at the time and said there "was a clear shot to jump above the *Ginny Stone*."

About 2049, the head of the *Marquette Mariner* tow began to pass the *Ginny Stone* tow at 4.7 mph. At the time, the *Capt Duffy* was alongside (starboard side to, not secured) the second barge of the *Ginny Stone* tow port string, aft of the *Ginny Stone*, and the *Terrel Williams* was at the bottom of the tow, at the stern of barge *IN 176117*.

⁶ The *Ginny Stone* was fitted with a Blue Box digital marine vessel recording system. The system was able to provide recordings of VHF radio audio, radar video, wheelhouse video, GPS, automatic identification system and compass video. The *Capt Duffy* was fitted with a similar system.

At 2051:30, CCTV footage from the bow of the *Capt Duffy* captured the *Ginny Stone* tow surging toward the left descending bank and then slowly moving away from the bank as the head of the *Marquette Mariner* tow passed the bow of the *Ginny Stone*. At the time, the closest passing distance, measured from the *Ginny Stone* electronic chart system, was about 130 feet (starboard side of the *Marquette Mariner* tow to the port side of the *Ginny Stone*).

The *Capt Duffy* crew returned to the vessel from the *Ginny Stone* tow, and the *Capt Duffy* backed away and departed downriver (see figure 4). The *Ginny Stone* moved slowly from the bank as the *Marquette Mariner* continued to pass at a speed of 5.2 mph. The captain of the *Ginny Stone* increased rpms on his port engine and increased rudder to starboard to help push the tow back into the riverbank.

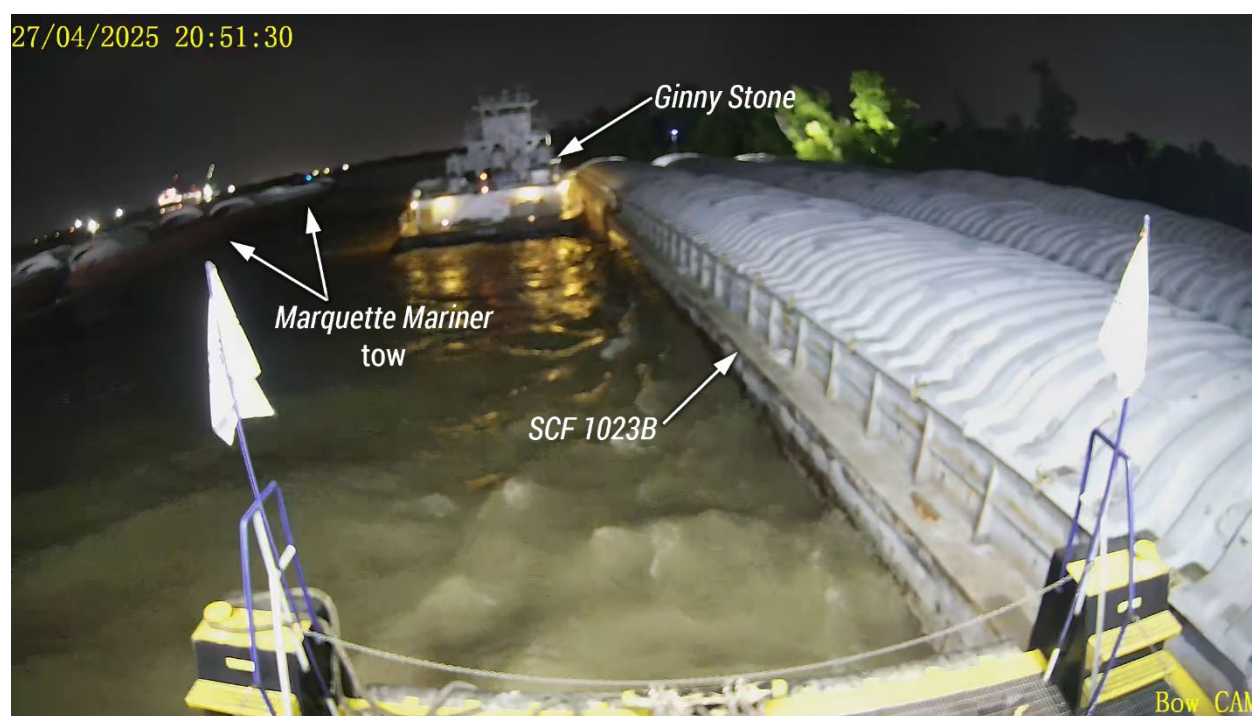


Figure 4. Screenshot from the bow CCTV of the *Capt Duffy* as it departed the *Ginny Stone* tow at 2051:30.

At 2052, the captain of the *Ginny Stone* radioed the *Terrel Williams*, which was about to depart from the tow. He asked the operator to stay with the tow, announcing that “he’s [the *Marquette Mariner*] pulling me off the bank.” The operator had the *Terrel Williams* face up (position the bow of the vessel against the hull of the barge and attach wires) to the aftmost barge in the starboard string. He then attempted to assist in getting the *Ginny Stone* tow back into the bank.

About 2053, the *Marquette Mariner* cleared the *Ginny Stone* at a speed of 4.6 mph. The *Ginny Stone* captain told investigators that as the *Marquette Mariner*

passed, the “wheelwash” from the *Marquette Mariner* caused the *Ginny Stone* to move away from the bank and to port.⁷ He stated that he began “getting current from [the *Marquette Mariner* tow]” in what had previously been “dead” (still) water.

The *Ginny Stone* captain used ahead propulsion on the port and center engines combined with rudders to starboard in an attempt to shove the head of the tow back into the bank. However, according to the captain, the tow kept “widening” (moving) out into the river. The *Marquette Mariner* captain told investigators that he could see what was happening and hear the communications on the fleet working channel (channel 65). Once his tow was clear and upriver of the *Ginny Stone*, he reduced rpms to “just enough for steerage” so that his wheelwash would not affect the tow.

The chemical tanker *Isla de Bioko* was underway downriver from the *Ginny Stone* tow. The *Isla de Bioko* was in ballast condition, transiting upbound at a speed of 6.7 mph, en route to the Grandview anchorage located around mile 147. An apprentice pilot was directing the movement of the vessel. The ship also had a state-licensed New Orleans-Baton Rouge Steamship Pilots Association (NOBRA) pilot on the bridge (supervising the apprentice pilot), as well as the master, third officer, and a helmsman.

The apprentice pilot saw the *Ginny Stone* tow, with its deck lights on, moving off the left descending bank and into the river. Beginning at 2054:01, the apprentice pilot hailed the *Ginny Stone* on VHF channel 67 three separate times. The captain of the *Ginny Stone* did not immediately reply to the calls; he was on the vessel’s other radio, the fleet working channel (channel 65), communicating with the *Terrel Williams*. He heard the calls from the *Isla de Bioko* and initially replied back to the apprentice pilot on the fleet working channel.

At 2054:50, the operator of the *Terrel Williams* radioed the *Capt Duffy* and asked him to return to the tow, stating, “might need a hand up here, he [the *Ginny Stone* captain] can’t shove it back in and I sure can’t stop him.”⁸ In response, the *Capt Duffy* turned around and proceeded back upriver toward the drifting *Ginny Stone* tow. At 2054:53, the captain of the *Ginny Stone* replied, on channel 67, to the apprentice pilot on the *Isla de Bioko*, stating, “I’m trying to get it to go back in.”

⁷ *Wheelwash* is a term that describes the movement of water away from a vessel by the action of a propeller, which can cause turbulence from a propeller that could adversely affect nearby vessels.

⁸ The *Terrel Williams* was a 1,200-hp towing vessel.

The starboard side of the loaded tow of the *Ginny Stone* was now exposed to the 6-mph (estimated) current, which was pushing the tow down and toward the center of the river. The captain of the *Ginny Stone* told investigators that although he used all three engines and rudders in an attempt to steer the tow back around, because of the current, "there was nothing [he] could really do out there on the side of the tow" to arrest the movement of the tow. He radioed the deckhand and mate that were still on the barges and directed them to return to the *Ginny Stone*. The *Terrel Williams* remained faced up to the aft barge in the starboard string (IN 176117).

On the *Isla de Bioko*, the apprentice pilot saw the *Ginny Stone* moving into the tanker's path. At 2055, the apprentice pilot ordered the "danger signal" to be sounded on the ship's whistle; it sounded shortly afterward.⁹ The apprentice pilot also ordered the ship's engine to half astern. At 2056, the NOBRA pilot relieved the apprentice pilot of the conn of the *Isla de Bioko* and began issuing multiple helm orders, including half ahead on the ship's engine.

On the *Ginny Stone*, the deckhand and mate returned to the vessel at 2055, and the captain sounded the general alarm. The stern line on the *Ginny Stone* parted, and the mate cast off the bow line securing the boat to the tow. The captain steered the *Ginny Stone* out of the way of the *Isla de Bioko*, down the port side of the tanker and out of danger. The barges of the tow, still secured together, continued to drift into the path of the *Isla de Bioko*.

At 2056:25, the bulbous bow of the *Isla de Bioko* struck the port side of barge SCF 1023B, the second barge in the port string (see figure 5). The barge flooded and sank; the remainder of the barges broke loose and drifted downriver with the current. The *Terrel Williams* remained faced up to the aft barge in the starboard string; both drifted down the starboard side of the *Isla de Bioko*. One of the barges from the tow drifted into the Dutch-flagged bulk carrier *Bulker Bee 30*, moored near the right descending bank.

⁹ According to the Inland Navigation Rules, "When vessels in sight of one another are approaching each other and from any cause either vessel fails to understand the intentions or actions of the other, or is in doubt whether sufficient action is being taken by the other to avoid collision, the vessel in doubt shall immediately indicate such doubt by giving at least five short and rapid blasts on the whistle." These five short and rapid blasts are commonly known as the "danger signal."

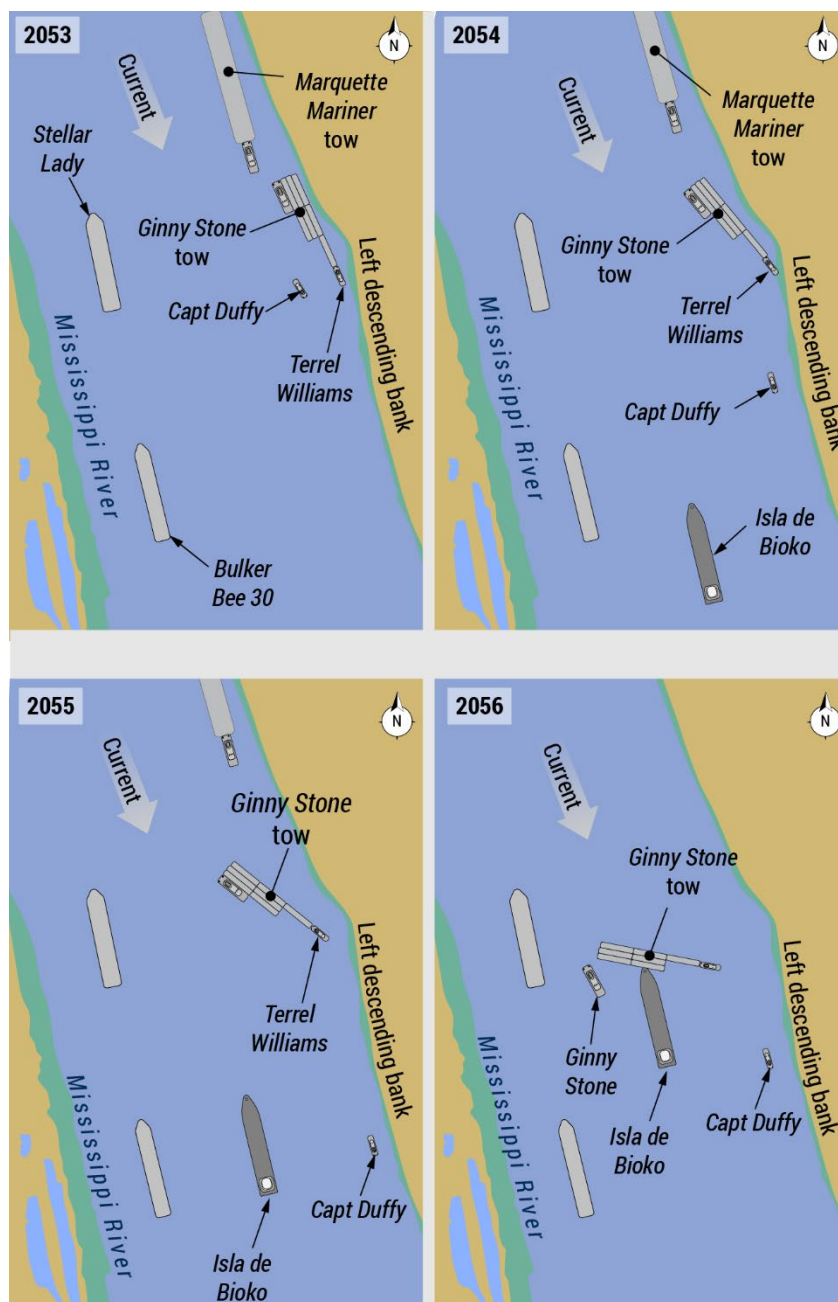


Figure 5. Approximate positions of *Marquette Mariner* tow, *Ginny Stone* tow, *Terrel Williams*, *Capt Duffy*, and *Isla de Bioko* from 2053 to 2056, the time of the collision. River bank shown does not reflect the high-water conditions at the time. (Background source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Electronic Navigational Chart US5MSYBB)

The captain of the *Ginny Stone* reported the collision location over VHF channel 67 and requested assistance from nearby vessels. Towing vessels nearby began to round up the barges that had broken loose. Unable to stop the vessel, and aware that there were no injuries to anyone, the NOBRA pilot on the *Isla de Bioko*

continued upriver, bound for the nearest anchorage at Kenner Bend at mile 113 (the vessel anchored about 2145).

At 2112, the captain of the *Ginny Stone* reported that all the adrift barges had been rounded up.

1.3 Additional Information

There were no observed or reported deficiencies with any of the navigation, communication, steering, or propulsion control systems of the *Isla de Bioko*, *Ginny Stone*, or *Marquette Mariner*.

1.3.1 Damage

The covered hopper barge *SCF 1023B* sank with its dry cargo of about 1,635 short tons of urea and was deemed a total loss valued at \$554,587. Barges *ING 5839* and *IN 015435*, both at the forward end of the tow, sustained damages totaling \$392,172. The loss of cargo (all urea) from the barges was reported to be \$926,076. The *Ginny Stone* was not damaged. Figure 6 shows the positions of the damaged barges in the tow.

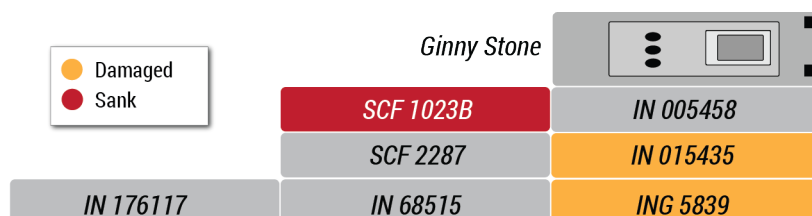


Figure 6. *Ginny Stone* tow arrangement, showing the location of the damaged barges in orange and the sunken barge *SCF 1023B* in red.

The *Isla de Bioko* sustained damage to its shell plating at its bulbous bow. There was no breach of the hull in the forepeak tank, and the classification society determined the ship was fit for return to service. Damages were reported at \$5,700.

The *Bulker Bee 30* sustained damage to its starboard-side shell plating at the no. 3 wing ballast tank, but there was no penetration to the hull. Four mooring lines and an aft winch brake liner were also broken or damaged. Damages were reported at \$45,498.

1.3.2 Waterway Information

On the day of the collision, the Lower Mississippi River was experiencing high-water conditions, with the nearest gage, about 7 miles downriver at Carrollton, New Orleans (mile 102.8), at 16.2 feet and falling.¹⁰ Nine feet or above on a falling stage was considered a high-water event.

There were no restrictions for building tows during high-water conditions in the area where the *Ginny Stone* was working. The captain of the *Ginny Stone* and the captain of the *Marquette Mariner* were aware of the river current conditions that existed at the time of the casualty. The captain of the *Ginny Stone* told investigators that he knew the main river current was running strong. He said that a marine survey company responding to the casualty “clocked it [the main river current] at 6.8 mph.” He also said that when he was assembling the tow, he pushed the tow into a “notch” in the riverbank where the water was “dead” against the bank, but an eddy current also existed in the area.

According to the NOBRA pilot of the *Isla de Bioko*, the area where the collision took place was known to have very high traffic, particularly due to the barge fleets located in the area, and it was common for vessels to be pushed into the bank where the *Marquette Mariner* and *Ginny Stone* were located.

¹⁰ See Title 33 *Code of Federal Regulations* 161.65. The Carrollton gage is maintained by the US Army Corps of Engineers and provides current and historical water level information.

2 Analysis

While the towing vessel *Ginny Stone* was building a tow on the left descending bank of the Mississippi River during high-water conditions, the tow moved into the center of the river, and the northbound chemical tanker *Isla de Bioko* and tow collided, resulting in the subsequent breakup of the tow and damage to its barges, the *Isla de Bioko*, and a nearby moored ship.

About 12 minutes before the casualty, the *Marquette Mariner* tow, located about a half mile downriver of the *Ginny Stone*, got underway to pick up additional barges upriver. The *Marquette Mariner* was pushing ten loaded barges with no raked barges at the head of the tow. When the *Marquette Mariner* tow proceeded upriver at a speed over ground of 5 mph in the strong current, a high-pressure zone existed ahead of the loaded barges at the head of the tow. As the *Marquette Mariner* tow began to pass the *Ginny Stone* tow at 130 feet of separation, the high-pressure zone would have initially pushed the *Ginny Stone* tow toward the bank.

As the *Marquette Mariner* tow passed alongside the *Ginny Stone* tow, the velocity of water forced through the narrow gap between the tows would have increased, creating a low-pressure zone between them. This low-pressure zone caused the *Ginny Stone* tow to be pulled off the bank. As the *Marquette Mariner* tow finished passing the *Ginny Stone* tow, a low-pressure zone in the wake of the *Marquette Mariner* would have further exacerbated the movement of the *Ginny Stone* tow away from the bank.¹¹ The combined effects of these hydrodynamic forces resulted in the *Ginny Stone* moving out into the river and into the path of the northbound *Isla de Bioko*, and ultimately put the strong current on the starboard side of the *Ginny Stone*'s loaded tow.

When the *Ginny Stone* captain saw that the tow was moving off the bank, he used the vessel's three engines and rudders to attempt to prevent the tow from moving further into the river. He also asked the *Terrel Williams* to remain with the tow to assist in shoving back into the bank. However, after the tow moved to port, the starboard side of the loaded tow was exposed to the current. From the *Ginny Stone*'s position tied up to the front row of barges, on the downstream side of the tow, there was little the *Ginny Stone* captain could do to counteract the strong effect of the current and maneuver the tow, especially given his priority to recover his crew, who were still on the tow at the time. Similarly, the 1,200-hp *Terrel Williams* was in a

¹¹ A low-pressure zone forms naturally in the wake of a vessel.

position at the end of the tow, where there was little the operator could do to counter any movement of the tow.

The NOBRA pilot and apprentice pilot aboard the *Isla de Bioko* saw the *Ginny Stone* moving off the bank and into the river. The apprentice hailed the *Ginny Stone* and took action to slow the tanker. When the *Ginny Stone* tow was pulled off the bank and into the path of the *Isla de Bioko*, there was about 0.43 miles (757 yards) between the tanker and tow, and the tanker was transiting at a speed of about 6.7 mph. With the distance between the vessels and speed of the tanker, the pilots only had about 2.5 minutes to maneuver the *Isla de Bioko* to avoid the collision. Attempting to anchor or stop the vessel likely would not have prevented the collision because the tow was moving downriver with the 6-knot current toward the *Isla de Bioko*. Further, the 595-foot-long *Ginny Stone* tow was ultimately oriented such that its length spanned nearly across the river. Given the additional confines of the waterway—with downbound traffic and bulk carriers moored at mooring buoys near the right descending bank—as well as the strong downbound current, the NOBRA pilot and apprentice pilot had no space to maneuver the tanker to avoid collision. Altering course or slowing the vessel would have put the ship in danger of colliding with other vessels, contacting infrastructure, or grounding.

3 Conclusions

3.1 Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the collision between the *Ginny Stone* tow and the tanker *Isla de Bioko* was the hydrodynamic forces from the close passing of the *Marquette Mariner* tow as it moved upriver into a strong current, which displaced the *Ginny Stone* tow from the bank as the tow was being made up and could not be overcome by the *Ginny Stone* and an assisting towing vessel, resulting in the tow moving into the path of the northbound *Isla de Bioko*.

Vessel Particulars

Vessel	<i>Ginny Stone</i>	<i>Isla de Bioko</i>
Type	Towing/Barge (Towing vessel)	Cargo, Liquid Bulk (Chemical tanker)
Owner/Operator	American River Transportation Company (Commercial)	Grand Shipping, SA / MOL Tankship Management (Commercial)
Flag	United States	Panama
Port of registry	St Louis, Missouri	Panama City, Panama
Year built	1974	2016
Official number	558610 (US)	N/A
IMO number	N/A	9767235
Classification society	American Bureau of Shipping (Third-party organization)	Nippon Kaiji Kyokai (ClassNK)
Length (overall)	200.0 ft (61.0 m)	610.2 ft (186.0 m)
Breadth (max.)	52.0 ft (15.8 m)	105.6 ft (32.2 m)
Draft (casualty)	11.0 ft (3.4 m)	31.5 ft (9.6 m)
Tonnage	1,206 GRT	30,480 GT ITC
Engine power; manufacturer	3 x 3,000 hp (2,237 kW); GE 7FDL12 diesel engines	1 x 11,358 hp (8,470 kW); MAN B&W 7S50ME-89.3 diesel engine

NTSB investigators worked closely with our counterparts from **Coast Guard Sector New Orleans** throughout this investigation.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable cause of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for any accident or event investigated by the agency. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person” (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b)).

For more detailed background information on this report, visit the [NTSB Case Analysis and Reporting Online \(CAROL\) website](#) and search for NTSB accident ID DCA25FM033. Recent publications are available in their entirety on the [NTSB website](#). Other information about available publications also may be obtained from the website or by contacting—

National Transportation Safety Board
Records Management Division, CIO-40

490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20594
(800) 877-6799 or (202) 314-6551