



**National  
Transportation  
Safety Board**

# Deck Operations – Vessels, Pilots, and Waterway Factors

Captain Rob Jones – Deck Operations  
Group Chairman

# Waterway Challenges

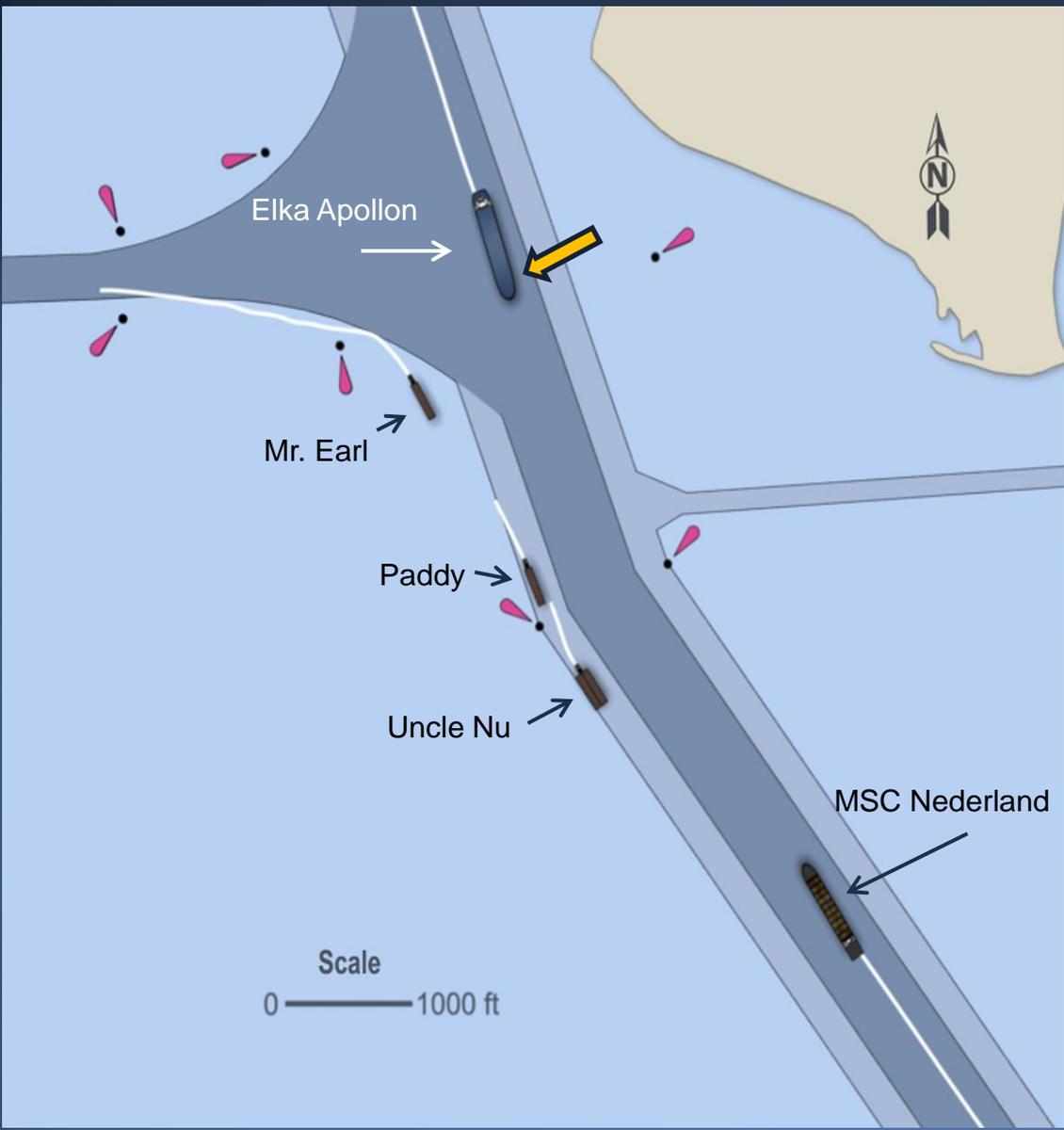
- Narrow Waterway
- Hydrodynamic Forces
- Vessel Traffic
  - Deep Draft, Tows, Dredges
- Vessel Speed

# Towboat *Mr. Earl*



# Vessel Communication

- No early radio call between *Elka Apollon* pilot and *Mr. Earl*
- Assumptions by operators on both vessels led to close quarters
- Early communication
  - Prevent close quarters



*Elka Apollon* Bridge Instruments and Audio

<p>Port 20 0 20 40 Stbd</p> <p>Rudder Angle Indicator</p>	<p>161</p> <p>09:02:10</p> <p>Heading/Time</p>
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CP: starboard twenty.

Ship-to-Ship VHF Communication

*MSC Nederland* Bridge Audio

# Accident Sequence



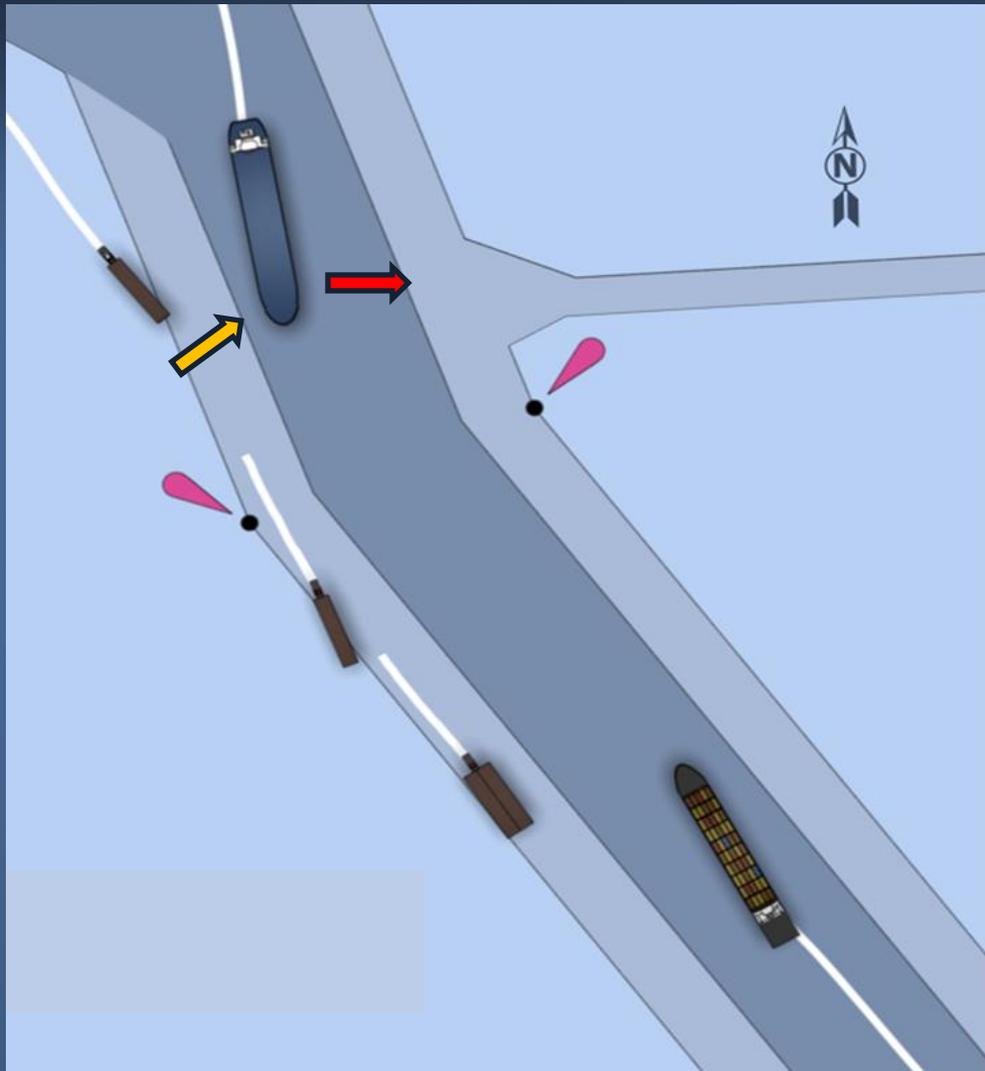
167  
09:02:40  
Heading/Time

CP: port twenty.

Ship-to-Ship VHF Communication

MSC Nederland Bridge Audio

# Bank Effect – Bow Cushion



Elka Apollon Bridge Instruments and Audio



170

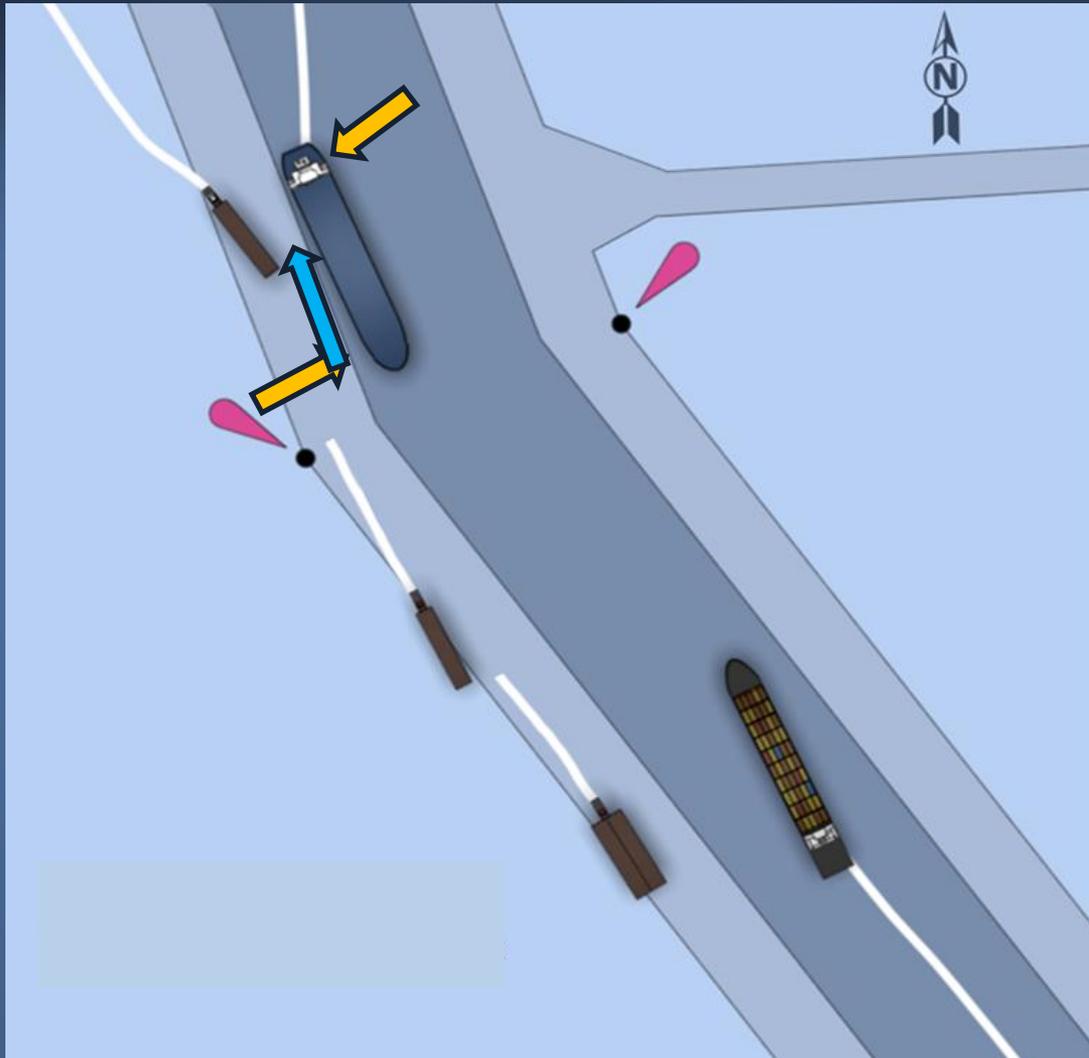
09:03:40

Heading/Time

Ship-to-Ship VHF Communication

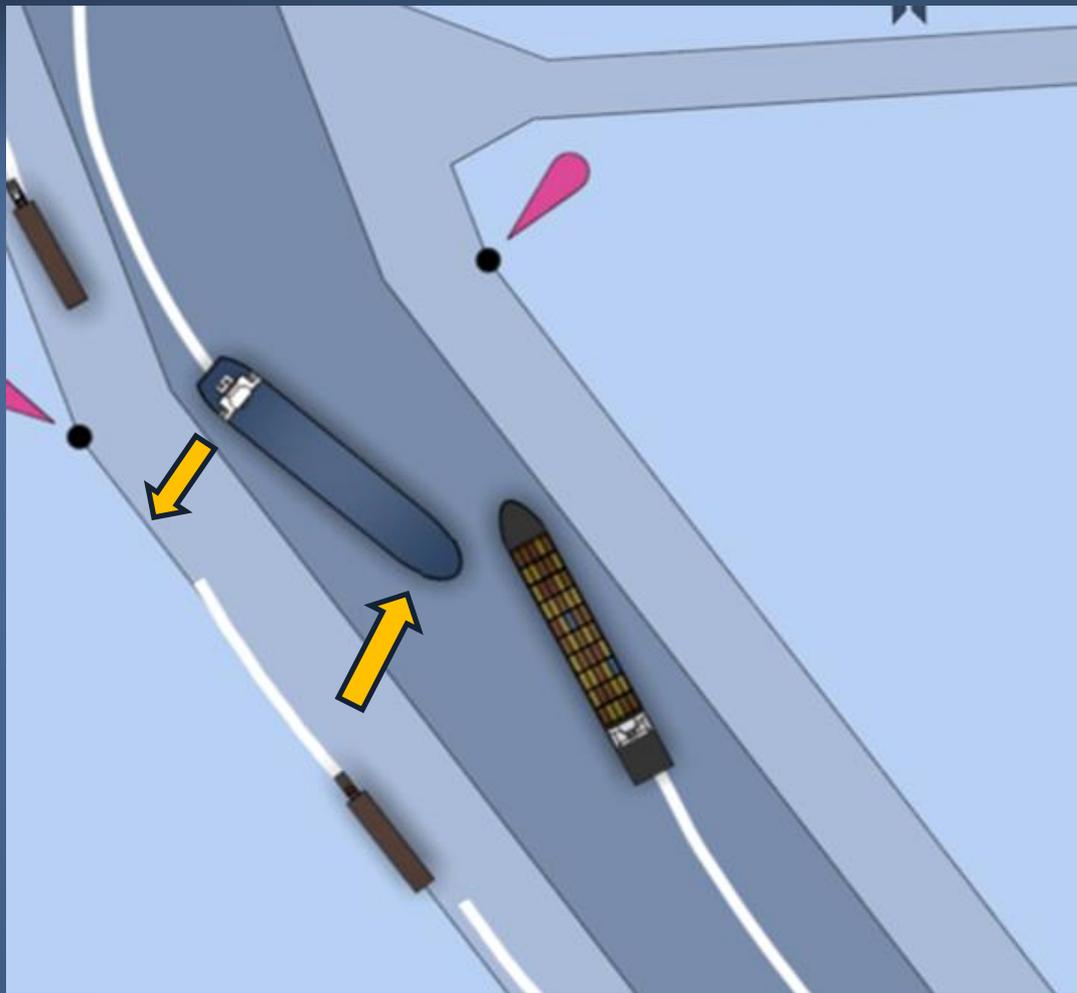
MSC Nederland Bridge Audio

# Bow Cushion & Stern Suction



156  
09:04:10  
Heading/Time

# Overwhelming Hydrodynamic Forces



130  
09:05:10  
Heading/Time

# Close Quarters

- *Elka Apollon and Mr. Earl*
  - *Mr. Earl* was entering an established barge lane alongside and parallel to the main channel
  - *Mr. Earl* more maneuverable in the circumstances
  - *Elka Apollon* in main channel and committed

# *Elka Apollon and Mr. Earl*

- Proximity to the events
- Recorded audio confirms left rudder issued prior to concern about *Mr. Earl*
- Proximity did not contribute to collision
- Close quarters a preventable occurrence

## *Elka Apollon and MSC Nederland*

- Recorded data confirms initial left rudder command necessary to adjust vessel's position in channel
- 20 degree port rudder for 80 seconds plus bow and stern bank effect
- Inevitable outcome



# National Transportation Safety Board