TRIP REPORT LEG 3 F/V AQUILA

 20 OCT. TO 28 OCT. 2014

The Aquila ended leg two in Dutch Harbor the evening of Oct. 20th. Folks disembarked and the ship got underway for Kodiak a few hours later on the 20th. Due to contractual definitions for Science days vs transit days and the difference in the daily rate it was determined that it would be cheaper for me to get off the boat in Dutch Harbor, fly to Kodiak and pick up the Aquila again in Kodiak.

The Aquila arrived in Kodiak the morning of Friday Oct. 24th. Mark Blakeslee and I boarded the vessel in Kodiak around 10am that morning and began setting up for the dragging operations. Mark has a transponder that attaches to a pole mounted to the ship, a compass, a gps, computer and the associated tracking program that allows him to track a pinger on the front leading weight of a string of drag hooks so you have some idea where your hooks are dragging. Any time you drag hooks attempting to snag something on or near the bottom your success is limited by how well you have defined the location of the target and how well you can position the hooks coming off the ship.

Dockside in Kodiak we had the ship staff weld a support bracket for the transponder pole, mounted the compass, and gps, strung cables and set up the computer on the bridge. Some measurements and calibrations were completed to map the distances between the transponder and the gps antenna. We got underway preparing to cross the gulf of Alaska at 2am on Oct. 25th.

We arrive at a spot near the distressed mooring the morning of Monday Oct. 27th. We spend an hour or so dragging the weight with the pinger to do some final plotting calibrations for the computer screen. Once on station it was good to see that the release still have enough battery power to allow us to make many range measurements and better refine the location of the mooring. Our first drag was in a horse shoe type pattern around the mooring. That drag was unsuccessful. For the second drag we added line to the string of hooks trailing behind the clump weight with the pinger to where we had 150 plus feet of line and hooks trailing behind that weight. As line was deployed from the winch pieces of chain were tied to the spectra to weight that part of the line down too. The idea is to watch the location of the leading weight (pinger attached) on the computer screen relative to the plotted location of the mooring release. We drug the pinger weight to a location near the release, completed a full circle around the mooring while laying out more spectra line from the winch then stopped the vessel and hauled back on the winch. The idea is to draw that circle of line in tight to the mooring and snag it one of the 5 hooks we had attached to the trailing line. As we recovered line onto the winch it became apparent from the increased tension that indeed we had managed to snag something on the bottom of the ocean at 300 meters depth. When the top of the ADCP float surfaced near the stern of the vessel we quickly attached a separate line to the float frame so it could not drop loose from the snag and sink back to the bottom of the ocean. The ADCP float, microcat, release and 1600 lb anchor were all recovered in what appears to be reasonable condition. This mooring was deployed May of 2011 but the release failed to operate property on several attempts to free this mooring. All equipment was aboard and secured by 7pm the evening of Oct. 27. We left the mooring area headed to Sitka, about 85 miles south.

I had asked the ship to be tied up in Sitka at first light, which should have been 8am on the 28th. When I went to the bridge that morning around 7am I was told we would not be tied up until 1000 or 1030. According to the mate (Guy) the only explanation for this delay was that there was some confusion as to our arrival time with the people standing watches at night. We were tied up at the dock in Seward by 10am on the 28th of Oct. Mark and I were packed up and off the boat by 1100 that morning. Mark air shipped some of his equipment to Kodiak, the mooring parts and some of Marks equipment rode the boat down to Seattle . The Aquila did not continue straight south to Seattle, instead they went off shore to pick up a drifting glider that belongs to WHOI. The Aquila is scheduled to arrive at NOAA on Monday Nov. 3rd to offload.

Wm. Floering and Mark Blakeslee were aboard for this leg. Marks contact information is P.O. Box 2356 Kodiak AK, 99615. His e mail is Aqualife@AK.net.

The mooring (11-IPP-2A) was deployed in March of 2011 at position 58 deg. 03.334 min. N and 137 deg. 04.720 min. W in approximately 315 meters of water. An attempt was made to recover this mooring using a ROV in May of 2012. Scott McKeever was along on this cruise but was unsuccessful in recovering the mooring with the ROV.

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