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## EPA Won't Let Princess Louise Rest in Peace

June 22, 1990 | GREG KRIKORIAN | TIMES STAFF WRITER

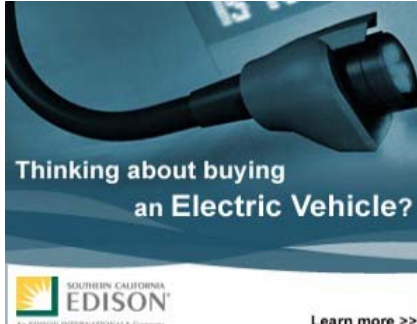
The saga continues.

When we last left the former cruise ship Princess Louise, the ill-fated vessel was lying 900 feet deep in the outer San Pedro Channel, where it sank en route to its intended resting place off the coast of Santa Catalina Island.

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The sinking of the 330-foot liner was to have ended its final sorry days--bankrupt as a business, no longer seaworthy, capsizing in a Terminal Island shipyard, even plundered by rogue divers.

At last, many had thought Wednesday, the onetime "Queen of the Northern Seas" would rest in peace.

But Thursday, Environmental Protection Agency officials said they want the Princess Louise Moved from its watery grave. Turns out the ship sank too close to an ocean dump site under the federal agency's jurisdiction, EPA officials said.

"We want the ship to be moved as quickly as possible, if it's possible, to another location," EPA spokeswoman Lois Grunwald said Thursday.

Where it sits now, according to Grunwald and EPA oceanographer Pat Cotter, the ship could interfere with the EPA's study of the dump site, where hundreds of thousands of tons of dredge material are discarded each year by the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. The dump, with a radius of 1,000 yards, has been in use for decades, they said.

"We have to monitor that site and take sea-bottom samples to collect fish and invertebrates. So if we're trying to find out what's out there and bingo, our nets hit the ship, it could be costly," Cotter said.

"We'd lose lots of time. We'd lose lots of money. And we'd lose lots of scientific samples. It could be a real problem."

But moving the Princess Louise may be an even bigger problem.

"If you're talking science fiction, if you're talking Hollywood, it can be done. But if you're talking real life, no," said Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. F. L. McClain, who supervised the escorting of the Princess Louise out to sea Wednesday.

The ship's depth, condition and history, McClain said, all suggest that everyone might be better off just leaving it where it lies.

After all, it took a team of divers, naval architects and stout salvagers more than two months to raise the Princess Louise from about 45 feet of water at Berth 241 in Terminal Island. Until two weeks ago, the 2,300-ton vessel sat listing to starboard ever since mysteriously capsizing Oct. 30 as it underwent repairs.

Even after it was raised upright, the ship's frailty was obvious and salvage crews continued to work day and night to prepare it for its last voyage--the one it never completed.

Coast Guard officials said there was no stopping it from sinking where it did.

"They tried to save it, but they couldn't," McClain said. Mud and other debris from the ship's hull clogged equipment and made it impossible to keep it afloat, McClain said.

A half-dozen Martech USA Inc. salvage divers tried to free the pumps until the very end, McClain said. "They stayed aboard until the main deck was awash and finally had to leave. There was nothing else they could do."

EPA officials said they would consult with the Coast Guard, marine engineers and the Princess Louise's owner and salvager, Willem Boelman, about the possibility of moving the vessel to deeper waters. Boelman returned to Vancouver, Canada, after the ship sank and could not be reached for comment.

"We want to know what our options are," Cotter said.

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