

Fishing vessel sinks near LaPush

Oil sheen will be left to evaporate, U.S. Coast Guard says after rescue

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LAPUSH — A 72-foot fishing vessel sank five miles west of LaPush on Wednesday evening, said U.S. Coast Guard officials.

No injuries were reported in the sinking of the *Milky Way*, said Mark Baumgaertner, executive petty officer at the U.S. Coast Guard Station Quillayute River.

However, four people and one dog had to be rescued from

the boat, which later left an oil sheen from leaking diesel gasoline as it sank into 180-foot deep waters.

"We received a mayday call at 5:45 p.m. from a smaller fishing vessel stating that a boat had capsized," Baumgaertner said.

"We sent a 47-foot U.S. Coast Guard vessel out, which helped to rescue three passengers, including a dog."

The crew from another boat, *Bainbridge*, was nearby

and helped rescue Andrew Blair, skipper of the *Milky Way*.

Milky Way is based out of Gig Harbor but was fishing out of Westport.

The names of the other rescued passengers were not available Thursday evening.

Officials did determine the cause of the sinking.

Too many sardines

Baumgaertner said the vessel was fishing with a hoist and caught too many sardines in its net.

"They apparently had a huge catch," Baumgaertner

said. "That caused it to just turn over."

Milky Way will not be recoverable, Baumgaertner said.

"The vessel has 2,000 to 2,500 gallons of fuel, and there is an oil sheen out there right now," he said.

"But that will evaporate and will have a minimal impact on the environment."

Recovery of the passengers took place a few minutes after 6 p.m.

Soon thereafter, the vessel turned completely upside down and stayed that way for about an hour before sinking, Baumgaertner said.