

For Immediate Release

F/V MISTRESS Shipwreck ‘Lost’ Near Block Island Located After Seven Years

Green Oceans’ Underwater Investigation Reveals a Shipwreck Presumed to be the F/V Mistress found at the Base of Block Island Turbine #1 - Asks Federal Authorities to Reopen the Investigation and Review Whether Mariners Are Safe in Turbine Congested Waters

POINT JUDITH, R.I. — September, 22 2026 — More than seven years after the commercial fishing vessel F/V MISTRESS sank near Block Island, a Green Oceans-sponsored investigation has located and documented a wreck believed to be the missing vessel, along with apparent human remains, resting within just 50 feet of turbine #1.

The F/V MISTRESS sank on January 1, 2019. Two fishermen lost their lives. The U.S. Coast Guard closed its investigation without locating the vessel.

Green Oceans hopes the discovery provides answers and some measure of closure to the fishermen’s families and the regional commercial fishing community.

Consistent with its mission to protect the ocean and the life it sustains, Green Oceans is calling on the federal government to reopen the F/V MISTRESS marine-casualty investigation and independently examine the new evidence in light of its proximity to Block Island Wind Farm.

Because the Coast Guard declared the wreck ‘lost,’ its investigation never resolved the cause of the sinking or the conditions impacting the search and rescue response. All federal offshore wind approvals since 2019 have depended on the Coast Guard’s findings that Offshore Wind Turbines would not significantly hinder Search and Rescue operations.

Subsequent federal approvals for Ørsted’s South Fork Wind and Revolution Wind projects characterized adverse effects on navigation safety as “minimal.”

“What is ‘minimal’ about the loss of two men's lives and the consequences for the families they left behind?” asked Green Oceans Trustee Barbara Chapman.

About the Shipwreck

Coast Guard records associated with the original search (MISLE Activity 6618087, Case 1158048) describe the difficult conditions rescuers encountered.

A Coast Guard helicopter dispatched in response to mayday calls reportedly could not conduct sector or parallel searches. The helicopter aborted its rescue attempt, returning after approximately 37 minutes. The records cite high winds, limited visibility, a low ceiling, and proximity to wind turbines as the hazards affecting the decision to turn back.

The captain's son was rescued from a life raft by another commercial fishing vessel. The captain and a second crew member were never recovered. After an extensive multiagency search was unable to locate the vessel's hull, the wreck was officially recorded as lost and the investigation was closed.

Seven years later, a multidisciplinary team of marine professionals was assembled to search for and document the wreck. Side-scan sonar conducted on July 27, 2026, identified a wreck site. Scientific divers performed an underwater assessment on August 30, 2026.

The divers documented numerous features consistent with the F/V MISTRESS, including its propeller and shaft, fuel tanks, net drum, deck hatch, processing equipment, and other characteristics to support its identity. Final identification remains subject to confirmation by the appropriate authorities.

The wreck lies in approximately 92 feet of water and just 50 feet from the base of Block Island Wind Farm turbine No. 1. Its location raises significant questions about the original investigation, its search area, routine maritime operations near this offshore infrastructure, and media reporting at the time of the incident.

Request for Federal Review

Green Oceans has submitted side-scan sonar imagery, underwater photographs, and related documentation to the U.S. Coast Guard, National Transportation Safety Board, Rhode Island officials, and other appropriate authorities.

The organization has formally asked the U.S. Department of the Interior to coordinate an interagency investigation, including reopening the Coast Guard inquiry that concluded with the vessel and two crew members classified as 'lost', and to provide public transparency for all subsea maintenance and monitoring at the site since 2019.

Expert review of the case identified discrepancies between the official record and subsequent media reports, including conflicting information concerning the possible location of wreckage, previously reported to be several miles east of the Block Island Wind Farm. Green Oceans maintains that these discrepancies provide additional grounds for an independent federal review.

Maritime-Safety Concerns

The recent discovery underscores the need to examine how permanent offshore infrastructure may affect visibility, radar navigation, maneuverability, emergency access, and search-and-rescue operations. These are life-critical considerations for all mariners from recreational sailors to commercial captains, as offshore development continues throughout the region and requires full transparency. This new discovery raises the question whether rescuers can aid a vessel in distress near offshore wind turbines in challenging, although routinely encountered conditions off the Northeast coast.

“We hope this discovery provides answers and some measure of closure for the fishermen’s families,” said Michael Lombardi, President of Green Oceans. “We have provided the new evidence to federal authorities and requested that the wreck site be secured immediately for an appropriate forensic analysis.”

Green Oceans maintains that this unresolved incident warrants renewed scrutiny and has formally requested the U.S. Department of the Interior leadership to cooperate with other parties maintaining jurisdiction over this area of continental shelf and suspend operations and maintenance activities near the Block Island Wind Farm until authorities evaluate the new evidence and bring a reopened investigation to a meaningful conclusion. The review should address implications for Coast Guard search-and-rescue procedures, marine safety, and the navigation-safety findings underlying all federal offshore-wind approvals.

About Green Oceans

Green Oceans is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) not for profit organization dedicated to protecting the ocean and the life it sustains. The organization works to preserve marine ecosystems and fisheries and to ensure that decisions affecting the ocean are informed by science, transparency, and responsible stewardship. Green Oceans also works to educate the public about the environmental, economic, navigational, and safety implications of activities that industrialize the marine environment.

Media Contact:

Green Oceans

media@green-oceans.org

www.green-oceans.org

Images

Mistress – F/V Mistress was a 52-foot wooden trawler operating out of Pt. Judith, Rhode Island. The vessel tragically sunk on January 1, 2019 in proximity to the Block Island Wind Farm, claiming the lives of two fishermen. It had been declared ‘lost’ by the USCG after survey efforts failed to locate the wreckage.

BIWF – The Block Island Wind Farm is located to the south and east of Block Island, RI, and consists of 5 offshore wind turbines. The project was originally called Deepwater Wind, though was acquired by Orsted in 2018 and renamed.

Jackup – Jackup barges are used at this site on a routine basis to provide a stable platform for service and maintenance. These barges extend long ‘spuds’ to the seafloor that act as legs to raise the barge out of the water. Spud placement requires verification that the seafloor below is free from obstructions.

Sonar – A July 27, 2026 sidescan sonar image captured a detailed image of wreckage within 50 linear feet of the base of one of the Block Island Wind turbines (the square). The long black shadows are from the jackup barge on location during the survey. The sonar image is a relative top-down view, which uses soundwave reflections to create imagery through the water.

Prop – Multiple vessel features were photographed on August 30, 2026 by a team of scientific divers. Vessel features were aligned with images of the FV Mistress contained within the USCG investigation to verify its identity.

NetDrum – The net drum was among the key vessel identifiers, as it includes several unique features. It was found upside down relative to the wreckage orientation, supporting the USCG report that the vessel rolled upon sinking based on the account of one survivor.