

# Recovering The Capsized Golden Ray

*Shelton Services Inc.*

On Sept. 8, 2019, the oceangoing ship MV Golden Ray capsized in St. Simons Sound soon after its departure from the Port of Brunswick, Georgia. When the accident occurred, the 656-foot roll-on/roll-off vehicle carrier vessel was carrying nearly 4,200 new vehicles and over 380,000 gallons of a combination of oils, the majority of which was heavy fuel oil. The vessel activated its U.S. Coast Guard-approved Nontank Vessel Response Plan, including its Qualified Individual and Spill Management Team provider Gallagher Marine Systems (GMS) in the process. GMS made the required notifications to regulatory authorities and activated Golden Ray's salvage and marine firefighting provider and plan-listed Oil Spill Removal Organization (OSRO). Shelton Services Inc. was engaged to respond to and support this complex incident and assist with pollution control and recovery measures in an environmentally dynamic area. Shelton Services mobilized its highly trained professionals and extensive response equipment to help protect the pristine environment of St. Simon's Sound. Shelton Services also helped build and lead operations at the equipment decontamination facility to decontaminate assets used in the response.

Deemed a total loss soon after capsizing, the decision was made to remove the vessel from the waterway in sections. Salvage operations began in November 2020, and the removal of the Golden Ray was completed in October 2021. Due to the ship's location, the work zone involved strong currents and, on many occasions, an 8-foot tidal change twice daily. Nonetheless, as of Nov. 4, 2021, Shelton Services personnel on the project worked 203,171 man-hours without any lost-time accidents or recordable incidents.

In addition to the typical hazards associated with oil spill responses, the COVID-19 pandemic hit approximately six months into the project. This



created a whole new set of health and safety challenges for everyone associated with the project. The Unified Command, which is made up of the U.S. Coast Guard, Gallagher Marine Systems and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, developed and implemented a COVID-19 policy for the safety of response personnel and continuity of the response, which Shelton Services took very seriously. By following the guidance of the Unified Command regarding protections against COVID-19, Shelton Services successfully maintained the safety of its personnel and prevented any team members on the project from contracting COVID-19.

At the equipment decontamination site, Shelton Services personnel decontaminated 166,200 feet of 18-inch containment boom, 8,200 feet of inflatable ocean boom and approximately 200 response boats. In addition to cleaning the containment boom, Shelton Services' personnel repaired 67,200 feet of the 18-inch boom throughout the project. These repairs provided significant cost savings for the client, which did not have to replace the damaged boom. Repairs were made quickly, and the boom was returned to service.

Shelton Services' response personnel also assisted with debris recovery on local beaches. As

of Oct. 26, 2021, a total of 8,000 pounds of ship-related debris and 9,500 pounds of non-ship-related garbage were removed from local beaches.

This was the largest removal of a capsized ship in U.S. history. Shelton Services was proud to be an integral part of the project for its entirety.

**For more information, visit [sheltonservices.com](http://sheltonservices.com) or call (866) J2S-6780 [527-6780].**