

ERIC KRIEGER/The Record

Chip to shore

At left, the United States Coast Guard tug Penobscot Bay breaks through the ice on the Hudson River in Kingston yesterday. Above, Seaman Paul Rinta shovels ice from the deck of the 140-foot tug. A barge loaded with 1.1 million gallons of jet fuel destined for upstate airports was stuck in the river just south of the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge. Thanks to the Penobscot Bay, the fuel reached its destination last night. Story, page 3.



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Ray Reiter watches from the deck of the Coast Guard icebreaking tug Penobscot Bay as a barge loaded with

jet fuel passes through a channel opened in the Hudson River by the ice-breaking tug.

Coast Guard opens ice-locked river

By JOHN MILGRIM
Staff Writer

KINGSTON POINT — The Coast Guard used 2,500 horses and a bubbling brew to crumble the icy lock on Hudson River shipping yesterday.

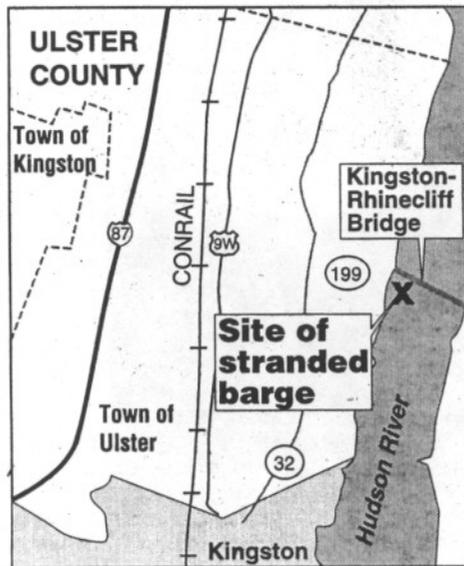
A barge loaded with 1.1 million gallons of jet fuel destined for upstate airports, spent most of yesterday morning stuck just south of the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge. Soon after, two empty cement barges were lined up behind her. The plea for help went out.

In response, the U.S. Coast Guard ice-breaking tug Penobscot Bay rumbled up the Hudson River clearing a track through the ice field — some spots a mere 8- to 12-inches thick, others, where the slabs had piled one on top of the other and frozen again, up to three feet thick.

It was the job the ship was built for.

Monday and yesterday the Penobscot Bay, a 140-foot inland ice-breaking tug, crashed through the ice on the river freeing more than a dozen ships and barges frozen in the ice.

The tug weighs 662 tons and has a maximum speed of about 15 knots. Two diesel



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engines power two electric generators which produce 2,500 horsepower to turn the 8-foot-diameter bronze propeller. There were 16 crewmen aboard.

The ship, with a sloping bow and rounded hull, can climb onto thick slabs of ice and break through with its weight. Normally, however, the ice breaker can push straight through ice up to about 24 inches. The maximum ice thickness the Penobscot Bay was rated for is 30 inches.

Separately, the hull has perforations under the waterline where high pressure air can shoot out in a "bubbling system" which keeps ice from forming on the hull.

"It's actually pretty wild how busy it is," said Lt. Chris Kmiecik, the ship's commanding officer. "This is real bad. Historically speaking it's extremely bad."

By 7 p.m. yesterday, the fuel arrived at its destination, King Fuel, in Rensselaer. Richard Slote, a vice president with the fuel company, said it was enough fuel to supply the airlines at the Albany County Airport for about a week.

"Keeping the river open you're always fighting little battles with mother nature," said Chief Boatswains Mate Ray Reiter, "these victories, it's a sense of accomplishment."

As the motto on the boat's stern says: "Mother Nature makes it, P-Bay breaks it."