



# PRESS RELEASE

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## Famed US Coast Guard Cutter *Acushnet* Assuming New Challenge as *Ocean Guardian*

*Anacortes, Washington, USA* – The former U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Acushnet*, having been retired from Coast Guard service in 2011, has now been re-acquired by a non-profit organization and is being re-fitted and re-purposed to meet new global challenges in environmental protection and law enforcement.

“This noble ship, the *Acushnet*, will now become the centerpiece of the mission behind *Ocean Guardian*,” stated Kenneth Welch, President and CEO of *Ocean Guardian*, an environmental protection and remediation organization originally conceived in 1997. “We’re excited



because it’s a happy ending for her, and an important new duty for a ship that earned three battle stars during World War II and participated in many heroic rescues at sea and other historic roles since she was launched in 1944,” he added. “Her new role will involve the protection of oceanic waters, detouring illegal activity such as illegal fishing, waste dumping and killing of protected endangered marine life, as well as unilaterally working on our vital oceanic cleanup and recovery programs.”

Decommissioned in 2011, the *Acushnet*, designated WMEC-167, was known at the time as the ‘Queen of the Fleet’ and was the oldest commissioned cutter in the Coast Guard’s fleet. Still in excellent condition after having undergone an extensive refit, she became available for sale and caught the attention of the Ocean Guardian team.

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Until her decommissioning, USCGC *Acushnet* was homeported in Ketchikan, Alaska. She was originally USS *Shackle* (ARS-9), a Diver-class rescue and salvage ship commissioned by the United States Navy for service in World War II. She was responsible for coming to the aid of stricken vessels and earned three battle stars during World War II, before serving a long career with the U.S. Coast Guard. *Acushnet* patrolled the waters of the North Pacific and was the sole remaining World War II era ship on active duty in the US fleet upon her retirement in 2011. She not only served as a vessel for Search and Rescue (SAR) operations, but also served as part of the International Ice Patrol. In February of 1952, *Acushnet* participated in one of the ten most significant Coast Guard rescues. Two tankers, *SS Pendleton* and *SS Fort Mercer*, split in two in a fierce storm off Cape Cod, and *Acushnet* took 18 men off the stern of the *Fort Mercer* in heavy seas.



Currently berthed in Washington state, *Acushnet* is being comprehensively renovated for her new role, assisted by many of *Acushnet*'s former crew members who have been volunteering, and helping out with inspections aboard the vessel, testing machinery, generators, and systems, and 'sprucing her up'.

The National Maritime Law Enforcement Academy and the International Maritime Law Enforcement Academy have joined forces with Ocean Guardian.org in the refitting and re-purposing of *Acushnet*. Charged with the operation of the vessel, the team will assist in preparing and manning the vessel for new missions that focus on the protection and preservation of the world's oceans, and specifically in recovery of plastics, protection of fisheries, and law enforcement training domestically and internationally.

The National Maritime Law Enforcement Academy (Academy or NMLEA) is a non-profit member driven organization, that provides assessment, evaluation, training, research, education and consulting services to the professionals that patrol, protect and preserve our nation's rivers, bays, harbors, lakes and coastlines.

*Acushnet*, as the centerpiece of Ocean Guardian, will be tasked with Environmental Protection and Remediation; Anti-Piracy; Marine Anti-Poaching; Fisheries Enforcement; Oceanic Clean Up; Maritime Law Enforcement Training; Humanitarian Missions; Scientific Research various agencies and much more, Welch says.

#### **About *Acushnet***

The USCGC *Acushnet* has an unrivaled legacy of service, one that spanned the oceans from Okinawa to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. The ship began service in the U.S. Navy as a 213-

foot Diver-class fleet rescue and salvage vessel, *USS Shackle*, on Feb. 5, 1944. Her first homeport was at Pearl Harbor, where she served as a salvage ship in the West Pacific throughout the remainder of World War II, clearing wreckage and repairing ships. In support of the Okinawa invasion, *Shackle* completed 55 salvage and rescue operations on naval craft damaged by kamikaze attacks. The ship's crew received three World War II battle stars, a World War II victory medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign medal, the American Campaign Service medal, and the Navy Occupation Service medal.

In August of 1946, the ship was commissioned into the Coast Guard as the cutter *Acushnet*, a search and rescue tug homeported in Portland, Maine. *Acushnet* also served as part of the International Ice Patrol, hunting icebergs in the north Atlantic shipping lanes. It was during her service in Portland, on Feb. 18, 1952, that *Acushnet* became involved in one of the Coast Guard's most celebrated rescues, in a violent blizzard off the coast of Cape Cod that split two tankers, the *Fort Mercer* and the *Pendleton*, into halves. The *Acushnet's* Captain, John M. Joseph, maneuvered the ship's fantail next to the *Fort Mercer's* stern in 60-foot waves to provide a place for 18 survivors to jump to safety. The role of *Acushnet* is detailed in the books *The Finest Hours: The True Story of the U.S. Coast Guard's Most Daring Sea Rescue*, by Michael Tougias and Casey Sherman, and *Two Tankers Down: The Greatest Small Boat Rescue in U.S. Coast Guard History* by Robert Frump.

#### **For More Information**

For more information about Ocean Guardian, and how to donate to the *Acushnet's* refit, visit <https://www.oceanguardian-og.org>; and for more information about The National Maritime Law Enforcement Academy, and to donate to its mission, visit <https://www.nmlea.org/>. Contact Ken Welch at Tel. 970-599-9485, Email [oceanguardian.org@gmail.com](mailto:oceanguardian.org@gmail.com).

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