

# Lumber on Windward shores may be from Japan tsunami

By Jim Borg  
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Three large pieces of lumber, perhaps tsunami debris from Japan, have washed up on Windward Oahu over the past several days.

But one of the pieces, a barnacle-bearing behemoth that could be an upright from a pier, was no longer in evidence at Kailua Beach on Wednesday, raising the possibility that it returned to sea and again poses a hazard to mariners.

"Those things are really dangerous for a lot of reasons," said Chris Woolaway, the international coastal cleanup coordinator for Hawaii under the organization Keep the Hawaiian Islands Beautiful.

Woolaway, who has been working closely with state and city officials on reports of marine debris, combed Kailua Beach unsuccessfully for the lumber Wednesday morning.

Gisela Speidel, an outreach specialist with the International Pacific Research Center, found two large pieces of lumber at Malae-kahana over the weekend, one on the beach, one in the shorebreak.

Nikolai Maximenko, an oceanographer with the center, said the center is receiving "multiple reports" on trees and lumber in Hawaiian and Alaskan waters.

"As you know, there were also large numbers of encounters with objects like trees or poles during the Transpac race in July 2013," he said by email Wednesday.

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**Chris Woolaway**  
*International coastal cleanup coordinator, Keep the Hawaiian Islands Beautiful*

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"This all is consistent with our model that suggests that low-windage tsunami debris has now reached the area east of Hawaii."

Low-windage refers to objects that sit low in the water and so are driven mostly by currents, not wind.

"Observations of such debris at sea are very difficult, but under typical wind conditions we expect more such debris to arrive on (the U.S.) West Coast this winter,"

Maximenko said. "Most of the original tsunami debris was wood that was expected to sink down quickly. Possibly, part of it is still floating."

Maximenko said that, even without kanji or other markings, the wood could possibly be traced to Japan through DNA analysis.

Key officials with the state Department of Land and Natural Resources and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration were notified of the finds Wednesday.

The International Pacific Research Center, part of the University of Hawaii's School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology, keeps track of debris re-

ports on its website, [iprc.soest.hawaii.edu/news/marine\\_and\\_tsunami\\_debris/sightings.php](http://iprc.soest.hawaii.edu/news/marine_and_tsunami_debris/sightings.php).

Among the recent debris recorded are a propane tank found Oct. 20 at Larsen's Beach, Kauai; a propane tank found Sept. 26 at Lanikai; the gabled roof of a small cabin found Sept. 24 at Kamilo Point, Hawaii island; a piece of a skiff and a white plastic box with kanji found Sept. 17 north of Donkey Beach, Kauai; a small refrigerator with Japanese markings found Sept. 7 north of Donkey Beach; a fuel tank found Aug. 28 at Kapaa, Kauai; a black oyster buoy found Aug. 26 at Waipouli, Kauai; Japanese fishing vessels found Aug. 14 and Aug. 17 at Kawela Bay and Turtle Bay, Oahu, respectively; several fiberglass and wood pieces of a small boat found Aug. 5 at Kii Point, Hawaii island; and a large light bulb with kanji found Aug. 2 at Kamilo Point, Hawaii island.

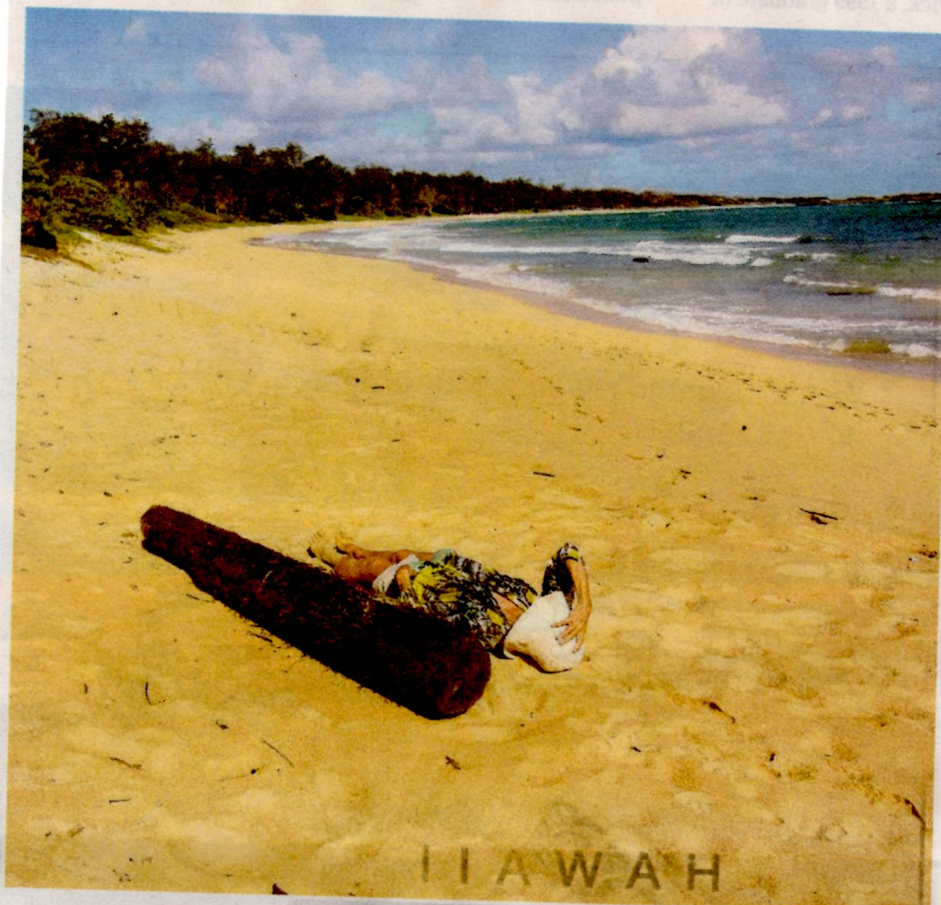
During the Transpacific Yacht Race from California to Hawaii, the sailboat Manatea on July 13 struck what may have been a 10-foot section of a telephone pole. Just a day earlier, the same boat passed large pieces of lumber that looked like parts of a house.

Two other boats sighted a 35-foot tree trunk and a 15-foot chunk of floating telephone pole.

If a boat hits that kind of debris end-on, it could easily sink from a punctured hull.

The Manatea went on to finish the race July 19, the first noncatamaran to do so.





COURTESY GISELA SPEIDEL

**This log, which is about 8 to 9 feet long and could be tsunami debris from Japan, was found at Malaekahana during the weekend.**