



Contact: Glenda Tyson, NOAA  
(301) 713-3066

NOAA 02-R448  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Dec. 12, 2002

**NOAA ANNOUNCES \$2.7 MILLION PATUXENT RIVER OIL SPILL RESTORATION**  
*Federal/State Agencies to Oversee Efforts Announce Plans*

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other federal and state agencies today announced plans for \$2.7 million in restoration efforts aimed at renewing natural resources damaged by an April 2000 oil pipeline spill into the Patuxent River in southern Maryland.

Eleven separate restoration efforts will address the natural resource damage caused by the ruptured pipeline that spilled approximately 140,000 gallons of oil at the Potomac Electric Power Company (Pepco) Chalk Point generating facility in Aquasco, Md. Under the federal Oil Pollution Act, NOAA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and Maryland Department of Environment are responsible for assessing and restoring natural resources injured by the spill. Companies responsible for the spilled oil will fund restoration efforts beginning in the Spring of 2003.

Congressman Steny Hoyer joined representatives of the agencies involved in the restoration at Greenwell State Park in St. Mary's County to announce the plans. The spill happened in Rep. Hoyer's district.

Agencies conducted a natural resource damage assessment to determine the nature and extent of injuries to resources and the restoration needed to reverse these losses. It is estimated that the spill oiled over 80 acres of wetlands and shoreline, killing more than 1,000 birds and animals, including waterfowl, diamondback turtles and muskrats. The spill also harmed fish and shellfish and hampered an estimated 125,000 river trips by fishermen and recreational boaters.

"Cooperation was key to efficiently redressing the harm caused by the Patuxent River oil spill, one of the worst environmental accidents to ever affect state waters," said James Mahoney, assistant secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA's deputy administrator.

"Federal and state agencies, in collaboration with Pepco and ST Services, have arrived at a resolution that will ensure future generations are able to enjoy the natural splendor of the Chesapeake Bay," Mahoney said.

“Through the restoration process, we will create and protect critical habitat, such as oyster reefs, wetlands and waterfowl nesting areas, benefiting the natural resources of the Patuxent River,” said John Wolflin, supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Chesapeake Bay Field Office. “These projects also move us toward the larger goal of restoring the Chesapeake Bay.”

The agencies, with funding from the responsible parties, will implement a number of restoration projects, including:

- Creating 5.7 acres of marsh and enhancing 1.7 acres of terrapin nesting habitat;
- Acquiring perpetual protective easements in the Prairie Pothole region to restore ruddy duck nesting habitat and increase the number of ducks returning to Maryland each year;
- Creating and seeding 5-acres of oyster sanctuary in the Patuxent River;
- Constructing two canoe/kayak paddle-in campsites, one in Prince George’s County and one in St. Mary’s County;
- Constructing a handicap accessible kayak/canoe launch site at Greenwell State Park in St. Mary’s County;
- Building a fishing pier at Cedar Haven in Prince George’s County; and
- Rebuilding a boardwalk and improving boat access in Calvert County.

"This is a great day for the Patuxent River," said Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary J. Charles Fox. "The Chalk Point oil spill devastated living resources in the area, as well as the public. This restoration effort provides long-term benefits to the river and the surrounding community as a whole. It will provide improved boat, canoe and kayak access, allowing the public to learn about and appreciate resources we are working to protect and restore. The department believes that as the public is able to learn and appreciate our valuable natural resources, the more they will work to protect and restore them."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) acts on behalf of the public to restore coastal and marine resources injured by oil spills and hazardous substance releases. NOAA's Damage Assessment and Restoration Program, a multi-office program involving NOAA's National Ocean Service, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Office of General Counsel, fulfills natural resource trustees responsibilities for NOAA.

Patuxent River oil spill assessment and restoration plans:  
<http://www.darp.noaa.gov/neregion/chalkpt.htm>.

Federal Oil Pollution Act: <http://www.darp.noaa.gov/legislat.htm>