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## Local News

# Officials Map Final Plan To Fix Oil Spill Damage

### *Wildlife Habitats to Be Restored Along Patuxent*

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Officials plan to unveil today a \$2.7 million final plan to restore natural habitat damaged by the massive oil spill more than two years ago at the former Pepco power plant in Aquasco.

Federal, state and Pepco officials are to outline the long-awaited strategy at a 10 a.m. news conference at Greenwell State Park. The plan will address the damage done along the Patuxent River and adjacent areas following the April 7, 2000, accident.

The final strategy was developed after officials heard from affected residents at a meeting last May, according to Jim Hoff, a representative of the National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration. Hoff said that implementation of the plan—which will be funded by both Pepco and pipeline operator ST Services—will start next spring.

In June, the National Transportation Safety Board recommended industry-wide reforms for owners and operators of pipelines in the aftermath of the oil spill at the Chalk Point power plant. Federal investigators concluded then that the spill occurred after a flaw in the pipe delivering fuel oil went undetected because consultants misread inspection data.

Pepco sold the Chalk Point plant in 2000 to Mirant Mid-Atlantic LLC. Mirant has reopened the 51.5-mile pipeline—with the permission of the U.S. Transportation Department's Office of Pipeline Safety—after



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**Federal investigators concluded that the Chalk Point spill occurred after a flaw in the pipe delivering fuel oil went undetected because consultants misread inspection data.**

completing restoration work that included testing the integrity of the pipe and installing equipment to monitor the oil flow through it.

The habitat restoration plan announced

today was developed under the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990, which requires the parties responsible for a spill "to return in-

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jured natural resources and services to pre-spill conditions" and "to compensate the public for the loss of natural resources and services from the time they are injured until they are restored."

The preliminary restoration report released earlier this year said that the spill caused light, moderate or heavy oiling of 76 acres of wetlands and 10 acres of shoreline. Other damage specified in the report included the deaths of 553 ruddy ducks, 376 muskrats, 143 assorted birds and 122 diamondback terrapins. Moreover, turtle hatchlings were reduced by 10 percent, and thousands of pounds of fish and shellfish were lost.

Among the restoration projects proposed in that preliminary plan is the creation of five to six acres of "intertidal marsh wetland" adjacent to Washington Creek, a tributary of the Patuxent River just south of Chalk Point. Officials also want to create nearly five acres of oyster reef sanctuary in the Patuxent to address injuries to fish, shellfish, birds and bottom-dwelling organisms. They also plan to restore nesting habitat for the ruddy ducks that migrate to the Chesapeake Bay.

To address the estimated 125,000 recreational trips on the river affected by the spill, officials proposed the creation of two campsites on the Patuxent River reachable only by canoe or kayak—one north of Golden Beach and another at Milltown Landing.

The preliminary plan also called for the establishment of a kayak and canoe launch at Greenwell State Park that would be accessible to the disabled. Other proposed projects include recreational improvements at Maxwell Hall Natural Resource Management Area, Forest Landing, the Kings Landing boardwalk and Cedar Haven Park.

The final plan will incorporate suggestions from the public, according to Hoff.

"In the final plan, we responded to each and every comment we received, making changes where we felt it was warranted," he said.