

Spill Response



Fisheries
& Habitat
Conservation

Our mission is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.



Omni-boom, with worker supervision, blasts oil coated rocks in an attempt to clean gross oil contamination from beach, LaTouche Island. Photo courtesy of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council.



Oiled bird in the hands of a rescue worker. Photo courtesy of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council.

THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICES ROLE IN SPILL RESPONSE

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) provides advice, including appropriate cleanup techniques, actions and end points to the Federal On-Scene Coordinator to protect threatened and endangered species, migratory birds, anadromous fish, certain marine mammals, and on-shore sea turtles. The Service also provides oversight of bird hazing, collection and treatment activities, and coordination of all Federal permitting activities for hazing, collecting, rescue and holding migratory birds, certain marine mammals and threatened and endangered species. As a major Federal landowner, the Service is also responsible for preparing for and responding to spills that may occur on the 95 million acre National Wildlife Refuge System.

THE SERVICE OPERATES AS PART OF A LARGE SPILL RESPONSE COMMUNITY

The Service provides response-related scientific and technical advice and assistance to Federal On-Scene Coordinators to help avoid or minimize injury to natural resources, including the public lands, protected species and their habitats. The Service has worked with other Federal agencies to develop a Memorandum of Agreement on how we will work cooperatively with Federal response agencies (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Coast Guard) on Endangered Species Act issues during emergency spill responses. The Service is also an active participant in the implementation of the Department of the Interior's Emergency Preparedness and Response Strategy.

With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, major changes are anticipated in how responses to emergencies will be carried out in this country, including responses to oil spills and releases of hazardous substances. All existing response plans, such as the National Contingency Plan, will now be integrated into a single, "National Response Plan." The Service can expect to invest considerable resources into the development and implementation of this plan. However, such an up-front investment is critical, particularly when it helps to establish the roles and responsibilities of all agencies involved in responses to spills and releases.

EFFECTIVE SPILL RESPONSE REQUIRES PLANNING, TRAINING, AND COORDINATION

Under the National Contingency Plan, in the event of a spill Federal On-Scene Coordinators are responsible for notifying the Department of the Interior through the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance's Regional Environmental Officers, who, in turn, contact the appropriate Service office and coordinate response activities. Presumably this will not change under the National Response Plan. The Service then responds through Regional Spill Coordinators and Field Response Coordinators. Typically, a response can be handled within the territory of a single field office, but during larger spills or when significant natural resources are at risk, multiple field offices could be called on to participate in the spill. To accomplish this task, field staff need the training and resources required to coordinate their activities, to respond effectively to the emergency at hand, and to work safely.

A CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO CONSERVATION

The Service remains committed to its role as a partner in conserving America's natural resources. Effectively responding to oil spills and hazardous substance releases is a key element of this commitment, and effective response involves building solid relationships with our partners and ensuring that our people are trained and ready to act when a spill or release occurs.

For more information about Spill Response, contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries and Habitat Conservation at 202/208-6394 or visit us on the Internet at <http://fisheries.fws.gov/>.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
800/344-WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>**

February 2005

