



M/T *Athos I* Delaware River Oil Spill

On November 26, 2004, the *Athos I*, a 750-foot tanker, hit submerged objects in the Delaware River near Philadelphia, spilling about 265,000 gallons of crude oil into the River and nearby tributaries. In the year since the spill, NOAA has responded to this incident by –

- Providing support to the U.S. Coast Guard
- Leading the state and federal resource agencies efforts to assess natural resource injuries resulting from the spill and plan appropriate restoration activities
- Conducting navigation surveys, which helped identify the object causing the collision
- Providing weather and oceanographic data
- Providing scientific support for reopening the Salem Nuclear Power Plant

Providing cleanup support

NOAA has scientists based in each U.S. Coast Guard district to provide scientific support for spills. At the *Athos I*, NOAA provided hazard and shoreline assessments, information on oil behavior and movement, cleanup recommendations, risk communication, and public outreach. NOAA's data input and expert advice was used to help prioritize response efforts, to maximize recovery efforts, and minimize environmental damage. Submerged oil caused the closure of the Salem Nuclear Power Plant, the second largest in the U.S. NOAA conducted field surveys and provided modeling tools for reopening the facility.



Oiled shoreline and cleanup of Tinicum Island 11/29/2004.

Assessing injured resources

NOAA is a federal natural resource trustee, acting on the public's behalf to protect and restore coastal and marine resources injured by oil and hazardous substance releases. NOAA biologists, toxicologists, and economists are working cooperatively with co-trustees (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the states of Delaware and New Jersey, and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania) and the responsible party, Tsakos Shipping, to collect data and conduct studies to determine the full impact to natural resources and services and determine the appropriate type and amount of restoration. To date, NOAA and co-trustees have identified the following categories of injuries:

- Shorelines (including marshes, beaches, and intertidal mudflats). A large area was impacted by the spill - of the 550 miles of shoreline that were surveyed, roughly 80 miles were oiled to varying degrees.
- Aquatic resources (including subtidal habitat). Bottom-dwelling fish, including shellfish, juvenile fish and larvae, and the federally-endangered short-nose sturgeon are at risk of being exposed to submerged oil. The trustees have collected water sediment and tissue samples throughout the river to determine the nature and degree of impacts.
- Birds/wildlife. Through ground surveys and other rescue efforts, 206 oiled birds were collected dead, died at the rehabilitation center, or were unable to be released to the wild, and 337 oil birds were rehabilitated and released alive. Other dead wildlife such as mammals, reptiles, and fish were also recovered. Because most oiled, dead wildlife are unaccounted for at spills the trustees have conducted avian population assessments and are working to determine exposure rates to assess the full impact of the spill.



Athos I oil spill clean up, 2004. NOAA overflight 12/2/2004.

- Recreational uses. Fishing, shellfishing, boating, and hunting were also impacted. The trustees are conducting surveys of boaters, fisherman, and hunters to assess the extent of recreational losses.

Restoring natural resources

Once the full range of injuries is identified and quantified, NOAA will work with its co-trustees to develop a plan describing the injured resources and services and determine appropriate restoration alternatives to compensate for these losses. Citizens, non-governmental agencies, and others will help NOAA, co-trustees, and the responsible party, identify, select, and implement on-the-ground restoration.



Athos I listing after the collision.

NOAA's Office of Response & Restoration—Protecting our Coastal Environment

**For further information about NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration,
please visit our Web site at**

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