



Selendang Ayu Oil Spill at Unalaska Island, Alaska

Alaska Region



The Selendang Ayu off the coast of Unalaska, AK. Polaris

On December 8, 2004, the freighter *Selendang Ayu* went aground and broke apart approximately half a mile from the shore of Unalaska Island, Alaska, between Skan Bay and Spray Cape. The vessel was carrying 132 million pounds of soybeans and approximately 424,000 gallons of Intermediate Fuel Oil (IFO) and 18,000 gallons of marine diesel.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has worked closely with the Unified Command to provide critical “resources at risk” information, assist in developing protection and cleanup priorities, direct wildlife response activities, search for injured wildlife and provide land management input for affected areas administered by the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge.

Response

The initial response effort included booming of salmon streams, wildlife rescue and stabilization, shoreline assessment, shoreline cleanup, carcass recovery, and fuel lightering. By mid-

February, 29 live oiled birds had been captured, nearly 38,000 bags of oily solid waste and 1,606 bird carcasses had been collected, and 144, 931 gallons of oil, diesel and oil/water mixture had been lightered from the vessel. The Unified



Service personnel searched for oiled wildlife that could be rescued and rehabilitated. USFWS

Command estimated that 321,052 gallons of IFO and an unknown amount of diesel had been released into the environment. With all the recoverable fuels removed from the wreck and the increased frequency of winter storms, the initial response was scaled back.

When the Spring Operations Plan goes into effect in early April, Service personnel will participate on Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Teams (SCAT) that assess the post-winter oiling shoreline conditions. Wildlife search and recovery teams may be activated based on SCAT team observations. Service

representatives will also coordinate any wildlife needs with SCAT activities and cleanup operations.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

The goal of NRDA is to compensate for injured resources and interim lost use resulting from an oil release. This is accomplished by assessing the extent of injury to natural resources and working to restore those resources and compensate for their interim loss.

There are three distinct phases of the NRDA process: preassessment, restoration planning, and restoration implementation. The Service along with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and four State agencies (Alaska Departments of Fish and Game, Environmental Conservation, Natural Resources, and Law) are the Natural Resource Trustee agencies responsible for coordinating and conducting preassessment activities for this spill.



One of 29 oiled birds captured for rehabilitation during the spill. USFWS



Oiled rocks on a beach in Makushin Bay. USFWS



Oiled harlequins and other sea ducks have been documented in the spill zone. USFWS

Preassessment Activities

The trustees are currently collecting and analyzing information to assess the type and level of injuries caused by the oil to natural resources and the loss of services provided by these resources. Preassessment activities include:

Beach Surveys: The Service conducted beach surveys to collect information for identifying potential impacts to wildlife and habitat and potential impacts to Service-administered lands. Carcass collection was an important aspect of these beach surveys, and over 1600 bird and five sea otter carcasses were recovered. Carcasses were heavily scavenged, and the majority require laboratory identification. Information collected during beach surveys will help the Service estimate the species and number of birds injured by the spill.



Service personnel recovered over 1600 bird carcasses. Carcasses were marked with red flagging tape on SCAT surveys (above). USFWS

Aerial Surveys: The Service and NOAA conducted aerial surveys in January to estimate the abundance of marine birds and mammals in the vicinity of the affected area. Information collected during the surveys also identified areas and habitats important to wintering birds and marine mammals.



Steller sea lions were seen in the spill area during aerial surveys. NOAA

Habitat Exposure and Impact to Biota:

NOAA is currently documenting the geographic extent of habitat specific exposure to *Selendang Ayu* oil and collecting information on the potential impacts to the biota that depend on those habitats. This includes shoreline surveys to collect oil, sediment, bivalves, and other potential accumulators of oil for analytical chemistry; benthic surveys of oil in eelgrass beds and other subtidal and demersal habitats; and the assessment of anadromous fish streams.

Information will help determine whether biota are contaminated at levels considered harmful to humans or wildlife.



Oiled stream in Makushin Bay, Unalaska, AK. USFWS

Restoration Planning and Implementation

When sufficient information has been collected, the trustees will begin the restoration planning phase of the NRDA process. Restoration planning begins with a publicly available Notice of Intent to Conduct Restoration Planning, which documents preassessment activities and provides the basis of the decision to proceed. Public involvement is an integral part of the restoration planning process. The trustee agencies will solicit involvement through public meetings and comment periods to ensure that public concerns are addressed during the restoration process.



Oiled carcasses and scavenged birds collected on January 27 & 28, 2005 from beach segments along Makushin Bay, AK. USFWS