

NWX DOI FISH & WILDLIFE

**Moderator: Chris Tollefson
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Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode until the question and answer period. If you would like to ask a question at that time, please press star then 1 on your touchtone telephones.

Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. Now I'd like to turn the call over to your host, Mr. Chris Tollefson, Chief of Communications for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife. Sir you may begin.

Chris Tollefson: Thank you. Thanks for joining us today. As the operator said my name is Chris Tollefson. I'm Chief of Communications for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

With us today we have Paul Schmidt who is the Assistant Director for Migratory Birds for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Dr. Michael Ziccardi, Director of the UC Davis Oiled Wildlife Care Network, Dr. Heidi Stout who is the Executive Director of Tri-State Bird Research and Rescue, Curt Clumpner who is a rehabilitation and capture specialist with International Bird

Rescue Research Center and Samantha Gibbs who is the Avian Disease Coordinator for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

I'm going to ask Paul Schmidt and Heidi Stout to give some brief introductory remarks then we'll open it up to questions. I would ask you to identify yourself and your organization, and also if you have a question that you would like directed to a particular person please, you know, identify that person for us to make it easier.

We'll return you to mute at that point. We do want to try to get as many questions in as we can in the time we have allotted. With that I will turn it over to Paul Schmidt.

Paul Schmidt: Thanks Chris and good afternoon to everyone and thank you for joining today's call. I'm here today as Chris indicated with some of the nation's foremost experts in the rehabilitation of oiled birds.

And he identified all those folks who will be on the call to answer any technical questions or follow up questions that you might have. Like hundreds of other Service employees, I've devoted a good bit of my career into the conservation of migratory birds in this country and frankly in the hemisphere.

And for more than a century the Fish & Wildlife Service has worked to protect and restore migratory bird populations. Millions of acres have been set aside and managed for birds along the Central and Mississippi flyways, carrying them along their annual migrations to and from the Gulf Coast and beyond.

This conservation legacy is jeopardized by the oil spill. The Service's primary objective in the Gulf of Mexico oil spill response is to minimize the impact of oil on fish, wildlife and their habitats.

The Service works towards that objective in coordination with others by conducting aerial and ground surveillance of wildlife in impacted areas, ecosystem and wildlife population damage assessments and habitat restoration.

The Service also authorizes people to handle birds, monitor rehabilitation efforts and assist in the recovery of individual oiled animals. The role of the Service in oiled wildlife clinical care is mainly support, since rehabilitation is conducted by organizations with the mandate and expertise in that field.

The Gulf Coast is critical to the health of the nation's wildlife, providing food and shelter to millions of birds representing hundreds of species. Some species use the area for breeding, some for wintering and some as an important stopover in their long migration.

We estimate that literally hundreds of millions of birds use this area some time during their lifecycle. Most of the birds that winter and stop through the coastal wetlands of the Gulf are on their breeding grounds right now in Northern U.S. and Canada.

But in a few weeks millions of birds will begin their journey South heading right for the biggest oil spill in this nation's history. As of yesterday we have recovered 881 oiled birds alive.

Speaking on behalf of the Fish & Wildlife Service and the Unified Command we are committed to working with the bird rehabilitation community to returning as many of them to the wild as possible.

Through the efforts of hundreds of dedicated wildlife rehabilitators we've been able to release about 400 of these birds at safe locations around the Gulf.

The fall migration will likely bring us many more birds to treat and we're working with the bird rehabilitation community to accomplish and address that increase.

We know there is not an abundance of data about the long-term prospects of rehabilitated birds and are working to implement the study that will track a sampling of the released birds to enable us to have a better idea of how they are faring after their release and to help us improve future rehabilitation efforts.

It's important to note that this rehabilitation program is only a part of our efforts to protect the continent's wildlife populations from this spill. Much of the Service's expertise and focus is on conservation of wildlife species on a population scale.

We're working with our partners to protect vital migratory bird habitat across the Gulf, to identify and improve alternate habitat and food sources and other management actions for the long-term sustainability of wildlife populations.

Working with conservation partners, the Service is preparing to implement a range of on-the-ground habitat conservation and management measures near the oil impacted area in the Gulf.

These measures are designed to minimize the entrance of oil into the managed habitats along the Gulf and enhance the availability of migratory bird food resources outside the oil-impacted area.

Supplemental crop planting, flooding of fields, prescribed burning and removal of invasive plants are all among the management actions that we - are being considered.

While large scale efforts to influence bird migration and distribution would be extremely difficult given the importance of weather on the timing and speed of bird migrations, actions that prompt redistribution of birds at smaller scales could help reduce oil exposure.

From a national harvest management perspective the Service intends to respond to the ongoing oil spill as it would any other non-hunting factor, mortality factor, that with the potential substantial effects on mortality or reproduction; such things as hurricanes, disease outbreaks or drought.

We do this by monitoring abundance and vital rates of waterfowl and the other migratory game birds, and adjusting any harvest regulations as needed based on harvest strategies.

The effects of this spill will probably linger for years but hopefully working together across this landscape we can ensure the future of this continent's wildlife populations.

With those opening remarks I want to thank you again for joining us and I'll turn it back over to Chris Tollefson who will introduce the next speaker.

Chris Tollefson: Thanks Paul. I'll now introduce Heidi Stout who is the Executive Director of Tri-State Bird Research and Rescue. Heidi?

Heidi Stout: Good afternoon and thank you to everyone for joining us. As far as the role that we're playing in this overall response, my perspective is overseeing the rehabilitation efforts across a multi-state region which is an integral part of the overall response efforts here on the Gulf Coast.

We are working very closely with our partner and colleague, International Bird Rescue Research Center, to manage multiple facilities across the Gulf area.

I also just want to note, although the focus is still – or this call is birds, Dr. Michael Ziccardi who is on the line today is overseeing the sea turtle and marine mammal efforts.

The organizations involved in providing much of the framework for the rehabilitation efforts working in concert with our agency partners have more than 30 years of expertise along the lines of rehabilitating oiled wildlife.

We have experience participating in spill responses here along the Gulf Coast and around the globe. As I mentioned we have centers up and running in four of the Gulf Coast states, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida and in strategic areas.

These centers are supported by stabilization sites which allow for very quick, immediate care for animals coming in out of the fields and then they're transferred to primary care centers within their state.

We have been working very closely with in-state resources through the wildlife rehabilitation communities, the state animal response teams and the veterinary communities, as well as other invaluable experts within the state and federal agencies.

I believe that the previous speaker has outlined the numbers of birds that have come in over the past several weeks. It is important to note that the rehabilitation effort was mounted back in April very shortly after this spill was initiated.

And these facilities have been online, forward thinking, forward planning since early May and receiving birds as the oil impacts the different habitat areas along the Gulf Coast.

The only other parts that I was going to add at this point is we are encouraging the public if they notice oiled wildlife to call the hotline number and for those that don't have it, it would be 866-557-1401. Thank you again for joining this conference call.

Chris Tollefson: All right, thanks Heidi. At this point I think we'll open it up to questions. Again please identify yourself and your organization and if you do want to direct it to a particular person please let us know. Thanks.

Coordinator: Thank you sir. If you would like to ask a question, please press star then 1 on your touchtone phones. To withdraw your request you may press star 2. Once again if you would like to ask a question, please press star then 1 now.

Our first question comes from Don Zaidle, Texas Fish and Game Magazine. Your line is open.

Don Zaidle: Yes, this is an open question to all who care to address it. It is a two-part question. Part 1, experience with past spills is that less than 1% of oiled birds survive after cleaning.

Therefore isn't cleaning oiled birds a waste of money and resources? Part 2, even if all survived, considering the number of cleaned birds relative to the overall population of a species, isn't it still a waste of resources and funds to rescue individual birds?

Michael Ziccardi: I'd be happy to address this. This is Michael Ziccardi. I'm Director of UC Davis' Oiled Wildlife Care Network. Answering your first question, it is actually incorrect that less than 1% of oiled animals actually survive.

This is a figure that was quoted from a personal anecdotal report reported in Der Spiegel during this spill response, not based on scientific knowledge or fact.

What we found actually in our experience in spills through International Bird Rescue Research Center, Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research and the Oiled Wildlife Care Network is we have far greater numbers of animals that actually survive to release.

For spills managed here in California we average between 50% and 75% of animals who are oiled and alive collected early, actually released. So a larger question is long-term survival of those animals.

There is data out there which indicate that there is a decreased survival in certain species long-term. However a lot of the records out there are based on data from 10, 15 years ago.

What we actually have found more recently in some of the more advanced studies using radio telemetry devices is that we're finding much better survival, long-term survival and in certain instances survival that is statistically indistinct from those animals that are unoiled, looking at appropriate controlled animals.

As to your second question related to a waste of resources for caring for these animals, personally and I'll speak for myself, I don't see it as a waste of resources in that those funds come directly from the responsible party as a portion of the costs related to cleanup operations.

It's legally mandated through the National Contingency Plan that a plan for caring for oiled animals needs to be in place and those funds would not be utilizable in other ways.

There's a separate process called Natural Resource Damage Assessment which actually provides funds after the spill to restore resources back to pre-spill conditions.

If we saved resources on animal care it doesn't necessarily equate to increased resources being available or population level impacts later on. And I'll stop at that point.

Chris Tollefson: Would anyone else care to add to that excellent response?

Curt Clumpner: I'll – this is Curt Clumpner. I'll add just a bit. I think that for one thing that I'd like to add is that a waste of time and resources is a pretty personal or individual judgment in many ways, and that there are many things that, you know, that many people don't agree are good use of time and resources that many of us do, including the government and other organizations.

So I think that that's a very difficult argument to make one way or the other. The other thing I'd like to just point out is that if there isn't an organized effort to collect the animals and to rehabilitate them, our experience is that there's a individual and disorganized effort by many, many people in various areas.

And that that can lead to a number of different problems in terms of health and safety for people and certainly a much lower chance of animals being able to be successfully released.

So I don't think that it's as cut and dried of a issue as simply whether it's a waste of time and resources.

Chris Tollefson: Okay, if no one else wants to elaborate I guess we could turn it over to our next questioner.

Coordinator: Okay thank you. Our next question is from Robert Chaney with Brazilian Newspaper. Your line is open.

Robert Chaney: Hello? I am curious up here in Montana what sort of game and non-game species you're expecting to be coming down into your area from the Western edge of the Central flyway, and what particular responses are you hoping to put in place to mitigate their arrival?

Paul Schmidt: This is Paul Schmidt from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. I'm quite certain that I'm not going to be able to come up with a complete list of species, but some examples that are likely to be coming through that area, I'd probably focus on a couple of species of waterfowl and some shore birds that use Montana and that general region let's say for – as a breeding area.

And so in that regard I'd identify Teal - Blue-winged Teal in particular will be one of the earlier waterfowl migrants that come through and generally pass through the Gulf on their way further south.

And then there are other waterfowl species that will probably spend much of their – a good bit of the winter in that particular region, including mallards and some more commonly known waterfowl.

Shore birds – there'll be an assortment of shore birds that will pass through - probably they'll be mostly passing through the Montana area but also will use the Gulf as the staging area for further migrations.

There probably are some grassland birds out there as well that breed in the Montana region and will pass through. I mean, there's dozens of species and in fact - and collectively probably a couple hundred species that will be using the Gulf for either migration or for wintering areas.

In terms of what we're doing I think I alluded to some of the things that we are hoping to – well we are doing with partners out there including the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited and others, we're working to do some actions that we think we can do on the short-term on and off, National Wildlife Refuge lands that would improve the habitat and resting/feeding areas that these birds use to hopefully provide them some I'll say clean environments and – for – and distracting them or taking them away from the contaminated sites associated with the oil spill.

Now as I also alluded to in my opening remarks we don't think we can change major migration patterns or anything of the sort, but if we can at least on a

localized basis down there provide some improvements to some of the areas, the unoiled areas, we think we can at least have some impact on local populations as they either stay there or pass through.

Chris Tollefson: Okay, I think we'll turn it over to our next questioner.

Coordinator: Okay, our next question is from Curtis Morgan, Miami Herald. Your line is open.

Curtis Morgan: Yes hi, I'm going to expand on the last question a little bit for a few more details. It sounds like you're focusing a little – mostly on unoiled areas. Would there be any efforts to keep birds out of areas that were visibly oiled, you know, with fireworks or anything like that?

And in addition I'm not so clear on when this migratory movement begins. You're talking about a couple of weeks. I thought it was later on. Can you give me some idea of the timeline and you're talking about millions?

Are we talking about the bird population tripling, quadrupling, some way to put this in how many more birds will be in that area over the coming months? I know that's a multiple number of questions. Thanks.

Paul Schmidt: Yes Curtis, you're getting your money's worth with that question. Let me see if I can try to dissect it a bit. And this is Paul Schmidt, again U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and others can join – chime in after that if you would like.

So in terms of let's say providing clean areas if you will, we are doing that as much as we can. And usually in these sorts of events like an oil spill and I underscore usually any kinds of habitat improvement efforts are joined if you will with trying to haze the birds out of the oiled areas.

Now I don't know what the specific plans are right at this moment in terms of trying to do that, but this oil spill event is so much different than others because of the expense – the extensiveness of this – of the pattern of oiling that it's – the feasibility if you will of using those hazing whether it's firecrackers or, you know, Zon Guns, mylar tape, a whole bunch of things that have proved to be moderately successful in the past for keeping birds out of a contaminated area will probably not be as effective in this example in this environment.

They also tend to be fairly temporary in their effectiveness although can be employed as I said and have been in other such events. I do think that the - just the general human activity in and amongst the hundreds of – well I should say thousands I suppose of people moving in and out of the area – in the oiled areas, cleanup crews, all of that human activity will certainly serve as a bit of a distraction or detractor for birds to keeping them out of that area.

So that's the first – that's at least a couple parts of your question. I think I missed now that I rambled on, what's the – was there another part of it that you asked?

Chris Tollefson: I think Paul that he was also interested in knowing, you know, when this migration is going to start and sort of when – what kind of birds we're going to see when.

Paul Schmidt: Thanks. I'm sorry. My memory didn't catch up on that one. So yes, that – it is actually going to happen and start happening in just a couple of weeks, a few weeks.

Usually starting in July we'll have some of the very early and long-distance migrants, usually the shore birds, plovers, sandpipers, dunlins will be coming through that area.

And there's – there then will be a series or yes, a series of waves I'll say of migrations that will represent, you know, in many of these species significant portions of their populations coming through that area, but as I said shore birds typically in July and into August.

August will start a wave of waterfowl, some waterfowl, particularly the early migrants like Blue-winged Teal. And then those will continue to build. Those waterfowl populations will then continue to build and actually reside there over the winter from September to probably February or so before they then return to their breeding grounds.

And they do represent and in some cases very significant portions of populations, redhead ducks for instance. Most of the continent's populations of redhead ducks will use the Gulf area for their wintering or non-breeding periods.

And some as I said will simply be passing through, but still a significant portion of that overall continental population.

Chris Tollefson: Okay, thanks Paul. I guess we'll take our next question.

Coordinator: Our next question is from Alyson Zepeda with Thomson Reuters. Your line is open.

Alyson Zepeda: Hi, this is Alyson Zepeda. I'm with Thomson Reuters. My question has to do with Hurricane Alex and speculation that it might make the situation for our coastal birds worse.

So I was wondering has it and based on the early observations from Alex what is the fear with regard to additional storms?

Heidi Stout: This is Heidi Stout. I can touch on that a bit. I think others may want to add. Certainly in terms of the storm itself as we were planning and preparing on the rehabilitation side, it was making sure that we were responsive to potential changes in where the oil trajectories may be going due to the weather pattern and the winds.

As it was we currently have not seen a large uptick in oiled birds coming into the center, but at this point the weather is such that field retrieval teams can really get out there in boats at this point and things may change over the next couple of days.

Chris Tollefson: Does anyone else want to speak to that?

Michael Ziccardi: This is Mike Ziccardi from UC Davis also. In addition to overall animal impacts I think it's important to note that all of the animal rehabilitation efforts under direction through the Unified Command have a – an extensive and elaborate hurricane plan in place so that not only increased risk of animals in the field, but we also have plans in place to try to keep those animals that are actually in care as safe as possible.

And so that planning is continuing and it's an ongoing process to make sure we have the best protection possible for those animals that have been impacted during this event.

Chris Tollefson: Okay, if there's no one else who wants to respond I guess we can take our next question.

Coordinator: Thank you sir. Our next question is from Bill Koran with the Saint Joe Star. Your line is open.

Bill Koran: Hello, this is Bill Koran, Port Saint Joe, Florida - just a little bit of background information. We have a bay here, Saint Joseph Bay, that is one of the cleanest, most natural bays left in America and it is a major stopover for migratory birds, turtles and dolphins here at the point.

I don't know if you all are familiar with our area. We're kind of like the redheaded stepchild. No one knows we're down here because we don't have big condos.

But have you all thought – the question is have you all thought about taking our bay and using it as a defensible position where you could keep a clean bay for these animals to stop in?

And then Part 2 of that is a little personal note. I have an island I own in that bay that would be an excellent site for rehabilitation of birds and longer-term storage and turtles and dolphins also could be used there.

My question is, is – well this is now the third question, and there is – have you all made any plans to move East of these positions? You keep talking about West.

Paul Schmidt: This is Paul Schmidt. I think perhaps that's best handled by those folks who are making decisions about where the birds and in this case turtles also are going.

I don't know if any of you all have a good response to that and I'm not familiar with your particular bay as you indicated, but it certainly sounds like an important area for us to protect.

Michael Ziccardi: I can start that. This is Mike Ziccardi from UC Davis. We're very aware of Point - Saint Joe Bay. We've been doing dolphin observations there throughout this spill response and actually have some dolphin experts in that area in particular because of the sensitivities of that region.

So that is an area that we're very aware of. We also have researchers who have worked with the dolphin populations there involved in our command structure for the marine mammal and sea turtle group.

So we are watching those populations very closely. So I share your concern about the risks in particular to the dolphins in that area and I just want to assure you that we're definitely watching them very closely.

Curt Clumpner: This is Curt Clumpner. I'm also familiar with the area having – I was personally down there a couple of weeks ago when – as a field team person for the oiled bird collection and just looking at the area and looking at the species that were down there.

And I would certainly agree that from my point of view in terms of an unspoiled part of Florida with the few condos that that area down there was very appealing.

Mexico Beach I think was the name of one of the places and we continue to have teams down there monitoring the birds on a pretty frequent basis. In terms of the other questions about actual rehabilitation I think Heidi would be in a much better position to answer that.

But certainly again from my point of view it does look like an area where particularly when the migration happens that we might see pretty significant numbers of animals. And it would be very nice to know that it's being protected.

Chris Tollefson: Okay thank you. I think we'll – let's move on to our next question and we'll try to – I'd like to give as many folks as we can a chance to answer – ask a question.

Coordinator: Our next question is from Doug Smith, Minneapolis Star Tribune. Your line is open.

Doug Smith: Hi Paul, I'm just wondering can significant habitat changes be made? You were talking about alternative habitats. Can significant changes be made before the fall migration?

And, you know, how much effect might that have? Part 2 would be kind of can you give us your perception of what you expect to see here this fall? I mean, how bad might this be for these birds given that the oil continues to flow today?

Paul Schmidt: Great questions and I wish I had the answers to all of those very, you know, but I, you know, more precisely than I'm going to have. But I do think you posed some good questions.

How much effect we can have, I alluded to and I'll elaborate a little bit more is, you know, we're realistic. We think we can have some localized effects, in other words, you know, in areas in and around the Gulf we could provide areas in this short time period that will prevent some oiling and certainly provide some benefits to migratory birds.

And we have, you know, organizations as I mentioned earlier such as the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited, et cetera working together with private donations to put this money to that use in very short order.

Frankly there is an expectation that we can work on private lands – this group can work on private lands down there in a matter of weeks to do some of the things we're talking about by issuing some contracts, flooding some areas, et cetera.

You know, it – will we, you know, as also I said we won't be able to dramatically affect migrations in any way, shape or form on this. The birds are still, you know, expected to do what they do in a natural cycle.

But we think there is value and we're committed to doing everything we can so that as to avoid any population effects from this spill. In terms of the risks or what I'd say is our assessment of risks, I have a team of biologists right now who are working on answering that question, in other words identifying those species that we think are most at risk because of their normal patterns in this migration and wintering.

And we'll be looking at that and providing that to the – to folks in the Incident Command and others so that we can be working together to minimize that risk.

But it is, you know, it's a big area. There's a lot of species and we don't know everything we need to know about these patterns. And in fact we do know that they change year to year in some examples.

For instance we know that scaup sometimes – it's a waterfowl species that sometimes will use the Gulf and sometimes inland areas depending upon the year.

And we don't fully understand all of that but we're doing the best we can to predict and minimize that risk.

Chris Tollefson: Thanks Paul. Do we have another question?

Coordinator: Our next question is from Pat Leonard, Bird Scope and Living Bird. Your line is open.

Pat Leonard: Hi, in terms of assessing long-term, I mean, a lot of the focus is on right now but is there a plan for monitoring in the years ahead to see what the long-term ripple effect could be on birds as well as breeding birds?

Will there be a failure because of nest loss this year and so forth? Is there a long-term plan for monitoring?

Paul Schmidt: Pat, this is Paul Schmidt, Fish & Wildlife Service. The answer is most definitely yes. There is a significant effort and frankly one of the key responsibilities of the Fish & Wildlife Service along with others is to indeed assess the damage to our ecosystem and our populations into a document that in the case of migratory birds we are I'd say fortunate because we have some of the best of – in terms of wildlife monitoring we have some of the best

systems in place, not as good as anybody would like or everybody would like but it's certainly a good place to start.

And we intend to continue in a fairly intensive fashion over the coming weeks, months and indeed years to more fully understand what the impacts are to what - not only breeding birds that you - as you pointed out but also the other populations that can and will be affected by this spill.

So that's a huge effort for us and it's our focus right now. We have teams of people, biologists who are trying to come to grips with that question and it will take some time obviously to more fully understand that impact.

Chris Tollefson: Thanks. Do we have another question?

Coordinator: Our next question is from Justin Nobel, Audubon Magazine. Your line is open.

Justin Nobel: Yes, thank you. I know the whole Gulf is not oiled so I'm wondering what are the species that are going to be headed right for the oiled areas? What are the species that you are most concerned about and where are they right now? Where would they be coming from?

Paul Schmidt: This is Paul Schmidt. I'll start but I think the folks down in the Gulf area may want to add to this. I don't want to repeat my earlier - a lot of earlier stuff but I, you know, those species that use that fringe area right along the marsh areas are certainly at risk.

Those tend to be the - can be the shorebird populations and water - and some waterfowl. In terms of the pelagic - there are pelagic birds, birds that will be out in the sea.

You've seen some of the impacts already in terms of gannets and others that have – are right there and use the oil – the areas in the Gulf and you – we obviously have seen a significant number of Brown Pelicans coming or being impacted by this spill.

The future, you know, I identified scaup as one particular focus for us because there is a chance that they would normal – might normally use some of the oiled areas.

That's a species of concern for us because of a long-term decline in scaup numbers that we've experienced over the past 10 or 15 years for other reasons, and this certainly won't help that situation.

And maybe I'll stop there and folks more local to the rehabilitation efforts might have some other species that they'd like to highlight.

Heidi Stout: I think you covered it Paul.

Paul Schmidt: Okay. There you go. Will that work Justin?

Chris Tollefson: Thanks. I guess we'll open it up for our next question.

Coordinator: Our next question is from Laura Tangley with National Wildlife Magazine. Your line is open.

Laura Tangley: Hi, it seems like so far you've mostly been talking about waterfowl and shorebirds, and I'm wondering about neotropical migrant – migratory species if – when you're expecting them to come through, how many species, how many numbers more or less and are they going to be at risk as well?

Paul Schmidt: Again a great question. The reason I haven't talked about them is that while my folks haven't produced a full report on the risk assessment it's our general understanding that those – they are less at risk for two reasons.

One is their current level of populations, just the sheer numbers that'll come through there but also their particular behaviors and habitats in which they use to launch their march over the Gulf are likely to be less at risk.

And what I mean by that is some of the songbirds and the neotropical migrants that you mentioned typically will make one long pass if you will. After staging before the Gulf they will then fly straight over top of the Gulf.

They don't have the ability to land or the – yes, or the physical features to land in the water so they're going to make that leap all the way to land over into Mexico, Central America and further to South America.

It doesn't mean we're not concerned about them but it means they're not the focus of the – much of the attention that we'd like to focus on. And I think in terms of numbers of species I think you asked there, you know, there's dozens of neotropical migrants who – that use that area as staging.

And they come in waves and those waves are again in the August-September time period and even in – probably even into October as well to some extent.

Chris Tollefson: Thanks. I think we've got time for about two more questions and then we're going to have to wrap things up.

Coordinator: Our next question is from Paul Wait with Wildfowl Magazine. Your line is open.

Paul Wait: Thanks. You mentioned – this is for Paul Schmidt. You mentioned scaup and redheads in previous answers. Are there going to be any changes in the waterfowl season structure this year and potentially long-term as a result of those birds encountering the oil?

Paul Schmidt: That's a really – a good relevant question and we are monitoring the situation. That's one of the things that I'm responsible for is setting the national harvest regulations.

We've gone through a first cycle and that – and fortunately I guess is that we have a system in place now that - with adaptive harvest management that allows for us to more scientifically compensate or address that in a subsequent hunting season.

So right now the part of the migration if you will and the mortality that we know will occur through hunting and other factors, that will be addressed in our breeding populations for the subsequent year.

And we do not feel that immediate harvest restrictions are warranted at this current time. So we believe that we're going to continue to monitor it – well, we will continue to monitor it and if there seems to be impacts that – where we – that surprise us in terms of that and population level effects, then we would be prepared to address that in a subsequent harvest management decision.

But I think right now we feel very comfortable with the system in place and this is – I don't want to trivialize this but we're going – this is a mortality event for us that is – we're going to consider as a disease outbreak or a

hurricane effect or some other disaster that would have an impact and our system in – is in place to make those adjustments in future cycles.

Chris Tollefson: Thanks. We'll take one last question.

Coordinator: Our next question is from Bob Driscoll with the Los Angeles Times. Your line is open.

Bob Driscoll: Oh hey, I got on the call a little late and I apologize for this, and I know you probably spoke to this but I wonder if you can help on one thing. You said several times that you can't affect – you can't have a great impact on the border migration but that you were going to make an attempt on local areas.

Can you just – and I apologize if you said this earlier, specifically what are the efforts you can do on a local area? I don't quite understand. How do you position a local basis?

Paul Schmidt: Sure, we have partners out there who have good – like the Natural Resources Conservation Service that have programs that they can employ to kind of redirect resources to work with private landowners.

They have - in Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, et cetera they have good relationships with private landowners and they can use funds and in some cases potentially be reimbursed by the responsible party to do such things as flooding crop fields that will provide more food and resting for migrating or wintering birds.

We believe we can take advantage of plans that are in place to remove invasive species that have overgrown particular impoundments in and around the Gulf area and believe that that would provide additional habitat for birds.

Prescribed burning is an effective tool to affect large areas of habitat and improve it for making food available to these birds. So I actually am optimistic that we can employ a bunch of efforts over the next few weeks that will have an effect and will provide additional habitats and will be a benefit to migratory birds.

And we're – our focus is in those areas that are within 50, 100 miles of the coast so that we are actually taking birds or distract – attracting birds to a particular point away from the contaminated area.

But again I think I've mentioned it two or three times now is that I, you know, we're not unrealistic that we – and hope not to get people's expectations too high that we can have such dramatic effects because you can't in those – in that short time period.

But those are some – I'll give three or four examples of where we think we can do some things right now and that will pay off in the short term and potentially in the long term for these species.

Chris Tollefson: Hello?

Paul Schmidt: Hello.

Chris Tollefson: I thought I was – I of course forgot to take it off of mute. I'm sorry. We're going to wrap things up at this point. If you have additional questions I would encourage you to call me, Chris Tollefson.

My number is here in New Orleans at the Unified Command, 504-335-0872 or on my mobile at 202-247-7417. We'll be making a transcript and an audio

recording of this teleconference available on both the Deepwater Horizon site and the Fish & Wildlife Services Web site.

I'd encourage you to check both sites for daily updates on progress in response to this spill and what we're doing on the migratory bird side. With that I'll thank our participants for joining us, and thank you for joining us as well today.

And this is one of what will be undoubtedly other conference calls and updates on the situation as it progresses. Thank you.

END