

Cumulative Impacts to Wildlife and Actions to Protect Wildlife in the Gulf of Mexico

The Deepwater Horizon/BP Oil Spill Response

Protection Strategy

The Unified Area Command's Wildlife Branches, staffed by experts from NOAA, USFWS, NPS and other Federal and State agencies, and academic partners, are working around the clock to protect and rescue wildlife that is at risk from the Deepwater Horizon/BP oil spill.

For terrestrial wildlife, birds, marine mammals, and sea turtle protection, wildlife teams conduct surveys by air, land, and water to find and identify affected wildlife. Wildlife teams collect and capture both dead and live wildlife. In addition, there is a hotline for the public to call to report oiled wildlife. Calls to this hotline continue to help guide response efforts. Affected live wildlife is taken to the appropriate established rehabilitation centers to be cleaned or treated. Dead wildlife that is collected is sampled and stored for further evaluation by trained experts. Rehabilitated animals are released at appropriate times and places, taking into account, species, weather and location of oiled areas.



Dr. Brian Stacy (NOAA OPR sea turtle veterinarian) conducting initial cleaning of oiled Kemp's ridley turtle. On-water operations under Wildlife Branch, Unified Command.



Wildlife recovery experts clean an oil impacted Brown pelican at the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at Fort Jackson in Buras, LA, photo: USFWS/Greg Thompson

Terrestrial Wildlife and Bird Protection Strategy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The overall response strategy for terrestrial wildlife and bird protection is the removal or deflection of oil before it reaches shore and comes into contact with animals. Once oil is likely to reach shore, priority is given to protecting sensitive areas, including National Park Units, National Wildlife Refuges, and state protected areas. In addition to the protection activities noted above, protective measures have been employed that include the use of booms and skimmers. Some areas are double or triple boomed, for example important bird nesting areas.

Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Protection Strategy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

The primary strategy to protect marine mammals and turtles is similar to that for terrestrial wildlife: minimizing contact between oil and wildlife. In addition to the response activities

noted above, the wildlife teams are also working with NOAA's Scientific Support Coordinators at each of the Incident Command Centers to protect wildlife during response activities (e.g., in situ burns, berms, boom placement, and dispersant application). While initial consultations have already been conducted, the Wildlife Branch continues to improve the response process so that as activities are increased, Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act considerations are better integrated into the planning and operations process. Similar measures are also implemented on land; for example, sand berms have been constructed on the beach at Bon Secour NWR to protect beach mouse habitat from storm surges that may carry oil onto the beach and potentially into valuable wetlands.

Wildlife Distress Hotline: 866/557 1401
www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com
www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill/