

California State Parks and Department of Fish and Game



News Release

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Old oil removed from *SS Palo Alto*

Historic cement ship at Seacliff State Beach now safe for wildlife

The *SS Palo Alto* oil removal project at Seacliff State Beach in Aptos has been completed, ahead of schedule and within budget. The Unified Command — the California Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR), Department of Parks and Recreation, U.S. Coast Guard, and contractor Titan Maritime — were pleased with the cooperative spirit in which the team operated.

All of the oil aboard the 87-year-old ship was found in one port forward bunker tank, which was configured much like an animal trap. It had a narrow, vertical opening that led to a large, horizontal, rectangular tank that contained the old fuel oil. Birds could get in, but very few got out.

To prevent future wildlife entrapment, Titan's crew opened the tank's entry hole to 4 feet by 10 feet, and removed all the oil and oily sediment. Now, if any birds go into the tank, they can also get back out of it.

"Some of the Titan guys worked on our *SS Jacob Luckenbach* oil removal project in 2002," said Lt. John Sutton, OSPR's incident commander. "They're creative problem solvers, and really know what they're doing."

Approximately 505 gallons of oil, 125 cubic yards of oily sand and residue, 173 deceased birds, two deceased harbor seals, and uncountable animal parts in various stages of decomposition were removed from the tank. The hazardous materials were turned over to an oil spill response organization, which disposed of them at licensed Class 2 dumpsites.

The team completed the cleanup on schedule, which allowed the pier to reopen and serve as an observation deck for the annual fundraising fireworks show on Oct. 14.

Photographs and information about the work are on the *SS Palo Alto* Project pages in OSPR's Web site, www.dfg.ca.gov/ospr.

