

Kinder Morgan Suisun Marsh Diesel Fuel Oil Spill

DRAFT

Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment

February 11, 2009

Suggested Citation

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Prepared by California Department of Fish and Game and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

FACT SHEET
Draft Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan / Environmental Assessment for the <i>Kinder Morgan/Suisun Marsh</i> Spill
Trustee Agencies: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG)
<p>Abstract: Under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA) and the Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act of 1990, the Natural Resource Trustee Agencies (Trustees) present a damage assessment/restoration plan/environmental assessment for natural resources injured during the diesel fuel oil discharge from a pipeline owned by Kinder Morgan Energy Partners (KMEP) in the Suisun Marsh on 27 April 2004. The oil spill directly affected birds, fish, and small mammals including the federal- and state-endangered salt marsh harvest mouse as well as aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates. The Trustees have identified two restoration projects to contribute to in order to restore the injured resources.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The projects are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Re-introduce tidal flow to Hill Slough and so restore and enhance tidal marsh habitat for the benefit of multiple species that utilize the Suisun Marsh. ii) Contribute to a weed control effort to control non-native invasive weeds on the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area that will enhance habitat value for waterfowl and a number of other animal and plant species that inhabit the Suisun Marsh. <p>The Trustees also present their environmental assessment on the proposed projects under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).</p>
<p>Contact Person: Bruce Joab California Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response 1700 K Street Sacramento CA 95811 Fax: 916-324-8829, Email: bjoab@ospr.dfg.ca.gov</p>
<p>Copies: Copies of the draft Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan/Environment Assessment (DARP/EA) are available from CDFG at the above address. Copies are also available online at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/ospr/spill/nrda/nrda_suisun.html.</p> <p>The Administrative Record is maintained by CDFG and may be viewed by the public upon request. Contact Bruce Joab at address above to schedule an appointment.</p>
<p>Public Comment Period: The public is requested to comment on this Draft DARP for a period of 30 days. The public comment period will run from February 11, 2009 - March 13, 2009. Please send comments to: Bruce Joab at the address above. Comments may also be emailed to: SuisunSpillNRDA@fws.gov.</p>
<p>Public Meeting: The Trustees will hold a public meeting in order to discuss the details of this Draft DARP and to answer any questions presented. The meeting will be held on February 26, 2009 from 6-7p.m. at the Solano County Administrative Center, Room 1600, 675 Texas Street, Fairfield, CA.</p>

Executive Summary

On 27 April 2004 an underground 14-inch diameter petroleum pipeline owned or operated by Kinder Morgan Energy Partners, L.P. (KMEP) and SFPP L.P. (the responsible parties; RPs) ruptured and discharged approximately 123,774 gallons of diesel fuel (grade 2-D) into a managed marsh located within Suisun Marsh near the city of Fairfield, California. The discharge of diesel fuel was contained within the privately owned Drake Sprig Duck Club (Duck Club). The Duck Club includes approximately 224 acres of managed wetlands located east of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) right-of-way near Fairfield, California. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) responded to the spill as the lead response agency. USCG handed over the role of lead response agency to United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) once it was assured the diesel fuel would not reach the San Francisco Bay. Other agencies participated in response activities including the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) and California Regional Water Quality Control Board.

In order to address injuries to natural resources not addressed by response activities the Natural Resource Trustees engaged in a cooperative natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) with the responsible parties. The goal of the NRDA is to scale the compensatory restoration projects so that the total natural resource benefits which they provide will fully compensate the public for the interim loss of natural resource services caused by this incident. Many studies were conducted to assess the severity, duration and extent of the injury to the habitat, flora, and fauna injured directly by the oil and the associated cleanup actions. This document addresses injuries from this spill, and in compliance with the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA) and the Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act of 1990, focuses on injuries that occurred from this discharge. In this case, the Trustees for injured natural resources are the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) (the Trustees). As a designated Trustee, each of these agencies is authorized to act on behalf of the public under state and/or federal law to assess and recover natural resource damages and to plan and implement actions to restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of the affected natural resources injured as a result of a discharge of oil.

The responsible parties worked cooperatively with the Trustees and settled the Trustees' claim for damages in a Federal District Court Consent Decree entered on July, 26 2007, by agreeing to contribute \$1,151,099.00 to restoration projects to restore the injured resources. Of this amount, up to \$200,000 may be used to pay the Trustee's costs of complying with the requirements of law to prepare and oversee the implementation of a Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan (DARP).

Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan (DARP)/Environmental Assessment (EA)

The Trustees prepared this draft DARP for public review and comment. It describes the injuries resulting from the spill and the proposed restoration projects intended to address the injuries. It also provides the rationale for the size and scope of each restoration

project. This document is also intended to serve as an Environmental Assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and, therefore, is called a DARP/EA. Additional environmental compliance may be required for one or both of the projects described herein, if selected.

What was injured?

There were documented direct injuries to a variety of birds, small mammals, reptiles, fish, and aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates in the areas of the marsh affected by the discharge of diesel fuel. The list of species directly affected includes northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), teal sp. (*Anas sp.*), bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*), semipalmated plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*), western sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*), American bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*), goldeneye sp. (*Bucephala sp.*), Virginia rail (*Rallus limicola*), Allen's hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanus ludovicianus*), common raven (*Corvus corax*), cliff swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*), barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), salt-marsh yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas sinuosa*), spotted towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), and brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). The federally and state endangered salt marsh harvest mouse (SMHM, *Reithrodontomys raviventris*) was also identified as being directly impacted by the spill, along with the western harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), house mouse (*Mus musculus*), deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), California vole (*Microtus californicus*), and the gopher snake (*Pituophis catenifer*). Plant species documented as impacted included arrowleaf saltbush (*Atriplex triangularis*), common brassbuttons (*Cotula coronopifolia*), swamp pricklegloss (*Crypsis schoenoides*), common saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), pickleweed (*Salicornia virginica*), three-square bulrush (*Scirpus americanus*), alkali bulrush (*Scirpus maritimus*), and narrow leaf cattail (*Typha angustifolia*). Various species of invertebrates were also killed, including both aquatic and terrestrial species. For scaling (determining the size/severity) of damages, the injury was quantified by the area of marsh that was impacted rather than attempting to scale for each impacted species.

What restoration projects will compensate for these injuries?

The Trustees have identified two restoration projects that are designed to address the various species injured by the spills; one a tidal marsh restoration project, the other a managed marsh weed control effort. While both will provide benefits for many of the affected species that were affected in the injured marsh habitat, the weed control project will be of greater benefit to waterfowl. The tidal marsh restoration project will provide a substantial degree of benefit to the same suite of species that were injured in the spill, including the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse. The amount of money proposed to go to a weed control effort is \$150,000, with \$800,000 going to a tidal marsh restoration project.

ABBREVIATIONS

BCDC	San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
BMI	Benthic Macroinvertebrate
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CESA	California Endangered Species Act
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulation
COE	U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
CWA	Clean Water Act
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
DARP	Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan
DOI	United States Department of the Interior
DWR	Department of Water Resources
EA	Environmental Assessment
EFH	Essential Fish Habitat
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FWCA	Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act
HEA	Habitat Equivalency Analysis
KMEP	Kinder Morgan Energy Partners, L.P.
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NDVI	Normalized Difference Vegetation Index
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NRDA	Natural Resource Damage Assessment
OPA	Oil Pollution Act of 1990
OSPR	Office of Spill Prevention and Response
OWCN	Oiled Wildlife Care Network
RP	Responsible Party
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SCAT	Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment Team
SMHM	Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse
UPRR	Union Pacific Railroad
USC	United States Code
USCG	United States Coast Guard
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

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1.0 Introduction and Purpose

This draft Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment (DARP/EA) has been prepared by state and federal natural resource Trustees responsible for restoring natural resources¹ and resource services² injured by the discharge of 123,774 gallons of diesel fuel oil from the Kinder Morgan Energy Partners L.P. (KMEP) pipeline into the Suisun Marsh at the Drake Sprig Duck Club on April 27, 2004. This document provides details regarding the injuries and their quantification, restoration planning, and the proposed restoration projects to address the injuries. The purpose of restoration is to make the environment and the public whole for injuries resulting from the spills by implementing restoration actions that return injured natural resources and services to baseline conditions and compensate for interim losses. A multi-incident settlement was agreed to by the parties in a Federal District Court Consent Decree entered by the court on July 26, 2007.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) are Trustees for the natural resources injured by the spill. As a designated Trustee, each agency is authorized to act on behalf of the public under state and/or federal law to assess and recover natural resource damages and to plan and implement actions to restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of the affected natural resources injured as a result of a contaminant discharge. The USFWS is designated as the lead federal Trustee for purposes of coordination and compliance with the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Trustees have prepared this draft DARP/EA to inform the public about the natural resource damage assessment and restoration planning efforts that have been conducted following the spill. This document also integrates National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements by serving as an EA. The public will have a comment period in which to submit comments on this draft DARP/EA. One or more of the projects may require additional environmental analysis or compliance prior to actual implementation. In such an instance, additional analysis may occur after engineering designs or operational plans are developed for those projects.

1.1 Overview of the Incident

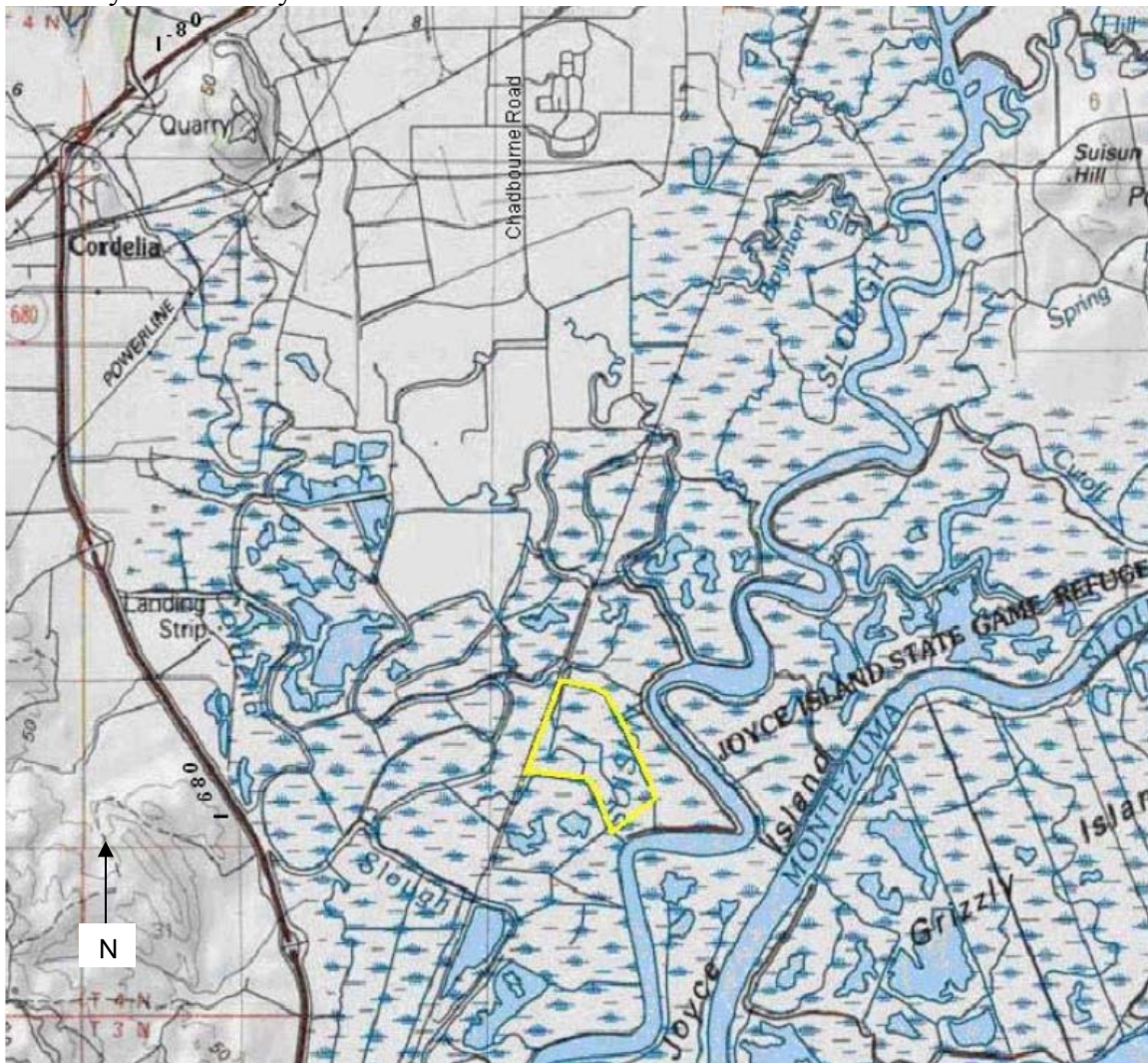
The discharge of 123,774-gallons of diesel fuel oil from a 14-inch-diameter pipeline owned and/or operated by the responsible parties occurred on 27 April 2004. The spill

¹ Natural resources are defined under the Oil Pollution Act (OPA) as "land, fish, wildlife, biota, air, water, groundwater, drinking water supplies, and other such resources belonging to, managed by, held in trust by, appertaining to, or otherwise controlled by the United States, any State or local government or Indian tribe, or any foreign government.

² Services (or natural resources services) means the functions performed by a natural resource for the benefit of another natural resource and/or the public.

occurred on the Drake Sprig Duck Club (“the Club” or “the site”) owned by the RBM Land Company, adjacent to the east side of a Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) right-of-way (Figures 1 and 2). The pipeline involved transports various petroleum products, but had diesel fuel oil in it at the time and place of the discharge. This line through Suisun marsh is no longer used and has been replaced by a newer pipeline outside of the marsh.

Figure 1. USGS map of general vicinity of the spill with Drake Sprig Duck Club boundary outlined in yellow.



Once discharged, the product flowed throughout the land and waterways of the Club property (Figure 3). The property is an approximately 224 acre managed salt marsh enclosed with levees and tidally influenced via tide gates. The entire discharge appears to have been confined to this enclosed acreage, with many of the waterways within the levees (Roos Slough system) exposed. However, searches of waterways outside the property, including Roos Cut, Suisun Slough, Chadbourne Slough, Wells Slough, revealed no observable diesel fuel. Vigorous removal of product from the marsh and contaminated soils continued through August 2004, including bioremediation activities in the vicinity of the pipe rupture and, to a lesser extent, along some of the slough margins

where diesel fuel was deposited. As of September 2004, free product had been removed and *in situ*, or in the field, treatment of residual product was continuing using bioremediation. An estimated 55,406 gallons of diesel fuel were removed in the response effort. On November 5, 2004, the Unified Command, which lead response activities, demobilized and transitioned oversight to the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). Their oversight continues as of the date of this report.

The majority of the natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) related ephemeral data collection was delayed for several days due to pipeline repair work that took precedence and fully utilized the only narrow road leading into and out of the site. Once data collection began, the RPs and their contractors worked with the Trustees in performing a cooperative NRDA, both during and following the response and data collection activities. Table 1 contains a list of all of the studies that were undertaken for this NRDA.

Figure 2. Aerial view of the spill site with yellow boundaries and red diesel fuel path.

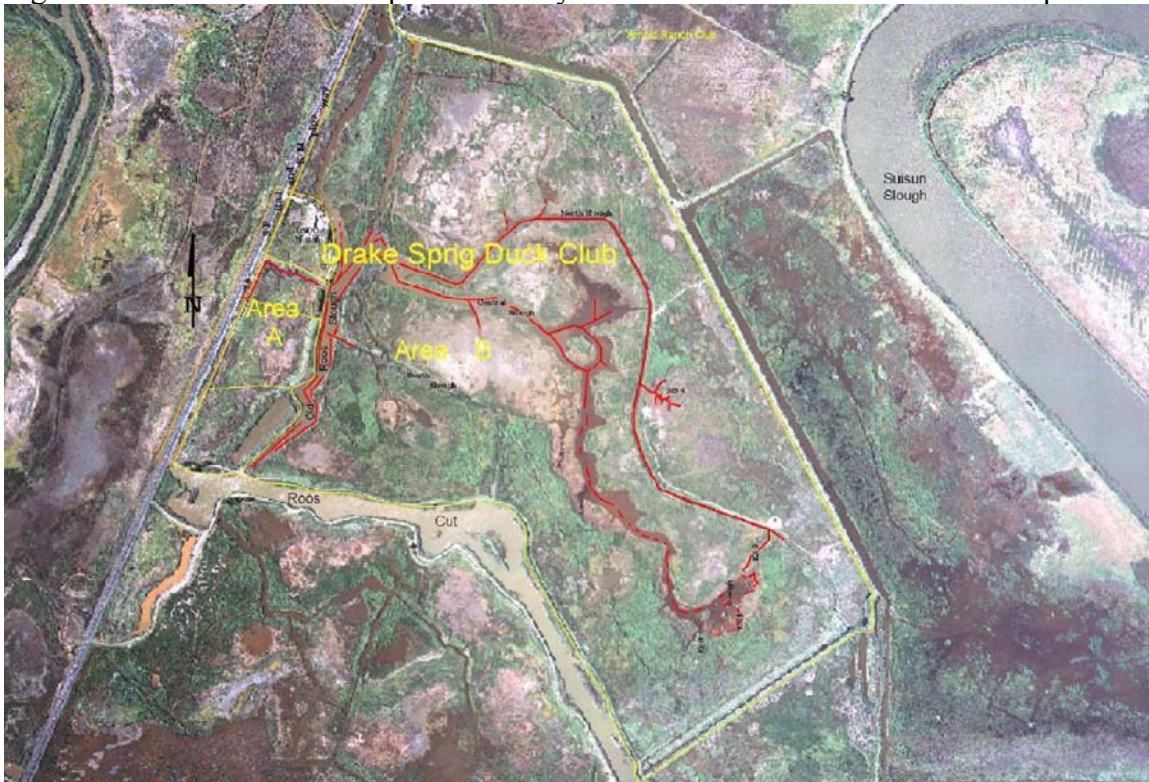


Figure 3. Diesel fuel accumulation at the junction of End Slough and North Slough.



Table 1. Studies undertaken and data sources used for the NRDA work resulting from the KMEP/Suisun Marsh diesel fuel spill in 2004.

Water Chemistry
Sediment Chemistry
Opportunistic Sample Collections in Division B, fish and feathers ¹
Vegetation Surveys in Division B
Macroinvertebrate Survey in Division B
Fish Survey in Division B
Salt marsh harvest mouse (SMHM) survey and genetic work for Divisions A & B
Marsh Bird survey
Aerial multispectral survey by Ocean Imaging
Wildlife Collections ²
SCAT data collection and mapping ³
Fish surveys outside of the Duck Club boundaries ⁴
Macro-invertebrate Survey outside of the Duck Club boundaries ⁴
BMI community assemblage outside of the Duck Club boundaries ⁴
Ichthyoplankton (larval fish) survey outside of the Duck Club boundaries ⁴

¹ Divisions and their boundaries are described in Section 1.2

² Wildlife collections; this is OWCN data, not NRDA-specific data

³ SCAT data collection and mapping is a compilation of data that is not NRDA-specific

⁴ Studies conducted outside of the Duck Club boundaries were not utilized in the damage claim since no diesel fuel was confirmed outside of the levees that enclose the affected property.

1.2 Summary of Natural Resource Injuries

Early in the process of evaluating the injuries, the parties involved in the cooperative NRDA process agreed upon a habitat-based approach. A habitat-based approach is especially well suited to this case since the injury from the discharge and response was to a whole suite of organisms that inhabit the Suisun Marsh. This approach differs from a species-oriented approach, where damages are scaled to the number of each species killed. In a habitat-based approach, or Habitat Equivalency Analysis (HEA), quantification of injury is based upon the area, severity, and recovery time of the habitat from the impacts. The habitat-based approach of injury evaluation was selected as the most appropriate due to the wide variety of marsh land resources injured during this discharge including vegetation, mammals, birds, fish, and invertebrates.

Several types of studies were undertaken to characterize, quantify, or document injury. The data came from water chemistry, sediment chemistry, vegetation surveys (on-ground

and aerial), a bird survey, fish surveys, macroinvertebrate surveys, a larval fish survey, and salt marsh harvest mouse surveys. Several avian species were directly affected by the spill including mallard, teal sp., semipalmated plover, and western sandpiper. Other species identified at the spill site included American bittern, goldeneye sp., Virginia rail, Allen's hummingbird, loggerhead shrike, common raven, cliff swallow, barn swallow, northern mockingbird, salt-marsh yellowthroat, spotted towhee, savannah sparrow, song sparrow, and brown-headed cowbird.

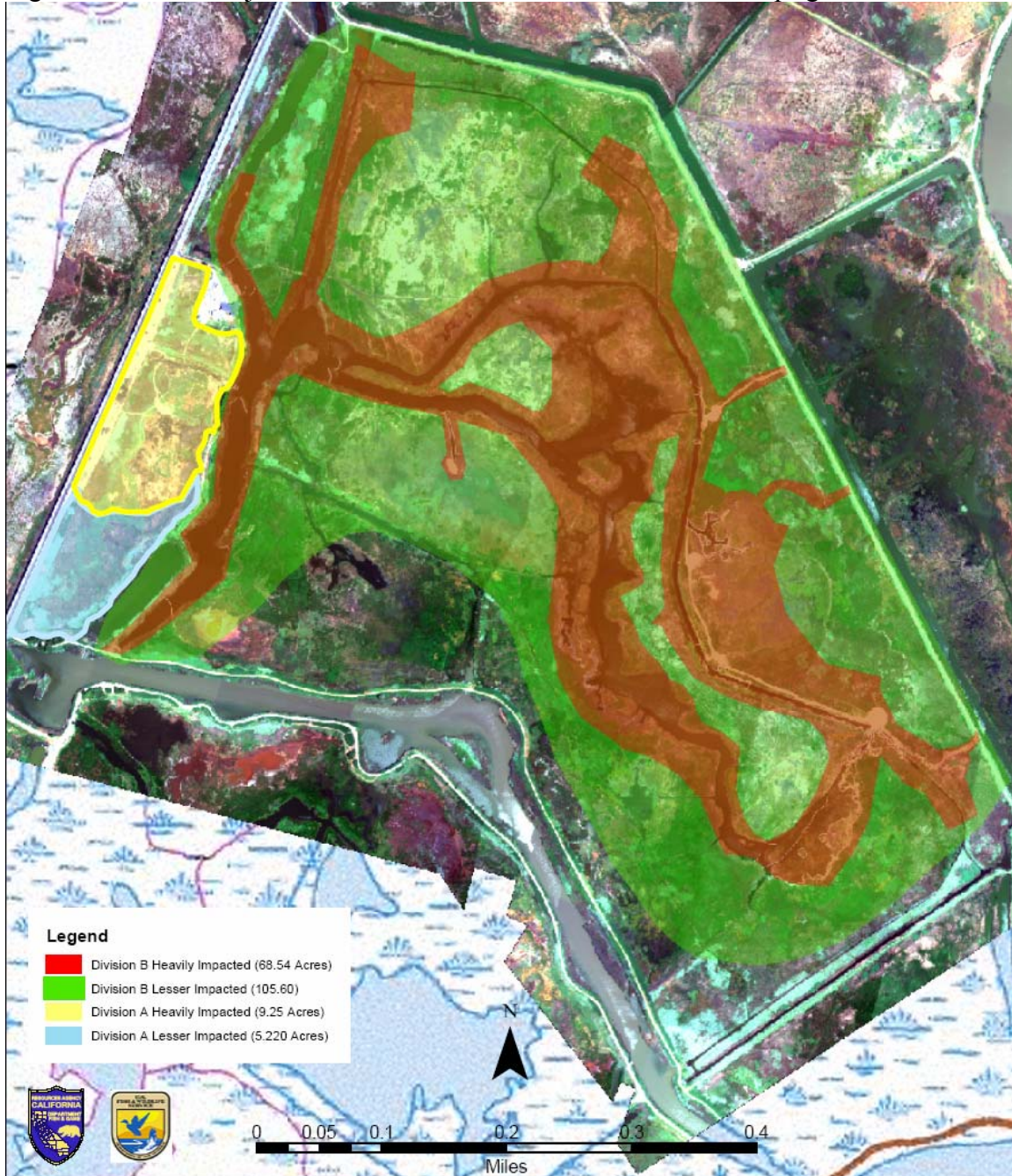
Mammal species killed included mole, muskrat, California vole, American beaver, house mouse, and western harvest mouse. The federally and state endangered salt marsh harvest mouse was also identified as being injured by the spill. Approximately 70 were trapped on the Club property and removed to adjacent clean habitat. Field workers collected 3 oiled, decayed dead harvest mice during response activities (final species identification was not possible, due to their oiled and decayed status). In addition, one juvenile salt marsh harvest mouse (SMHM) was found dead on the site.

Fish were also injured by this spill. Dead sticklebacks were observed in Old Roos Slough at the tide structure and a dead mosquito fish was recovered. However it was noted that dead fish could be easily overlooked in the turbid water or scavenged by predators before they were observed. Many aquatic invertebrate organisms were observed dead in spill impacted areas. During the first days of response, field personnel observed floating dead invertebrates in areas associated with uniform sheen on the surface of the water in the Old Roos Slough channels. Invertebrates, particularly insects, were very abundant based upon the large numbers found dead in the bottom of shallow channels and pools. Large numbers of aquatic invertebrates were also found dead. Appendix A contains photographs of some of the injured and dead organisms and habitats observed.

At least one field responder from a trustee agency reported that oiled birds were seen miles away in Suisun Bay and the near the Carquinez Straits, but the source of the oil on these birds remains unconfirmed.

The HEA focused on four regions of injured habitat; two with higher and two with lesser impacted areas (Figure 4). The area shown as Division A is primarily a brood pond area near the Drake Sprig Duck Club, Club house, and contains within it the location of the ruptured pipeline. Division B is the much larger area of the Drake Sprig Duck Club property that was affected by diesel fuel that flowed out of Division A.

Figure 4. The four injured areas assessed in the HEA at the Drake Sprig Duck Club.



1.3 Summary of Proposed Restoration Projects

The Trustees' goal under OPA (see 33 U.S.C. 2706(b)) is to make the environment and the public whole for injuries to natural resources and natural resource services resulting from the discharge of oil. This requirement must be achieved through the restoration, rehabilitation, replacement, or acquisition of equivalent natural resources and/or services.

Thus, for a project to be considered there must be a connection, or nexus, between the natural resource injuries and the proposed restoration actions.

Restoration actions under OPA are termed primary or compensatory. Primary restoration is any action taken to accelerate the return of injured natural resources and services to their baseline condition. An example of a primary restoration action is the removal of the contamination from the organisms' environment, which was performed as part of the clean-up activities in this case and included recovery of diesel fuel, removal of contaminated soils and tilling/disking of contaminated soil for bioremediation.

Compensatory restoration is any action taken to compensate for interim losses of natural resources and services pending recovery to baseline conditions. The scale, or amount, of the required compensatory restoration will depend on the extent and severity of the initial resource injury and how quickly each resource and associated service returns to baseline. This DARP focuses on compensatory restoration as primary restoration has already been undertaken for this spill.

The Trustees considered several restoration concepts and alternatives with the potential to provide compensatory restoration. These were evaluated based on selection criteria developed by the Trustees consistent with the guidelines provided in the OPA regulations (15 C.F.R. 990.54(a)). Section 4.2.2 presents OPA regulations-based selection criteria developed by the Trustees for this spill. Based on the Trustees' evaluation, two restoration projects have been proposed. These are summarized below and presented in detail in section 4.3.

It is the intent of the Trustees to address all injuries. However, rather than develop separate restoration projects for each species impacted, the Trustees have grouped the injuries into tidal and managed marsh components. In this way two restoration projects that benefit a suite of species address all injuries to the group of species that were impacted.

The Trustees grouped the potential restoration projects into those that were on managed marsh area and would benefit ducks along with some other species discussed below and those that would occur in a tidally influenced marsh area that would benefit a wide range of species. Summaries of the proposed restoration projects are provided below. More details on the projects are provided in section 4.0.

PROJECT: *Hill Slough Restoration Project*

BENEFITS: *Marsh birds, Shorebirds, Wading birds, Small and Medium Size Mammals, Raptors, Brackish Water Fish, and Waterfowl*

The Hill Slough Restoration Project will restore approximately 950 acres of tidal wetlands and moist grassland habitat from diked seasonal and perennial wetlands. The desired outcome is a self-sustaining marsh ecosystem created through restoration of natural hydrologic and sedimentation processes and reliance on natural abiotic and biological succession processes. The resultant tidal marsh will contribute to the Bay-

Delta food web and provide valuable habitat for species reliant on the tidal areas of the Suisun Marsh.

The project is expected to benefit state- and federally- listed species as well as other migratory and resident species that inhabit brackish marshes and moist grassland habitat. Some of the species expected to benefit include California bulrush (*Scirpus californicus*) and hardstem bulrush (*Scirpus acutus*), California clapper rail (*Rallus longirostris obsoletus*) and California black rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus*), salt marsh common yellow throat (*Geothlypis trichas sinuosa*), red-winged blackbirds, marsh wrens, song sparrows, shorebirds including the western and least sandpipers, dunlins, willet, black-necked stilts, wading birds such as the great blue heron and great egret, and other water associated birds such as various species of gulls. The project is expected to increase habitat availability for a number of waterfowl species when tidal waters are present at the restored site, including northern pintail, green-winged teal, northern shoveler, American wigeon, mallard, Cinnamon teal and gadwall. Fish and invertebrates will access the site which will provide habitat to a number of species including splittail, Delta smelt (*Hypomesus transpacificus*) and longfin smelt (*Spirinchus thaleichthys*). The lowland alluvium will provide habitat for a number of species of small mammals, including voles, mice and possibly shrews, which would provide prey for raptor species such as the northern harrier and white-tailed kite. The site will also provide habitat for black-tailed jackrabbits, coyote, and other medium sized mammal species (Phillip Williams and Associates, 2001).

The Hill Slough Tidal Restoration Project expands on an original Hill Slough West Restoration Project design which was slated to restore a 208-acre site. The project has been expanded to encompass approximately 950 acres and includes the raising of Grizzly Island Road. As this project is pending further planning, design and permitting, the federal Trustees anticipate this project will require further assessment under NEPA.

PROJECT: *Invasive Weed Control, Grizzly Island Complex*
BENEFITS: *Waterfowl, Marsh Birds and Small Mammals*

This project will assist in control of invasive weed species that are causing harm in the marsh environments of the Grizzly Island complex, displacing native plants and altering the physical habitat of the marshes. This land is managed by CDFG and the project involves control of invasive species, particularly Perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*). Monitoring and maintenance of the areas where control measures are implemented are planned for this project. This work will benefit pickleweed habitat along with the endangered soft bird's-beak (*Cordylanthus mollis* ssp. *mollis*) and Suisun thistle (*Cirsium hydrophilum* var. *hydrophilum*) in Suisun Marsh. This in turn will provide habitat benefit for the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse (CDFG 2002- 2003, Shellhammer *et al.* 1982), and California clapper rail (Goals Project 2000). Waterfowl will benefit since some of the areas where these weed are to be controlled are managed for the benefit of nesting waterfowl.

2.0 Environment Affected by the Spill

This section presents a brief description of the physical and biological environment affected by the diesel spill. A complete discussion of the history, geology and physical environment of the regional tidal marsh and diked bayland habitats may be found in Chapter one of the Baylands Ecosystem Species and Community Profiles (Goals Project 2000).

2.1 Physical Environment

The Duck Club is located on the western edge of Suisun Marsh just west of Suisun Slough on the northwestern shore of Grizzly Bay (Solano County, California). Suisun Marsh is the largest contiguous brackish water marsh remaining on the west coast of North America, and is a critical part of the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary ecosystem encompassing more than ten percent of California's remaining wetland area.

Comprised of approximately 116,000 acres, the marsh includes 52,000 acres of diked seasonal wetlands primarily managed as habitat for waterfowl. Thus, much of the regional ecology is strongly influenced by the artificial annual hydrologic cycle (continually flooded in late autumn and winter and desiccated from late spring through summer), resulting in a disturbance-mediated habitat.

The Duck Club owners have and continue to manage the property for waterfowl via the attenuation of tidal activity. Levees with water control structures that surround the management areas protect the areas from tidal influence and enable the club to control water level within the property divisions. During spill coordination efforts, the vicinity was separated into two divisions, referred to as Divisions A and B. Division A, containing the site of the spill and the most heavily impacted surroundings, extends from the UPRR tracks eastward to the western edge of Old Roos Cut and is managed as a waterfowl brood pond. Division B encompasses the vast majority of the club (approximately 208 acres) as managed marsh, and is bounded by containment levees on the south by the Roos Cut tidal slough, and along the north and east boundary by adjacent private land.

2.2 Biological Environment

Suisun Marsh provides habitat for more than 221 bird species, including habitat for a variety of endangered, rare, or unique species such as the peregrine falcon, white-tailed kite, golden eagle, California clapper rail and black rail. In winter, it is an important feeding and resting station for waterfowl traveling the Pacific Flyway and it may harbor a population of as many as 1,500,000 ducks and geese. In addition to the migratory population, Suisun Marsh supports a substantial population of resident waterfowl, shorebirds, and rookeries of great blue herons and great egrets.

A variety of mammals inhabit the area, including river otter, beaver, mink, muskrat, jackrabbit, striped skunk, raccoon and the Suisun shrew (*Sorex ornatus sinuosus*), a

California species of concern. Further, an abundance of fish life is found in the waters of the marsh, providing spawning, nursery and year-round habitat for a variety of species.

The major floral components of the Suisun Marsh include both salt and freshwater forms common to Pacific Coast marshes. At least 182 species have been identified within the marsh, with predominant vegetation including tules (*Scirpus sp.*), arrow grass (*Triglochin maritimum*), cattail (*Typha sp.*), coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*), pickleweed (*Salicornia sp.*), and fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*).

2.2.1 Threatened and Endangered Species

There are several species of concern that inhabit Suisun Marsh, three of which were potentially impacted by the spill.

The brackish marsh assemblage at Suisun Slough includes habitat suitable for the SMHM and the California clapper rail, both federally listed as endangered in 1970 (35 FR 16047). The SMHM is endemic to the salt and brackish marshes of the San Francisco Bay and adjacent tidally influenced areas. It resembles, but is genetically distinct, from the western harvest mouse. The SMHM has evolved to a life in tidal marshes, though it is commonly found in managed marshes as well, and is specifically dependent on dense pickleweed (*Salicornia virginica*) stands as a primary cover and food source.

California clapper rails occur within a range of tidal salt and brackish marshes, typically dominated by pickleweed or Pacific cordgrass (*Spartina foliosa*). The rail exists in the region and may have been impacted by the spill either directly from discharged product, or indirectly through habitat disturbance.

Fish were injured, possibly including the threatened Delta smelt, as the extended network of tidal marsh provides critical fish nursery habitat for this species. A Delta smelt larva was collected in Roos Cut during post-spill investigations, indicating their presence adjacent to the site.

Two flora species of concern, Soft bird's-beak and the Suisun thistle exist in Suisun Marsh, but are unlikely to have been disturbed by the spill.

2.3 Recreational Services

The Suisun marsh includes 52,000 acres of diked seasonal wetlands, managed by over 150 privately-owned duck clubs, primarily as habitat for waterfowl. The location of the spill was restricted to the private property of the Drake Sprig Duck Club, owned and maintained by RMB Land Company. The property is maintained as a private hunting club, with management activities including control of vegetation and hydrologic conditions including maintenance of a designated waterfowl brood pond (Division A). In 2001, over 115,000 waterfowl hunters contributed an estimated \$117 million to the California economy (U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. 2001). Given the predominance of

private hunting clubs in the region, the contributions of hunting activities to the regional economy are clear. However, the spill and related response activities did not interrupt the fall hunting season in 2004. The Trustees have asserted no recreational loss in the natural resource damage assessment claim.

3.0 Coordination and Compliance

3.1 Federal and State Trustee Agencies

The USFWS and CDFG are the state and federal trustee agencies (Trustees) who are addressing the natural resources injured by the spill. The USFWS is a designated Trustee for natural resources pursuant to subpart G of the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP) (40 CFR § 300.600 *et seq.*) and Executive Order 12580 (3 C.F.R., 1987 Comp. p. 193, 52 Fed. Reg. 2923 (January 23, 1987) as amended by Executive Order 12777 (56 Fed. Reg. 54757 (October 19, 1991)). CDFG has been designated as a state trustee for natural resources pursuant to Section 1006 (b) (3) of the Oil Pollution Act and subpart G of the NCP. Additionally, CDFG has state natural resource trustee authority pursuant to Fish and Game Code §§ 711.7 and 1802 and the Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act (Government Code § 8670.1 *et seq.*). As a designated Trustee, each agency is authorized to act on behalf of the public under state and/or federal law to assess and recover natural resource damages and to plan and implement actions to restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of the affected natural resources injured as a result of a discharge of oil. The USFWS is designated as the lead federal Trustee for purposes of coordination and compliance with OPA and NEPA.

3.2 Coordination

3.2.1 Coordination Among the Trustees

Federal regulations implementing OPA provide that where an oil spill affects the interests of multiple Trustees, they should act jointly to ensure that full restoration is achieved without double recovery (15 CFR § 990.14(a)). The Trustees in this matter have worked together in a shared effort to fully restore the resources that were injured. OPA is described in more detail below.

3.2.2 Coordination with the Public

Public review of the draft DARP/EA is an integral component of the restoration planning process and may be appropriate under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA is described in more detail below.

The Trustees continue to maintain a website <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/ospr/organizational/scientific/nrda/NRDAstisun.htm> that provides information on the case and on-going restoration planning.

In addition, the Trustees have opened an Administrative Record (Record) in compliance with 15 C. F. R. § 990.45. The Record includes documents relied upon or considered by the Trustees during the assessment and restoration planning process.

The Record is on file at:

California Department of Fish and Game
Office of Spill Prevention and Response
1700 K Street, Suite 250
Sacramento, CA 95811

Arrangements may be made to review the Record by contacting Bruce Joab by telephone at (916) 322-7561.

3.3 Compliance with Environmental Laws, Regulations, and Policies

3.3.1 The Oil Pollution Act

The Oil Pollution Act, Title 33 USC § 2701 *et seq.* (OPA), establishes a liability regime for oil spills that injure or are likely to injure natural resources and/or the services that those resources provide to the ecosystem or humans. Pursuant to OPA, federal and state agencies and Indian tribes act as Trustees on behalf of the public to assess the injuries, scale restoration to compensate for those injuries, and implement restoration. The draft DARP/EA has been prepared jointly by the USFWS and CDFG. As described above, each of these agencies is a designated natural resource Trustee for natural resources injured by the Spill. OPA defines "natural resources" to include land, fish, wildlife, water sources, and other such resources belonging to, managed by, held in trust by, appertaining to, or otherwise controlled by the United States, any State or local government or Indian tribe, or any foreign government. Assessments are intended to provide the basis for restoring, replacing, rehabilitating, and acquiring the equivalent of injured natural resources and services. OPA authorizes the Trustees to assess damages for natural resources injured under their trusteeship. OPA further instructs the designated Trustees to develop and implement a plan for the restoration, rehabilitation, replacement, or acquisition of the equivalent of the natural resources under their trusteeship. The regulations for natural resource damage assessments under OPA are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 990.

3.3.2 The National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321, *et seq.*; 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508, sets forth a specific process of impact analysis and public review. NEPA is the basic national charter for the protection of the environment. Its purposes are to "encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and the environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; and to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation" 42 U.S.C. §4321. NEPA provides a mandate and a framework for federal agencies to consider all reasonably foreseeable environmental effects of their proposed actions and to involve and inform the public in the decision-making process. NEPA also established the Council on

Environmental Quality (CEQ) in the Executive Office of the President to formulate and recommend national policies which ensure that the programs of the federal government promote improvement of the quality of the environment.

Generally, when it is uncertain whether an action will have a significant effect, federal agencies will begin the NEPA planning process by preparing an environmental assessment (EA). The EA may undergo a public review and comment period. Federal agencies may then review the comments and make a determination. Depending on whether the effects of a proposed action are considered significant, an environmental impact statement (EIS) or a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) will be issued.

In accordance with the regulations implementing the OPA NRDA process, the Trustees will integrate OPA restoration planning with the NEPA process (15 CFR § 990.23). Accordingly, the draft DARP will be integrated with a NEPA EA document. The integrated process allows the Trustees to meet the public involvement processes of OPA and NEPA concurrently.

This draft DARP/EA is not a complete assessment under NEPA for the Hill Slough Restoration Project because this project is undergoing further planning and design. The federal Trustees anticipate that this project will require further NEPA assessment prior to implementation.

3.3.3 Other Federal and State Laws, Regulations, and Policies

As described above, OPA, NEPA, and federal regulations implementing these laws are the major federal laws and regulations guiding the development of this DARP/EA for restoration of injured resources and services resulting from this spill. However, there are other federal and state laws, regulations or policies that may be pertinent to either the approval of this DARP/EA or to implementation of the specific restoration actions proposed herein. Potentially relevant laws, regulations, and policies are set forth below.

3.3.3.1 Federal Laws, Regulations, and Policies

Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. 1251, et seq.

The federal Water Pollution Control Act (commonly referred to as the Clean Water Act, CWA, or the Act) is the principal federal statute governing water quality. The Act's objective is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters. The CWA regulates both the direct (point source) and indirect (non-point source) discharge of pollutants into the Nation's waters.

Section 402 of the Act established the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program. The Act allows EPA to authorize state governments to implement the NPDES program. Section 301 of the Act prohibits the discharge into navigable waters of any pollutant by any person from a point source unless it is in compliance with a NPDES permit. Section 319 of the Act directs states to identify best management practices and measures to reduce non-point source pollution.

Section 311 of the CWA regulates, *inter alia*, the discharge of oil and other hazardous substances into navigable waters, adjoining shorelines, and waters of the contiguous zone. The CWA allows the federal government to remove the substance and assess the removal costs against the responsible party. The CWA defines removal costs to include costs for the restoration or replacement of natural resources damaged or destroyed as a result of a discharge of oil or a hazardous substance.

Section 404 of the Act authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) to issue permits, after notice and opportunity for public hearings, for the discharge of dredged or fill material into the waters of the United States. Section 401 of the Act provides that any applicant for a federal permit or license to conduct any activity which may result in any discharge into navigable waters must obtain certification of compliance with state water quality standards.

The Hill Slough Restoration Project may trigger the need for a CWA Section 404 permit. If so, the implementing entity for this project (CDFG), will be required to obtain this permit prior to project implementation.

Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Act of 1899, 33 U.S.C. § 401 et seq.

The Rivers and Harbors Act regulates the development and use of the nation's navigable waterways. Section 10 of the Act prohibits unauthorized obstruction or alteration of navigable waters and vests the Corps with authority to regulate discharges of fill and other materials into such waters.

The Trustees do not believe that either of the proposed restoration projects has the potential to negatively affect navigable waters because none of the projects will result in the obstruction or alteration of navigable waters. However, the Hill Slough Restoration implementing entity (CDFG) is responsible for consulting with the Corps to determine whether this project is considered to include navigable waterways and to ensure compliance with applicable law.

Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1451, et seq.

The goal of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) is to encourage and assist states to preserve, protect, develop and, where possible, restore and enhance valuable natural coastal resources. Participation by states is voluntary. California developed the California Coastal Management Program pursuant to the requirements of the federal CZMA. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) approved the California Coastal Management Program in 1977. The enforceable policies of the CZMA are found in Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act. For the entire California coast, except San Francisco Bay, the California Coastal Commission implements the federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972. For the San Francisco Bay estuary system (including the Suisun Marsh), the implementing agency is the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

Section 1456 of the CZMA requires that any federal action inside or outside of the coastal zone that affects any land or water use or natural resources of the coastal zone shall be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of approved state management programs. It states that no federal license or permit may be granted without giving the State the opportunity to concur that the project is consistent with the state's coastal policies. The regulations implementing the CZMA outline the consistency procedures. 15 C.F.R. Part 930.

The federal Trustee, USFWS, has determined that the Grizzly Island Complex Invasive Weed Control Project will not adversely affect coastal zone resources and/or uses and will likely result in beneficial effects. The Trustees conferred with BCDC regarding this project and it agreed with this determination. While the USFWS believes the Hill Slough Restoration Project will result in beneficial coastal effects and will be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the CZMA and the California Coastal Management Program, USFWS may seek a final determination when project planning and design is completed, depending on further communication with BCDC. Additionally, the project proponent will be required to seek the necessary BCDC permits.

Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1531, et seq.

The purpose of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is to conserve endangered and threatened species and the ecosystems upon which they depend. The ESA directs all federal agencies to utilize their authorities to further these purposes. Pursuant to Section 7 of the ESA, federal agencies shall, in consultation with the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and/or the Secretary of the Department of Commerce, ensure that any action that they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat.

Under the ESA, the NOAA Fisheries Service (formerly the National Marine Fisheries Service, or NFMS) and the USFWS publish lists of endangered and threatened species. Before initiating an action, the federal action agency, or its non-federal permit applicant, must ask the USFWS and/or NOAA Fisheries Service to provide a list of threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species and designated critical habitat that may be present in the project area. If no species or critical habitats are known to occur in the action area³, the federal action agency has no further ESA obligations under Section 7. If the federal action agency determines that a project may affect a listed species or designated critical habitat, consultation is required.

If the federal action agency concludes that the project will not adversely affect listed species or critical habitat, the agency submits a “not likely to adversely affect” determination to the USFWS and/or NOAA Fisheries Service. If the USFWS and/or NOAA Fisheries Service concurs with the federal action agency’s determination of “not

³ Action Area: All areas that may be affected directly or indirectly by the proposed action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action.

likely to adversely affect,” then the consultation (informal to this point) is completed and the decision is put in writing.

If the federal action agency determines that the project is likely to adversely affect either a listed species or its critical habitat, then more formal consultation procedures are required. There is a designated period in which to consult (90 days), and beyond that, another set period for the USFWS and/or NOAA Fisheries Service to prepare a biological opinion (45 days). The determination of whether or not the proposed action would be likely to jeopardize the species or adversely modify its critical habitat is contained in the biological opinion. If a jeopardy or adverse modification determination is made, the biological opinion must identify any reasonable and prudent alternatives that could allow the project to move forward.

There are several federally-listed species that inhabit Suisun Marsh, three of which were potentially impacted by the spill. The brackish marsh assemblage at Suisun Slough includes habitat suitable for the salt-marsh harvest mouse and the California clapper rail, both federally-listed as endangered. Also, extended network of tidal marsh provides critical fish nursery habitat for the federally-threatened Delta smelt.

The Grizzly Island Complex Invasive Weed Control project is designed to provide habitat benefits to a variety of species that utilize Suisun Marsh and is not expected to adversely impact any special-status species. However, in compliance with ESA, the USFWS will conduct an Intra-Service Section 7 consultation to assess the impact of the proposed invasive weed control project on federally-listed species or any designated critical habitat.

The Hill Slough Restoration Project is expected to provide overall long-term benefits to marsh habitat and associated species. This project is pending further planning and design and compliance with applicable consultation and/or permit requirements under the ESA will be required prior to project implementation.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1801, et seq.

The federal Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) as amended and reauthorized by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 establishes a program to promote the protection of essential fish habitat (EFH) in the review of projects conducted under federal permits, licenses, or other authorities that affect or have the potential to affect such habitat. After EFH has been described and identified in fishery management plans by the regional fishery management councils, federal agencies are obligated to consult with the Secretary of Commerce with respect to any action authorized, funded, or undertaken, or proposed to be authorized, funded, or undertaken, by such agency that may adversely affect any EFH.

The Trustees do not believe that either of the proposed restoration projects will adversely affect EFH. A more complete evaluation of any impacts to EFH can be made upon completion of the Hill Slough Restoration Project planning and design.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. § 661, et seq.

The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) provides the basic authority for the USFWS involvement in the evaluation of impacts to fish and wildlife from proposed water resource development projects. The FWCA requires that federal agencies consult with the USFWS (and/or NOAA Fisheries as may be appropriate) and state wildlife agencies for activities that affect, control or modify waters of any stream or bodies of water, in order to minimize the adverse impacts of such actions on fish and wildlife resources and habitat. This consultation is generally incorporated into the process of complying with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, NEPA or other federal permit, license or review requirements.

The Trustees believe the proposed Hill Slough Restoration Project will have an overall beneficial effect on fish and wildlife resources. A more complete evaluation of any impacts to fish and wildlife can be made upon completion of the Hill Slough Restoration Project planning and design.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, 16 U.S.C. § 703, et seq.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) implements four international treaties involving protection of migratory birds, including all marine birds, and is one of the earliest statutes to provide for avian protection by the federal government. The MBTA generally prohibits actions to “pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, attempt to take, kill, possess, offer for sale, sell, offer to purchase, deliver for shipment, ship, cause to be shipped, deliver for transportation, transport, cause to be transported, carry, or cause to be carried by any means whatever, receive for shipment, transportation or carriage, or export, at any time, or in any manner, any migratory bird...or any part, nest, or egg of such bird.” Exceptions to these prohibitions are only allowed under regulations or permits issued by USFWS. Hunting of migratory game birds is regulated annually through a process in which the USFWS sets “framework regulations” and “special regulations” designed to maintain sustainable hunting levels. Framework regulations are the foundation of annual regulations and consist of the outside dates for opening and closing seasons, season length, daily bag and possession limits, and shooting hours. Special regulations consist of framework regulations that are applied on a small scale and consist of split seasons, zones and special seasons, state regulations conform to the federal regulations. All other actions prohibited by the MBTA are only allowed under specific permits issued by the USFWS Regional Bird Permit Offices. These permits include special use permits for rehabilitation, possession and salvage of oiled birds during spill response, which usually provides the primary data for determining extent of injury to marine birds and the need for restoration.

Implementation of restoration projects identified in this DARP/EA will be conducted in full compliance with the MBTA.

Executive Order (EO) 11988 – Construction in Flood Plains

The 1977 Executive Order 11988 seeks to avoid, to the extent possible, the long-and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of flood plains and to avoid direct or indirect support of development in flood plains wherever there is a practicable alternative. Each federal agency is responsible for evaluating the potential effects of any action it may take in a flood plain. Before taking an action, the federal agency should determine whether the proposed action would occur in a flood plain. For any major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, the evaluation would be included in the agency's environmental impact statement prepared pursuant to NEPA. The agency should consider alternatives to avoid adverse effects and incompatible development in flood plains. If the only practicable alternative requires sitting in a flood plain, the agency should: (1) design or modify the action to minimize potential harm, and (2) prepare and circulate a notice containing an explanation of why the action is proposed to be located in the flood plain.

The Trustees do not expect that the Hill Slough Restoration Project would result in adverse effects to, or incompatible development of a flood plain. However, this question can be addressed in more detail once project planning and design are finalized.

Executive Order 13112 - Invasive Species

The 1999 Executive Order 13112 requires that all federal agencies whose actions may affect the status of invasive species shall, to the extent practicable and permitted by law, (1) identify such actions, and (2) take actions specified in the Order to address the problem consistent with their authorities and budgetary resources; and (3) not authorize, fund, or carry out actions that they believe are likely to cause or promote the introduction or spread of invasive species in the United States or elsewhere unless, "pursuant to guidelines that it has prescribed, the agency has determined and made public its determination that the benefits of such actions clearly outweigh the potential harm caused by invasive species; and that all feasible and prudent measures to minimize risk of harm will be taken in conjunction with the actions."

The Trustees do not believe that either of the proposed restoration projects have the potential to cause or promote the introduction or spread of invasive species. To the contrary, one of the projects is aimed at the removal or control of non-native species.

Executive Order (EO) 12898 - Environmental Justice

The 1994 Executive Order 12898 requires each federal agency to identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects

of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. In the memorandum to heads of departments and agencies that accompanied executive Order 12898, the President specifically recognized the importance of procedures under NEPA for identifying and addressing environmental justice concerns. The memorandum states that “each federal agency shall analyze the environmental effects, including human health, economic and social effects, of federal actions, including effects on minority communities and low-income communities, when such analysis is required by [NEPA].” The memorandum particularly emphasizes the importance of NEPA’s public participation process, directing that “each federal agency shall provide opportunities for community input in the NEPA process.” Agencies are further directed to “identify potential effects and mitigation measures in consultation with affected communities, and improve the accessibility of meetings, crucial documents, and notices.” The CEQ has oversight of the federal government’s compliance with Executive Order 12898 and NEPA.

The Trustees will involve the affected community by providing notice to the public, seeking public comments, holding a public meeting and providing public access to the Administrative Record.

Information Quality Law, Public Law 106-554, Section 515

Information disseminated by federal agencies to the public after October 1, 2002, is subject to information quality guidelines developed by each agency pursuant to Section 515 of Public Law 106-554 that are intended to ensure and maximize the quality of the objectivity, utility and integrity of such information. This DARP/EA is an information product covered by information quality guidelines established by NOAA and DOI for this purpose. The quality of the information contained herein is consistent with these guidelines, as applicable.

3.3.3.2 State Laws, Regulations, and Policies

California Environmental Quality Act, Pub. Res. Code 21000-21178.1

CEQA was adopted in 1970. Its basic purposes are to inform California governmental agencies and the public about the potentially significant effects of proposed activities, to identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced, to prevent significant avoidable damage to the environment through adoption of feasible alternatives or mitigation measures, and to disclose the reasons for agency approval of a project resulting in significant environmental effects.

The CEQA process begins with a preliminary review as to whether CEQA applies to the project in question. Generally, a project is subject to CEQA if it involves a discretionary action that is carried out, funded or authorized by an agency (i.e., the lead agency), and that has the potential to impact the environment. Once the lead agency determines that the project is subject to CEQA, the lead agency must then determine whether the action is exempt from CEQA compliance under either a statutory or categorical exemption.

Examples of categorical exemptions include actions taken by regulatory agencies for protection of natural resources and actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment (Title 14 CCR, Chapter 3, §§ 15307-15308).

If the lead agency determines that the project is not exempt, then an Initial Study is generally prepared to determine whether the project may have a significant effect on the environment. Based on the results of the Initial Study, the lead agency determines whether to prepare a Negative Declaration (i.e., the project will not result in significant adverse effects to the environment) or an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The test for determining whether an EIR or negative declaration must be prepared is whether a fair argument can be made based on substantial evidence that the project may have a significant adverse effect on the environment.

CEQA encourages the use of a federal EIS or FONSI prepared pursuant to NEPA when such documents are available, or the preparation of joint state/federal documents, in lieu of preparing a separate EIR or negative declaration under CEQA. However, in this case neither proposed restoration project will rely on this DARF/EA for CEQA compliance. The Grizzly Island Complex Invasive Weed Control Project is considered categorically exempt from CEQA. CDFG is in the process of preparing separate CEQA environmental documentation for the Hill Slough Restoration Project.

California Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act, Government Code § 9574.1, et seq.

The Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act became effective on September 24, 1990. This legislation is the key state compensatory mechanism for subsequent spills and establishes a comprehensive liability scheme for damages resulting from marine oil spills. Recoverable damages include damages for the injury to, destruction of, or loss of natural resources, including the reasonable costs of assessing the injury, destruction, or loss, the cost of rehabilitating wildlife, habitat, and other resources, and the loss of use and enjoyment of natural resources, public beaches, and other public resources. Responsible parties are required to fully mitigate adverse impacts to wildlife, fisheries, and wildlife and fisheries habitat by successfully carrying out environmental restoration projects or funding the activities of CDFG to carry out environmental restoration projects.

The Suisun Marsh Preservation Act of 1977, Public Resources Code §§ 29000 et seq.

The *Nejedly-Bagley-Z'berg Suisun Marsh Act* was enacted in 1974 to require the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and the CDFG to prepare a plan to preserve the integrity and assure continued wildlife use of the Suisun Marsh, approximately 85,000 acres of tidal marsh, managed wetlands, and waterways in southern Solano County. The Suisun marsh is the largest remaining brackish wetland complex in San Francisco Bay, comprises more than ten percent of California's remaining wetland area, and is deemed a wildlife habitat area of international importance. The Suisun Marsh Preservation Act (Cal. Pub. Res. Code §§ 29000–29612) was enacted in

1977 to incorporate the findings and policies contained in the *Suisun Marsh Protection Plan* into state law and to empower BCDC to implement the plan through its regulatory authority.

The Suisun Marsh Preservation Act provides that, in addition to obtaining any other required permit, any person wishing to perform or undertake any development in the marsh must obtain a marsh development permit from the BCDC or local government having jurisdiction over the land . Prior to implementation of the proposed restoration projects described in this DARP/EA, the implementing entities will ensure any required marsh development permits are obtained.

California Endangered Species Act, Fish and Game Code §§ 2050 et seq.

Pursuant to the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (California Fish and Game Code Sections 2050 et seq.), it is the policy of the State of California that state agencies should not approve projects that would jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of habitat essential to the continued existence of those species if there are reasonable and prudent alternatives available. However, if reasonable alternatives are infeasible, individual projects may be approved if appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures are provided.

Pursuant to the CESA, the Fish and Game Commission has established a list of threatened and endangered species based on criteria recommended by the California Department of Fish and Game. Section 2080 of the California Fish and Game Code prohibits “take” of any species that the Commission determines to be an endangered species or a threatened species. Take is defined in Section 86 of the Fish and Game Code as “hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill.” The CESA allows for take incidental to otherwise lawful development projects. The CESA emphasizes early consultation to avoid potential impacts to rare, endangered, or threatened species and to develop appropriate mitigation planning to offset project-caused losses of populations of listed species and their essential habitats.

There are several state-listed species that inhabit Suisun Marsh, three of which were potentially impacted by the spill. The brackish marsh assemblage at Suisun Slough includes habitat suitable for the salt-marsh harvest mouse and the California clapper rail, both state-listed as endangered. Also, extended network of tidal marsh provides critical fish nursery habitat for the state-threatened Delta smelt.

Implementation of the Grizzly Island Complex Invasive Weed Control Project is not expected to trigger any CESA issues.

The Hill Slough Restoration Project is expected to provide overall long-term benefits to marsh habitat and associated species. This project is pending further planning and design and compliance with CESA will be required prior to project implementation.

Public Resources Code, Division 6, § 6001, et seq.

The Public Resources Code, Division 6, gives the California State Lands Commission trustee ownership over State sovereign tide and submerged lands. Permits or leases may be required from the State Lands Commission if a restoration project is located on such lands.

3.3.3.3 Other Potentially Applicable Statutes and Regulations

Additional legal requirements potentially applicable to NRD restoration activities under the statutes or their implementing regulations, or Executive Orders are listed below:

- National Park Act of August 19, 1916 (Organic Act), 16 USC 1, *et seq.*
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 460, *et seq.*
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended (16 U.S.C. 470-470t, 110)
- Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. 7401, *et seq.*
- Executive Order 11514 – Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality
- Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands
- Executive Order 11991 – Relating to the Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality
- Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, Water Code Sections 13000 et seq.

4.0 Injury Quantification and Restoration Planning

This section describes the Trustees' efforts to quantify the nature, extent, and severity of injuries to natural resources resulting from the discharge. It begins with an overview of the data collected during and after the discharge followed by a description of the damage assessment strategy and methods used to determine and quantify the injuries. The chapter also presents summaries of the injury quantification results, restoration alternatives including a no-action alternative, and restoration scaling for all projects. The environmental impacts, or consequences, of the projects are described in section 4.3, and potential cumulative impacts are summarized in section 4.5.

The Trustees have used available information, focused studies, and expert scientific judgment to arrive at the best estimate of the injuries caused by the spill. Principal investigators included state and federal scientists, and consultants with damage assessment experience. There is, however, some uncertainty inherent in the assessment of impacts from oil spills. While collecting more information may increase the precision of the estimate of the impacts, the Trustees believe that the type and scale of restoration actions would not substantially change as a result of more research. The Trustees have sought to balance the desire for more information with the reality that further research would cost more money and would delay the implementation of the restoration projects.

4.1 Overview of Data Collection and Studies

Delays of several days to weeks occurred in the collection of various portions of the ephemeral data, but significant efforts were still made to collect important and relevant data for this case. Division A was largely bioremediated, so less data was needed to quantify the complete injury of that area. However, Division B had many studies performed in it. Some studies were conducted outside of the boundaries of the Club since it was initially unclear whether diesel fuel had reached the sloughs beyond the levees that encompass the Club. It was later determined that no discharge of diesel fuel to areas outside of the Club boundaries could be confirmed, so the studies conducted in those outer areas were not used.

Data collection was performed cooperatively, with much of it collected by the contractors for the RPs in tandem with Trustee representatives. Each type of investigation that was used to assess the extent or degree of injury is briefly described below. The Trustees also used some response data to conduct their assessment of natural resource damages (NRD).

Water and Sediment Chemistry: Water and sediment chemistry samples were collected following the spill for chemical analysis to document the waterway and shoreline areas that were contaminated with diesel fuel following the discharge. The samples also helped give an approximation of the concentrations that were present, though diesel fuel contains enough volatile components that the detected concentrations were almost certainly less than the highest concentrations that had been present.

Vegetation Surveys: Both reconnaissance-level surveys and a more quantitative vegetation survey were conducted to help assess where plants and habitat injury occurred from the spill and response-related activities at the Duck Club. This was used as one line of evidence for injury analysis of marsh habitat affected by the discharge. The surveys also allowed a greater understanding of the habitats that are present on the site.

Marsh Bird Survey: A bird survey was conducted to allow a better understanding of the bird resources present and utilizing this particular area of the marsh during the spill and response activities. Both a Trustee representative and contractor were present for the survey which used both bird calls as well as visual identification to confirm the presence of bird species.

Fish Surveys: Fish surveys were conducted both within the Duck Club as well as in the adjacent slough habitats to identify the types and numbers of fish utilizing these habitats at the time. Researchers from UC Davis performed the work done outside of the boundaries of the Duck Club, while the RP contractors and Trustees did the survey work within the Duck Club boundaries.

Macroinvertebrate Surveys: A benthic macroinvertebrate survey was performed in the slough channels within the boundaries of the Duck Club. Various indexes were computed with the goal of assessing the impact of the spill on the benthic invertebrate community. Observations of mortality of water column and epibenthic species such as crayfish were also noted. This work was important to document the spatial extent and severity of the impacts, especially since there was a delay in the trustees' ability to access the site for ephemeral data collection. The impacts to the invertebrate community were noted to be more persistent than the chemical residues due to dispersion and attenuation of the diesel fuel in the environment. The invertebrate study allowed assessment of impacted slough reaches that no longer had detectable chemical residues once sampling commenced.

Small Mammal (salt marsh harvest mouse) Surveys: The Trustees and contractors worked together to trap small mammals at the Duck Club following the discharge of the diesel fuel. This was important to investigate the presence of the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse at the impacted site. Biometric techniques were utilized in the field and a subset of samples of dead organisms was sent in for deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) analysis to distinguish them from the Western Harvest mouse. Approximately 70 SMHM were removed from the property during post-spill exclusion trapping. Field workers collected 3 oiled, decayed harvest mice (genetic confirmations were not possible due to their oiled and decayed status) and a dead juvenile SMHM (confirmed) during response activities.

Aerial Multispectral Survey (Ocean Imaging): Ocean Imaging Corp. (OI) was contracted to utilize its remote sensing resources and expertise to map vegetation and substrate change in and around the region of the Suisun Marsh diesel spill which occurred at the Drake Spring Duck Club. OI utilized its 4-channel DMSC aerial sensor to image the region on 5/18/04 and again on 7/15/04. One of the primary results of this work was a

map indicating "significant vegetation stress", as measured by major decreases in normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) between the two flights.

Wildlife Collections by the Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN): As with any significant spill, wildlife recovery efforts were conducted. The wildlife intake logs were used to quantify the numbers of each species that were taken in as well as how many of these animals died. This provided a list of species that were known to have been directly affected by the discharge or related response activities.

4.2 Injury and Damages Assessment

The goal of injury assessment is to determine the nature, extent and severity of injuries to natural resources, thus providing the technical basis for evaluating and scaling restoration actions. The OPA regulations define injury as “an observable or measurable adverse change in a natural resource or impairment of a natural resource service.” Diminution in the quantity or quality of recreational use of natural resources also constitutes an injury as defined by the OPA regulations.

For the injured areas, the Trustees selected appropriate assessment procedures based on (1) the range of procedures available under section 990.27(b) of the OPA regulations; (2) the time and cost necessary to implement the procedures; (3) the potential nature, degree, and spatial and temporal extent of the injury; (4) potential restoration actions for the injury; (5) the relevance and adequacy of information generated by the procedures to meet information requirements of planning appropriate restoration actions; and (6) input from scientific experts.

The injury assessment is focused on determining both the magnitude of the injury and the time to full recovery. Four different geographic areas, each with unique estimates of injury and time to full recovery were considered (Figure 4). This produced an estimate of the direct and interim (from the time of injury until full recovery) losses of resources resulting from the oil spill.

4.2.1 Damage Assessment Methods and Quantification

Quantification of damages relied on a service-to-service restoration-based approach; that is, the Trustees sought to determine appropriate restoration projects to compensate for the interim losses between the time of the spill and full recovery to conditions had the spill not occurred (see NOAA 1997). Restoration scaling is the process of determining the appropriate size of a restoration project. These projects, because of their compensatory nature, are intended to provide resources “of the same type and quality, and of comparable value” as those injured (NOAA 1995). For this task, the Trustees relied upon Habitat Equivalency Analysis.

The HEA method is divided into two main tasks: the debit calculation and the credit calculation. The debit calculation involves determining the amount of “natural resource services” that the affected resources would have provided had they not been injured. The

unit of measure may be acre-years, stream feet-years, or some other metric (such as bird-years). The credit calculation seeks to estimate the quantity of those resource services that would be created by a proposed compensatory restoration project. Thus, the size of the restoration project is said to be “scaled” to equal the size of the injury. Consistent with federal recommendations for NRDA (NOAA 1997; see also NOAA 1999) and generally accepted practice in the field, future years are discounted at a rate of 3 percent per year. This discounting is done based on the assumption that present services are more valuable than future services, and that some uncertainty exists when estimating future restoration benefits.

4.2.1.1 Estimation of Impacts to Several Areas of the Marsh

The Trustees evaluated injury at two distinct areas within both divisions A and B, the heavily impacted and the less impacted areas (Figure 4). The impacts in these areas were to a variety of natural resource services associated with wetland marsh and transitional upland habitats from this area, as reflected in both the types of organisms collected and the types of studies performed.

Division A

The heavily-impacted 9.25 acre area of division A was bioremediated with heavy equipment for weeks with addition of nutrients to promote microbial degradation of the hydrocarbons that were in the soil and shallow groundwater. The habitat in this area was completely disrupted, appearing similar to that of a plowed agricultural field. It was therefore categorized as 100% injured, with an estimated recovery time of 10 years to achieve complete recovery and a return to the baseline level of natural resource services.

The lesser-impacted 5.22 acres immediately south of the bioremediated area within division A was estimated to be substantially less injured. Many animals, especially birds, were flushed from the area and indirectly harmed or deprived of nesting habitat that otherwise would have been available. Accordingly, the less-impacted area of Division A was estimated to be 25% injured, with a recovery time of two years to achieve complete return to the baseline level of natural resource services.

Division B

The heavily-impacted 68.54 acres of division B is the area where many dead organisms were found on or near the affected sloughs. Many birds were flushed by the diesel fuel or the response activities. Additionally, there was an active hazing effort that was employed in the response to help minimize the oiling of more birds. The desired effect of the hazing is to make the birds go elsewhere, which deprived these birds of the use of the Club habitat for foraging, resting, and breeding or nesting activities. The net affect on the habitat caused by the spill and response activity was that organisms other than just the slough-dwelling aquatic organisms were impacted. There was also an impact from the disruption of the normal water management cycle practiced by the Club which resulted in a drying out of the marsh during the period of response activity. The organisms that utilized the habitat around these sloughs were injured along with aquatic organisms, as is reflected in Figure 4. Accordingly, the heavily-impacted area of Division B was

estimated to be 80% injured, with a recovery time of four years to achieve complete return to the initial baseline of natural resource services.

The lesser-impacted 105.6 acres of division B is the area where the more indirect effects from the response activity, water cycle disruption, hazing, and interruption of nesting or breeding opportunity impacted the habitat. This is captured by the area in green in Figure 4. Accordingly, the area was estimated to be 40% injured, with a recovery time of three years to achieve complete return to the baseline of natural resource services.

Restoration Categories

The Trustees propose to implement compensatory restoration projects involving both managed marsh and tidal marsh areas near the spill incident, providing for restoration of the same resources injured on the site. Although most species are likely to benefit from both projects, waterfowl (ducks) will likely accrue more benefits from the restoration actions in the managed marsh area (Grizzly Island Complex), with other resources benefiting from the tidal marsh restoration (Hill Slough). Both projects are located on public lands devoted to natural resources management and are expected to provide long-term natural resources benefits.

4.2.2 Restoration Project Selection Criteria

The Trustees considered numerous restoration alternatives to compensate the public for spill-related injuries. Each restoration alternative was subjectively evaluated using the criteria described below. This process resulted in the identification of the two proposed projects.

Phase I - INITIAL SCREENING CRITERIA: The following initial screening criteria were used to identify the proposed restoration projects presented in this DARP/EA.

- A. **Consistency with Trustees' Restoration Goals.** Projects must meet the Trustees' intent to restore, rehabilitate, replace, enhance, or acquire the equivalent of the injured resources and resource services.
- B. **Technical Feasibility.** The project must be technically and procedurally sound. Consider the level of risk or uncertainty and the degree of success of projects utilizing similar or identical techniques in the past.
- C. **Cost-Effectiveness.** Consider the relationship of expected project costs to expected resource and service benefits. Seek the least costly approach to deliver an equivalent or greater amount and type of benefits.
- D. **Relationship to Injured Resources and/or Services (nexus).** Projects that restore rehabilitate, replace, enhance, or acquire the equivalent of the same or similar resources or services injured by the spill are preferred to projects that benefit other comparable resources or services. Consider the types of resources or

services injured by the spill, the location, and the connection or nexus of project benefits to those injured resources.

- E. **Time to Provide Benefits.** Consider the time it takes for benefits to be provided to the target ecosystem or public to minimize interim resource loss (sooner = better).
- F. **Duration of Benefits.** Consider the expected duration of benefits from the project. Long-term benefits are the objective.
- G. **Multiple Resource and Service Benefits.** Consider the extent to which the project benefits more than one natural resource or resource service. Measure in terms of the quantity and associated quality of the types of natural resources or service benefits expected to result from the project.
- H. **Comprehensive Range of Projects.** Consider the extent to which the project contributes to the more comprehensive restoration package. Evaluate the project for the degree to which it benefits any otherwise uncompensated spill injuries.

Phase II - ADDITIONAL SCREENING CRITERIA: To the extent that sufficient information was available, these additional screening criteria were used to further refine the selection of the restoration projects in this DARP/EA. These additional criteria are *not considered to be of lesser importance* than the initial screening criteria. However, these criteria are generally more appropriately applied after more detailed project plans and scopes of work are developed.

- I. **Avoidance of Adverse Impacts.** The project should avoid or minimize adverse impacts to the environment and the associated natural resources. Adverse impacts may be caused by collateral injuries when implementing, or as a result of implementing, the project. Consider avoiding future short-term and long-term injuries as well as mitigating past injuries.
- J. **Likelihood of Success.** Consider the potential for success and the level of expected return of resources and resource services. Consider also the ability to evaluate the success of the project, the ability to correct problems that arise during the course of the project, and the capability of individuals or organizations expected to implement the project.
- K. **Compliance with Applicable Federal, State, and Local Laws and Policies.** The project must comply with applicable laws and policies.
- L. **Public Health and Safety.** The project must not pose a threat to public health and safety.
- M. **Maintenance and Oversight of Project.** Consider the opportunities to protect the implemented project and resulting benefits over time through conservation

easements, land acquisition, or other types of resource dedication. Long-term protection is preferable.

- N. **Opportunities for Collaboration.** Consider the possibility of matching funds, in-kind services, volunteer assistance, and coordination with other ongoing or proposed projects. External funding and support services that reduce costs or extend benefits are preferable. Funds, however, shall not be used to offset the costs of ongoing mitigation projects required pursuant to state or federal law.
- O. **Total Cost and Accuracy of Estimate.** The total cost estimate should include costs to design, implement, monitor, and manage the project. Its validity is determined by the completeness, accuracy, and reliability of methods used to estimate costs, as well as the credibility of the person or entity submitting the estimate.

Phase III - SUPPLEMENTAL CRITERIA: The following criteria were also considered.

- P. **Ability to Document Benefits to the Public.** Consider the ability to document receipt or delivery of benefits to the public as a result of a project or other use of funds.
- Q. **Educational/Research Value.** Consider the potential for public education and outreach and/or clarifying restoration planning issues.
- R. **Non-Duplication.** Projects should not duplicate other efforts already ongoing at the same location.

4.3 Restoration Alternatives

The following sections provide the details regarding the range of potential restoration alternatives, and, for each injury category, a description of the proposed restoration project and the scaling of that project. Summarized results of the scaling are provided in Appendix B. Included with each restoration project description below is a discussion of its impacts under “Environmental Consequences.” Project costs are intended to include design, permitting, implementation, and biological monitoring.

As described previously, the injury assessment was habitat-based, so the injury evaluation that is presented below forms the basis of the restoration debt owed. This debt would then be compensated for by the restoration projects. A summary of the injury details is presented below. The Trustees propose to implement restoration in both tidal and managed marshes to compensate for the injuries caused by this discharge. The tidal project is intended to provide greater uplift in baseline credit to a wide range of species injured because of the spill. The managed marsh project is intended to provide habitat improvement to multiple species, but also specifically to benefit waterfowl (duck) species injured because of the spill. A summary of the important habitat-based injury parameters from the HEA was presented in Section 4.2.1.1.

4.3.1 Tidal Marsh Restoration Project

Background

Tidal marsh refers to a marsh in which the water level fluctuates with the tide. Historically, Suisun Marsh and Bay (Suisun) included more than 68,000 acres of tidal wetlands. Over 90% of these wetlands were diked and drained for conversion to agricultural uses, beginning in the mid-1800's. A series of dry years resulted in increased salinity in Suisun, which limited production/success of the farms. Many farms failed and most were replaced by waterfowl hunting clubs. Water quality degraded further when the Central Valley Project came on line in the 1940s, and then again when the State Water Project and CVP began Delta diversions to San Luis Reservoir in the 1970s. Today, most of the levees originally constructed for agricultural reclamation form part of the infrastructure for managing water levels in seasonal non-tidal (managed) wetlands (Goals Project 1999). Many diked wetlands in the Suisun Marsh have progressively subsided and suffer from lack of adequate drainage. This, coupled with increased water salinity, has contributed to increased soil salinity, which impacts wetland habitat quality and increases maintenance costs.

After more than 100 years of land reclamation, few areas within Suisun Marsh remain with natural flows and elevations. Many linear miles of tertiary channels have been lost, which are important spawning and rearing areas for native fish and are used for feeding and nesting by some waterbirds. Of the natural channels that remain, most have degraded natural habitat values from loss of the tidal prism, dredging, levee confinement, isolation from the marsh plain, high water flow, and poor water quality. Tidal marshes, which were once the most common habitat type in the Bay/Delta system, are now restricted to remnant, disjunctive patches. Most of the remaining brackish marshes in Suisun lack certain attributes of fully-functioning saline and brackish emergent wetlands (CDFG, 2006).

Habitat Conservation Issues

Numerous documents and many agencies have recommended tidal restoration in Suisun Marsh. The Suisun Marsh Protection Plan (1977) recommends wetland restoration for agricultural lands within the management zones of Suisun, "where feasible, historic marshes should be returned to wetlands status, either as tidal or managed wetlands." The Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP) of the California Bay-Delta Authority identifies more specific recovery measures, to restore tidal action to 5,000 to 7,000 acres in the Suisun Marsh within seven years of its initiation. The Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals recommends restoration of tidal marsh in the Suisun subregion, with a specific recommendation of more than doubling the area of tidal marsh to between 30,000 and 35,000 acres (Goals Project 1999). The Suisun subregion includes the Suisun Marsh and the Contra Costa shoreline, which extends from west of the Carquinez Strait to east of Pittsburg and includes Browns and Sherman Island (CDFG, 2006).

Restoration Alternatives

Restoration options that re-introduce tidal action to a marsh environment are available in the Suisun Marsh. Subsidence and low-elevation is a common problem for such sites, requiring either long time-frames for natural deposition of sediments or a large amount of fill to be brought onto the site. While these sites are in the more inundated state they would not provide in-kind benefits for the injuries sustained in the marsh habitat at the spill site. The Trustees evaluated the Restoration options listed in the box below.

PROJECT CONCEPTS	BENEFITS
Restore diked and managed marsh at Hill Slough, Solano County, to tidal wetlands by restoring tidal flow to the site.	Brackish tidal marsh assemblage, including salt marsh harvest mouse
Restore diked and managed marsh at Meins Landing, Solano County, to tidal wetlands by restoring tidal flow to the site.	Brackish tidal marsh assemblage, including salt marsh harvest mouse
Restore diked and managed marsh at Blacklock property, Solano County, to tidal wetlands by restoring tidal flow to the site.	Brackish tidal marsh assemblage, including several fish and bird species

The Hill Slough site is proposed because, of the tidal projects evaluated, it is expected to provide the most in-kind benefits. Other tidal restoration projects that were considered include Meins Landing and Blacklock. The Meins Landing project is to be mitigation for Department of Water Resources (DWR) work at Van Sickle Island, and there is some uncertainty about whether any restoration credit will remain after the mitigation needs for DWR are fulfilled.

The Blacklock restoration objectives includes restoring the property to a self-sustaining functioning brackish tidal marsh by restoring tidal action, reversing subsidence, and promoting establishment of native vegetation and a tidal marsh channel network appropriate to this location within the San Francisco Estuary (DWR, 2006). A large portion of the Blacklock property is at a low elevation, and was projected to flood leaving a rim of salt marsh habitat around it once levees are breached. This property actually developed a breach on its own, and that breach was expanded, effectively restoring the property. The site is anticipated to gain elevation over time as sediments are naturally deposited, but there will be a significant time delay to realize the marsh habitat benefits that are expected to accrue sooner at the Hill Slough site. The Blacklock project is projected to create much less habitat than the Hill Slough Restoration project.

Proposed Project

Restore diked and managed marsh at Hill Slough, Solano County, to tidal wetlands by restoring tidal flow to the site.

While this project is largely conceptual at this point, the Trustees provide the following general project background and description.

The Hill Slough Restoration Project will restore tidal wetlands and moist grassland habitat to approximately 950 acres of diked seasonal and perennial wetlands. The project will consist of areas of the Hill Slough Wildlife Area that are not already fully tidal.

The wetland restoration will re-introduce tidal action to the site, restoring a transition of perennial aquatic habitat in the deepest areas, low intertidal marsh, high intertidal marsh, and lowland alluvial habitat. The desired outcome is a self-sustaining marsh ecosystem created through restoration of natural hydrologic and sedimentation processes and reliance on natural abiotic and biological succession processes. The resulting tidal marsh will contribute to the Bay-Delta food web as well as provide valuable habitat for listed species reliant on the tidal areas of Suisun Marsh. Implementation of this project will also help meet the CALFED goal of 5,000 to 7,000 acres of tidal restoration in the Suisun Marsh region.

The Hill Slough Restoration Project will be conducted in three phases:

- Phase 1. Preliminary Restoration Design, Environmental Documentation, and Permitting. This phase includes preparation of the preliminary restoration design and plan, as well as an interpretive program, environmental documents, and permits.
- Phase 2. Final design, implementation, and pre-project/baseline monitoring.
- Phase 3. Post-project monitoring.

The Hill Slough Restoration Project was originally slated to restore 208 acres west of Grizzly Island Road. For the smaller, original project, Phase I was nearly complete with a Preliminary Restoration and Management Plan, a completed CEQA document (CDFG, 2005) and a permitting package was written, but not approved. The current, larger Hill Slough Restoration Project seeks to expand on the existing project and planning to include areas east and south of the original 208 acre site bringing the total project acreage to approximately 950 acres. The project is able to expand by incorporating the raising of Grizzly Island Road into the project with the help of Solano County Public Works. Raising Grizzly Island Road will prevent the need for the project to construct levees to protect the road, allow the project to expand east of Grizzly Island Road, as well as alleviate flooding issues on this section of the road.

The Hill Slough Restoration Project is favored by the Trustees due to its strong nexus with the natural resources that were injured in the spill, in part due to its close proximity to the spill site and the projects broad support from other natural resource agencies including the Suisun Marsh Charter Group. The Suisun Marsh Charter agency consists of managers with primary responsibility for actions in the Suisun Marsh. This agency formed a Charter Group to develop an implementation plan for the Suisun Marsh that would protect and enhance the Pacific Flyway and existing wildlife values, endangered species, and water-project supply quality. Because the Suisun Marsh includes private lands, the Suisun Resource Conservation District (SRCD) also serves on the Charter Group to represent the interests of private landowners. Members of the Charter Group include the USFWS, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), CDFG, California Department of Water Resources (DWR), and California Bay-Delta Authority (CBDA). The Charter Group has also consulted other participating agencies, including the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE).

Budget

The Trustees propose contributing \$800,000 toward this project.

4.3.2 Managed Marsh Restoration Project

Background

Suisun Marsh has been invaded with non-native weeds that are altering the marsh ecosystem, perennial pepperweed notable among them. Perennial pepperweed threatens the natural ecosystem of the Suisun Marsh, with infestations currently widespread and covering approximately 371 acres of CDFG owned acres (Figure 8). This plant forms dense monospecific stands in a wide variety of habitats and is very tolerant of a wide variety of salinities (Howald 2000). Stems and roots increase in density over time, eventually out-competing perennial native vegetation like native grasses, sedges, and rushes (Morisawa, 1999). Pepperweed also acts as a "salt pump", taking in salts from the soil via its roots and depositing them near the soil surface, altering soil salinity (Blank and Young 1997) and essentially permanently altering the habitat. Pepperweed is quickly becoming a dominant plant in many parts of the Suisun Marsh.

Conservation Issues

Unless control measures are implemented, pepperweed will continue to spread and displace native and sensitive species such as pickleweed, a plant strongly associated with the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse (CDFG 2002- 2003, Shellhammer *et al.* 1982), and California clapper rail (Goals Project, 2000). Two endangered plant species are also affected by pepperweed. The Species and Community Profiles prepared by the San Francisco Bay Area Wetlands Eco-system Goals Project of 2000 clearly states that pepperweed "actively encroaches on populations of endangered soft bird's-beak and Suisun thistle in Suisun Marsh." Furthermore, pepperweed out competes grasses that provide food for waterfowl in nesting areas (Howald, 2000) and which provides habitat for upland species such as Suisun shrew, northern harrier, burrowing owl, and song sparrows .

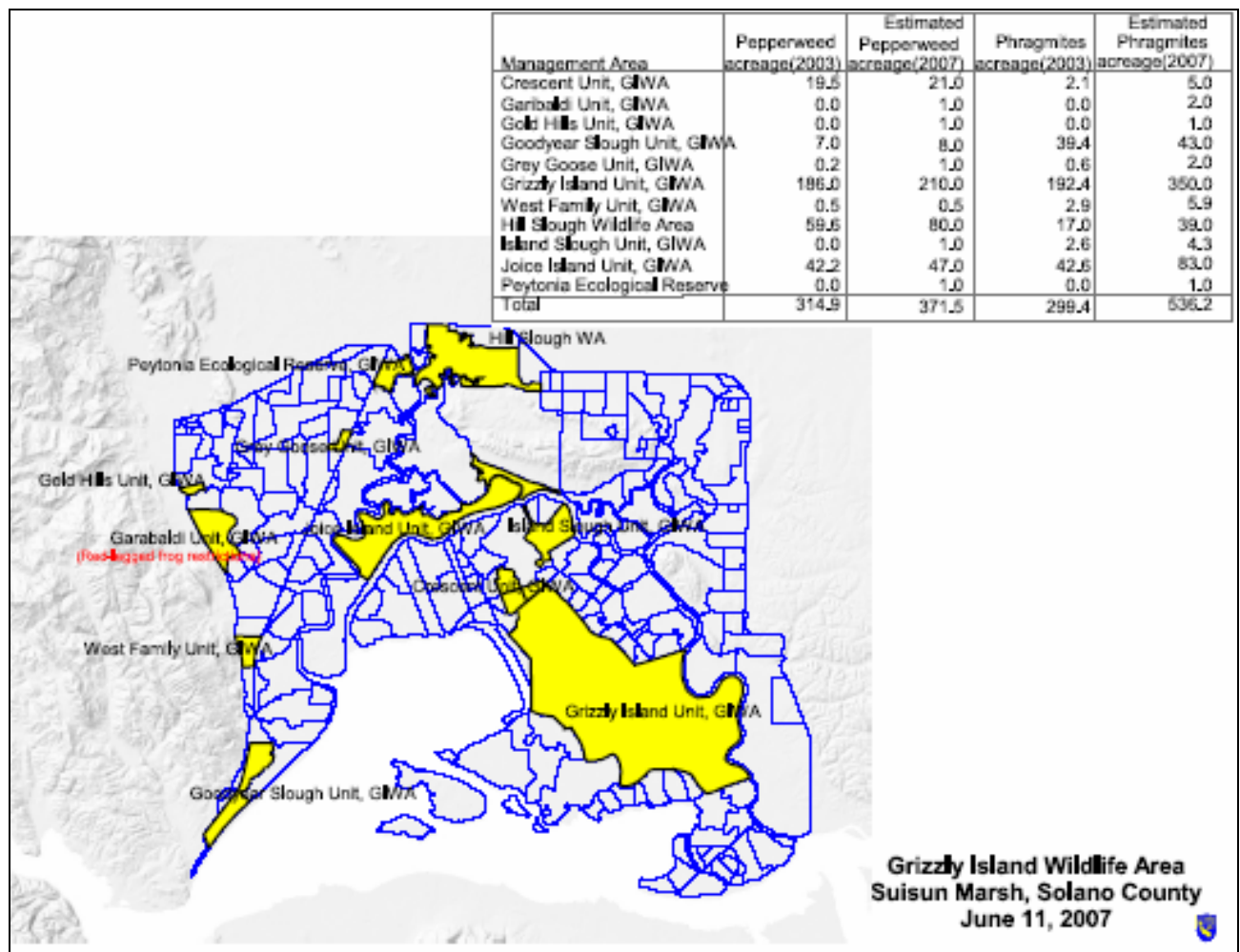
Restoration Alternatives

Several restoration options were considered for managed wetlands, including invasive weed control at the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area, raising the outboard/service road of the Joice Island Unit of the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area and improving existing water control structures within the levee, and a variety of Duck Club restoration projects (Appendix C). These projects are listed in the table below.

PROJECT CONCEPTS	BENEFITS
Weed Control, Grizzly Island Wildlife Area	Brackish Marsh organisms including birds, small mammals, fish, and plants
Raise the outboard levee/service road of the Joice Island Unit of the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area and improve existing water control structures within the levee.	Wetland habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds due to a more stable and reliable means of managing water flows and salinity variations
Duck Club restoration projects (see Appendix C for details)	Various brackish marsh organisms

The invasive weed control project is proposed because it has the highest and most assured managed marsh benefits and is a project on public land (CDFG owned). These in-kind benefits include those for plants, the salt marsh harvest mouse, the California clapper rail, fish, as well as waterfowl, by removing monotypic stands of pepperweed and allowing higher quality marsh vegetation to return.

Figure 8. DFG-owned parcels in the Grizzly Island Complex that are affected by invasive weeds.



Proposed Project

Weed Control, Grizzly Island Complex

The goal of this project is to implement control measures on perennial pepperweed in managed marsh land within the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area. The current proposal is to chemically treat pepperweed with Chlorsulfuron (Telar®), which has been found to be the most effective herbicide for eradicating pepperweed (J. Trumbo, pers. comm.). Chlorsulfuron can be sprayed with a boomless application system mounted to an all-terrain vehicle in managed wetlands and uplands and a backpack sprayer above the mean high-water mark in tidal wetlands. Mechanical controls are much less effective and biological controls have not been discovered. While it may require a separate consultation with the USFWS to do so, the Trustees may consider the treatment of other invasive weeds, such as the non-native form of common reed (*Phragmites australis*), in the future.

Budget

The overall budget for the project is estimated at \$353,645. The Trustee propose contributing \$150,000 toward this project.

Scaling for Compensatory Restoration

All scaling performed in the HEA was done based on the proposed Tidal Marsh Restoration Project (Hill Slough Habitat Restoration Demonstration Project).

Affected Environment

This project is proposed to be implemented on the Grizzly Island Complex, set within the Suisun Marsh, which occupies about 15,300 acres of this prime wildlife habitat. The complex is a patchwork of 10 distinct land parcels, many of which are not connected and are surrounded by private land. It provides recreation opportunities for wildlife viewing, hunting, angling, as well as hiking, and acts as a vital buffer against further marsh development.

The Grizzly Island Complex combines natural tidal wetlands and artificially diked marshes. CDFG employees manage extensive waterways and pumps to create more than 8,500 acres of seasonal ponds. Plants like alkali bulrush and fat-hen are encouraged. This carefully managed combination of high nutrient food and resting ponds sustains more than 100,000 waterfowl that winter at Grizzly Island each year. Additionally, a small group of tule elk were reintroduced to the Grizzly Island Unit in 1977 and they have prospered. Several hundred of the offspring from these elk have been captured and relocated to start new herds in places these native elk once favored. Grizzly Island is also known to have several rare, threatened and endangered species, including the salt marsh harvest mouse, peregrine falcon, California clapper rail, California black rail, bald eagle, Suisun aster, and soft-haired bird's beak.

Environmental Consequences (Beneficial and Adverse)

This project will enhance the pepperweed-affected areas of the Marsh that are treated to control this weed, aiding in the return to higher quality habitat for a variety of species in the Suisun Marsh. This includes soft bird's-beak and Suisun thistle, as well as

pickleweed habitat and the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse and California clapper rail that utilize this habitat type. The Suisun shrew should also benefit from the habitat improvements that this weed control will provide. Various other bird species are expected to benefit, including waterfowl, northern harrier, burrowing owl, and song sparrows.

As discussed above, the Grizzly Island Complex Invasive Weed Control project is designed to provide habitat benefits to a variety of species that utilize Suisun Marsh and is not expected to adversely impact any special-status species. However, in compliance with ESA, the USFWS will conduct an Intra-Service Section 7 consultation to assess the impact of the proposed invasive weed control project on federally-listed species or any designated critical habitat.

Probability of Success

The probability of success is high. The staff of the Department of Fish and Game, as well as partners such as the Suisun Resource Conservation District, have experience implementing successful weed control efforts. Previous work with Chlorsulfuron in the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area and Hill Slough Wildlife Area resulted in excellent control with little effect on grass species. The treated plots were in a particularly thick growth of Pepperweed and thirteen months after treatment were virtually free of Pepperweed and were thick with beneficial grass species (Trumbo, 1994). Often weed control efforts are limited only by the lack of resources to implement the control. While it may require a separate consultation with the USFWS by the project implementer to do so, the Trustees may consider use of funds for the treatment of other invasive weeds, such as the non-native form of *Phragmites australis*.

Performance Criteria and Monitoring

CDFG personnel will be responsible for periodic monitoring and follow-up treatments of the habitat to ensure longer-lasting benefits from these weed control efforts. Periodic updates by the CDFG staff of the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area will be provided regarding the status of the habitat and the success of the weed control treatments.

Evaluation

Weed control has been successfully implemented and has a demonstrated track record of providing improved habitat quality in marsh habitats on the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area and Hill Slough Wildlife Area. By providing funding to control invasive weeds on the Grizzly Island and Hill Slough Wildlife Areas the Trustees would be helping to enhance habitat quality by helping to control non-native invasive weeds in this habitat area.

The Trustees have evaluated this project using the threshold and additional screening criteria developed to select restoration projects and concluded that this project is consistent with and meets the objectives of these selection factors. They believe that this type and scale of project will effectively provide appropriate compensation for waterfowl, and other injured resources as a result of the spill and have therefore identified this project as a preferred alternative.

4.4 “No Action” Alternative

NEPA requires the Trustees to consider a “no action” alternative, and the OPA regulations set forth consideration of a somewhat equivalent natural recovery alternative. Under this alternative, the Trustees would take no direct action to restore injured natural resources or to compensate for lost services. Instead, the Trustees would rely on natural processes for recovery of the injured natural resources.

The principal advantages of the natural recovery approach are the ease of implementation and the absence of monetary costs. However, while natural recovery may occur over time for many of the injured resources, the interim losses suffered by those resources would not be compensated under the “no action” alternative. OPA clearly establishes Trustee authority to seek compensation for interim losses pending recovery of natural resources. Losses were, and continue to be, suffered during the period of recovery from the spill. Furthermore, technically feasible project alternatives exist to compensate for these losses. Thus, the Trustees reject the “no action” alternative and instead have proposed the appropriately scaled restoration projects described above as the preferred alternatives.

4.5 Cumulative Impacts

The Trustees examined a variety of alternatives to restore resources and/or services lost as a result of the Kinder Morgan/Suisun Marsh spill in 2004. Anticipated environmental consequences arising from each of the proposed projects are provided in section 4.3. As required by NEPA, this section addresses the potential overall cumulative impacts of implementing this restoration plan.

Cumulative environmental impacts are those combined effects on the quality of the human environment that result from the incremental impact of the alternative when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what federal or non-federal agency or person undertakes the other actions (40 CFR 1508.7, 1508.25(a), and 1508.25(c)).

The Trustees expect that the impact of the Hill Slough Restoration Project, considered together with past and reasonably foreseeable similar projects, will be an overall beneficial environmental impact. However, as the Hill Slough Restoration Project is pending final planning and design, the cumulative impacts of this project will be described in more detail in subsequent CEQA and NEPA documentation.

Weed control efforts around the Suisun Marsh may have a cumulative impact on invasive weed areas, but again, the Trustees view such changes as positive for habitat quality in the Suisun Marsh environment. The Trustees believe that both the Hill Slough Restoration Project and the invasive weed control project at the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area will result in a net benefit to native plant communities in the Suisun Marsh region.

Summary

The Trustees believe that, overall, the alternatives proposed in this restoration plan, when considered along with past and reasonably foreseeable future projects, will have medium to long term local and regional beneficial impacts to natural resources.

5.0 References

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