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Monterey Bay Bird Incident - Update - Coast Guard Lab Identifies Substance as Vegetable Oil

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SANTA CRUZ, California ---- The Unified Command at the State Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Oiled Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center in Santa Cruz, California, received test results today from the Coast Guard's Marine Safety Laboratory in Groton, Connecticut.

Lab results indicated that the mystery substance floating in the water off Santa Cruz and coating sea birds most resembles hydrogenated vegetable oil. Samples of the substance are still being analyzed by two DFG laboratories near Sacramento, California. Initial analysis for public health purposes was performed early Saturday morning, October 25, by the County of Santa Cruz.

A DFG vessel has taken Coast Guard pollution investigators and a representative from Clean Bay, a local pollution-response company to the slick to determine if cleanup is possible.

Preliminary estimates indicate that there could be up to 2,300 gallons of the substance comprising the 3-mile slick. The National Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund has been opened to help pay for the costs associated with spill response. Since discovery of the shortening-like substance Friday night, more than 400 distressed birds have been brought to the center, most by volunteers, with the unknown material matting their feathers.

Volunteers from the Santa Cruz Native Animal Rescue, Friends of the Sea Otter, Monterey and Santa Cruz SPCA, International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC), Peninsula Humane Society, Monterey Bay Aquarium, The Lindsey Museum, the University of California Santa Cruz- Long Marine Lab, and local volunteer veterinarians are working around the clock to treat the sick birds.

**The cause of the spill remains under investigation.**

The public is requested -- again -- to stay away from wildlife. Injured or distressed animals are unpredictable, and may strike out in self-defense. Dead birds should also be left alone, where they are. Removing them will hamper efforts to track the overall impact of this incident.

Anyone with information that may aid the investigation of this incident is encouraged to telephone the Coast Guard Command Duty Officer at 510-437-3073, or CalTIP (Californians Turn In Poachers and Polluters), at 1-888-DFG-CALTIP (334-2258).

Individuals interested in volunteering to help may telephone the volunteer coordinator at 1-888-228-4544.

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