

Date: November 21, 1997

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## Point Reyes Tarball Incident-Update

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### **CONTACT:**

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Time: 6:30 p.m.

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POINT REYES, Calif. -- A Coast Guard / NOAA overflight of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS) today led to the discovery of a cluster of oil patches, approximately one mile in diameter. Its location is roughly ten miles south of the Farallon Islands and thirteen miles west of San Pedro Point, on the San Mateo County coast.

Following the overflight report, the Coast Guard Cutter Long Island sailed to the location of the oil patches. The crew took samples of the oil, which were airlifted by a Coast Guard helicopter and taken to the Department of Fish and Game OSPR petroleum chemistry lab in Sacramento, and sent to the Coast Guard marine safety lab in Groton, Connecticut. Incident responders are still awaiting the results of tests on samples taken earlier at Drakes Beach.

Aggressive investigative efforts are underway by the Coast Guard and OSPR, to analyze samples and identify potential sources of the oil. Additionally, Coast Guard specialists are preparing trajectory analyses and developing response strategies. Presently, winds and currents are pushing the oil offshore, away from the California coast.

Species impacted by oil to date include common murre, western grebes, surf scoters, loons, sanderlings, snowy plovers, gulls, brown pelicans, and elephant seals.

Sparsely scattered tarballs were found on Drakes Beach, today. The Seashore and its beaches are all open to the usual recreational activities. The Incident Command for that operation was in the process of demobilizing when word of the newly-found oil reached the command post at Seashore headquarters.

Anyone with information that may assist the investigation should call either the Department of Fish and Game's CalTIP hotline at 888-DFG-CALTIP (334-2258), or the Coast Guard Command Duty Officer at 510-437-3073. Callers may remain anonymous.

**Wildlife impact, to date:**

93 live, oiled birds have been captured and are receiving care;  
14 of those have died in captivity;  
Approximately 300 dead birds have been recovered;  
11 lightly oiled elephant seals continue to be monitored;  
Approximately 200 oiled birds (still free) are being monitored; and  
13 oiled snowy plovers were seen, Thursday, and will continue to be monitored.

Oiled wildlife should be reported to Point Reyes National Seashore, at 415-663-8525.

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