



# *Unified Command News Release*

## **SAN MATEO MYSTERY OIL SPILL**

**DATE:** January 4, 2002

**TIME:** 5:00 P.M.

---

---

### **Tarballs found at Point Reyes National Seashore Oiled seabird count tops 1,000**

Staff of the State Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response discovered numerous oil tarballs, yesterday, on North Beach and Abbot's Lagoon Beach, at Point Reyes National Seashore. The tarballs ranged from the size of pea gravel to that of a playing card. Samples will be analyzed at the OSPR Petroleum Chemistry Lab.

The U.S. Coast Guard, lead federal agency for marine oil spills, has contracted with Clean Bay of Concord for helicopter flights (weather permitting) over coastal waters, in search of the oil's source, or a slick. To date, only a sheen was seen, in early December. It had disappeared, the next day.

The Coast Guard Marine Safety Office - San Francisco and OSPR are aggressively working to identify the source of the oil, and stop the injury to California's wildlife and habitat. The agencies are analyzing offshore vessel traffic and oil transfer records dating from mid-November, and data on sunken vessels.

The number of seabirds injured by oil off the northern-central California coast, since November 24 now exceeds 1,005. The oiled birds — mostly common murre — have been taken to the San Francisco Bay Oiled Wildlife Care and Education Center in Suisun. Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN) staff and volunteers need additional volunteer assistance. Adults wishing to volunteer should call the Center at 707-207-0380, extension 107.

Of the 1005 birds captured or collected, 428 were alive and 577 were dead on arrival. Of the 428 live birds, 108 are still receiving care; 228 have died, and 92 have been returned to the wild. Most of the birds collected in the past few days were found in the Monterey and Point Reyes areas, and were heavily soaked with fresh oil.

Other organizations working on this response include the UC Davis Wildlife Health Center, International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Park Service, California State Parks, Peninsula Humane Society, Native Animal Rescue of Santa Cruz, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, SPCA of Monterey County, Monterey Bay Aquarium, WildCare of Marin and Gulf of the Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries' Beach Walk programs.

---

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

PO Mark Jiminez, U.S. Coast Guard: 510-437-3091 — MJimenez@d11.uscg.mil  
Dana Michaels, OSPR Public Affairs: 916-327-9948 — dmichael@ospr.dfg.ca.gov  
Karen Benzel, International Bird Rescue Research Center: 510-814-7227  
Sylvia Wright, UC Davis News Service: 530-752-7704 — newsservice@ucdavis.edu  
Robert Hughes, OSPR Public Affairs: 916-323-6286 — rhughes@ospr.dfg.ca.gov

---

**WEBSITES**

Dept. of Fish & Game - OSPR — <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/Ospr/index.html>  
U.S. Coast Guard — <http://www.uscg.mil/D11/index.htm>  
Oiled Wildlife Care Network — <http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/owcn/default.asp>  
International Bird Rescue Research Center — <http://www.ibrrc.org>

