

# **San Mateo Mystery Spill**

## **OILED BIRD SEARCH AND COLLECTION OPERATIONS**

### **SUMMARY**

The three situations which could result in activation of oiled bird search and collection (S&C) operations are oiled birds brought in by the public, oil on the water observed during wildlife reconnaissance aerial operations, and oil/oiled wildlife observations from the shoreline wildlife reconnaissance team. Activation of S&C teams will not be initiated without consultation between the Wildlife Operations Branch Director and the Planning Chief. If activation is warranted, the Wildlife Operations Branch Director will immediately alert the OWCN Response Veterinarian for mobilization of their staff. The Planning Chief will notify the Incident Command SOSC and FOSC.

### **ACTIVATION CRITERIA**

#### 1) Birds Recovered by the Public

If the public brings in three or more oiled birds from any division or similar geographic area, the Wildlife Branch Director can activate S&C teams. Depending on the number of birds, degree of oiling, and area or areas in which they were collected, a single team or multiple teams can be activated for search and collection on subsequent days.

#### 2) Wildlife Reconnaissance Observations – Aerial

If oil on the water is observed during overflights, the location and perceived amount of the observed oil will be communicated to the Wildlife Operations Branch Director and the Planning Chief. Depending on the oil location, weather conditions (25 knot on-shore winds sustained for 6 hrs or more) proximity to wildlife, amount and footprint, a single S&C team or multiple teams can be activated for search and collection on subsequent days. See Attachment 1 for Aerial Operations schedule.

#### 3) Wildlife Reconnaissance Observations – Shoreline (foot)

If oil or oiled wildlife is observed on the shoreline or on the water during beach reconnaissance operations, the location and amounts will be communicated to the Wildlife Operations Branch Director and the Planning Chief. Depending on weather (on-shore winds) and sea states (high swell), oil location, proximity to wildlife, amount and footprint, a single S&C team or multiple teams can be activated for search and collection on subsequent days. The threshold of 6 or more oiled birds (live, dead or any combination) in any single division should be used as a guideline for activation.

### **STAFFING SEARCH AND COLLECTION TEAMS**

The OWCN will make 2 OWCN teams (4 people) available daily to perform search and collection as deemed necessary based on current search and collection protocols. This schedule will include 1 team capable of conducting ATV operations, and 1 team capable of performing foot based search efforts. Within these 4 personnel, 2 team members will be capable of conducting boat operations. The OWCN personnel will maintain and come equipped with appropriate PPE/safety and capture equipment for these operations and will rely on OSPR to

provide ATV's, helmets, a boat, and a boat operator. If necessary, the OWCN can utilize its boat, stored at the Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center in Santa Cruz. The boat driver will be responsible for transporting the boat and returning it to Santa Cruz if this boat is used. The OWCN response coordinator will report directly to the Wildlife Branch Director unless a larger S&C effort is mobilized (see below) and coordinate with the OSPR S&C coordinator as appropriate.

Concurrently, the OSPR S&C coordinator will continue to develop the OSPR personnel availability matrix on a monthly basis. The Wildlife Branch Director will be responsible for distributing OWCN and OSPR schedules to the IC as they become available.

If the Wildlife Branch Director, in consultation with the OWCN response coordinator, determines that more than 2 S&C teams are needed, s/he will ask the OWCN response coordinator if the OWCN has additional personnel available to provide further search and collection coverage. If this is not possible, the OSPR personnel matrix and/or OSPR contractors will be utilized to supplement the OWCN teams and mount a larger S&C effort. If this scenario occurs, the OWCN response coordinator will report to the OSPR S&C coordinator who will then report to the Wildlife Branch Director.

## **AGENCY NOTIFICATION OF SEARCH AND COLLECTION EFFORTS**

The following notifications will be made by either the OWCN response coordinator or the OSPR search and collection coordinator prior to conducting operations in the following divisions:

### Division AA& A – All search & collection

Jan Roletto, NOAA, (415) 561-6622 ext. 207, [jan.roletto@noaa.gov](mailto:jan.roletto@noaa.gov)  
Sarah Allen, Pt. Reyes National Seashore, (415) 464-5187; home, (415) 456-0187

### Division B – All search & collection (or only ATV operations, as noted)

1. Jan Roletto, NOAA, (415) 561-6622 ext. 207, [jan.roletto@noaa.gov](mailto:jan.roletto@noaa.gov)
2. ATV ops on Ocean Beach – Aline Forbes, GGNRA, (415) 716-6396
3. ATV ops on Pacifica Beaches – Pacifica Police Department, (650) 738-7314

### Division C – All Search & collection

Jan Roletto, NOAA, (415) 561-6622 ext. 207, [jan.roletto@noaa.gov](mailto:jan.roletto@noaa.gov)

### Division D – All search & collection

Jan Roletto, NOAA, (415) 561-6622 ext. 207, [jan.roletto@noaa.gov](mailto:jan.roletto@noaa.gov)

### Division E (south) – All search & collection (or only ATV operations, as noted)

1. ATV operations only - State Park Dispatch, (831) 649-2817
2. Physically check in at the office of Hopkins Marine Lab before walking their beaches- if before or after hours, leave a message at Hopkins Dispatch, (831) 655-6200

3. Snowy Plover monitoring :
  - a. north of Elkhorn Slough, call Carleton Eyster at (831) 334-3407 (c) or (831) 466-9820 (h) and
  - b. south of Elkhorn Slough, call Kriss Neuman (831) 332-0631 daytime and (831) 475-8769

## SEARCH EFFORTS AND LOCATIONS

Once search and collection teams are activated, they may be deployed for beach searches or sweeps, as well as boat operations, as determined by the Wildlife Operations Branch Director in consultation with the Planning Chief. Full beach searches typically involve coverage of the full length of beaches and more detailed searching. Sweeps typically consist of limited coverage of beach lengths, binocular searches from vantage points and search effort concentrated in the key search areas listed below by division. Boat operations typically consist of on-water recovery in a limited area of operation of live, oiled birds. Thus far, these operations have only taken place in Monterey Bay but the Wildlife Branch Director can authorize additional boat operations as needed. These operations may also be conducted at night, as safety permits.

Teams are directed to search and collect live and dead oiled wildlife, properly document date/time/location information and transport birds to intake center, collect representative samples of fresh oil or tar balls and transport to DFG Santa Cruz lab, assess beach areas for stranded oil and determine whether cleanup is necessary. GPS coordinates for all samples should be provided whenever possible.

Teams should pick-up all dead birds, oiled or not, during beach collection except for the following:

- 1) Toe-clipped birds within Divisions E north and south;
- 2) Birds that are clearly well into the decay process and show no signs of being oiled.

Note: Birds that have *recently* been scavenged (mostly feathers and bones) should be picked up.

Teams are directed to contact the OWCN Wildlife Veterinarian if a stranded marine mammal is spotted or found. The OWCN Wildlife Veterinarian will contact Mr. Joe Cordero of the National Marine Fisheries Service as consistent with the MOU.

Teams should also record start/end times of searches, distances actually covered, and submit Search Effort Logs to Kathleen Jennings (OSPR).

OSPR teams should check in with the Search & Collection Coordinator between 10-11 am and between 3-4 pm every day to report search results. OWCN and Santa Cruz Field Office staff will check in with the OWCN Spill Response Coordinator.

Tide information, current weather, and sunrise/sunset times are available through the Search & Collection Coordinator.

If you have been assigned more than one division to search and do not have time to cover all beaches, key search areas in each division are listed in order of priority:

### Divisions A and AA

- Drake's Beach
- Limantour Spit
- Great Beach

### Division B:

- Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
- Rockaway Beach (Pacifica)
- San Pedro Creek Beach (Pacifica)
- Montara Beach

### Division C:

- Pillar Point – break water & beach/south beach in Harbor
- Pescadero Beach and coves south to Bean Hollow – Pebbles Beach & North area
- San Gregorio Beach
- Pomponio Beach
- Miramonte Beach
- Dunes Beach
- Martin's Beach

### Division D:

- Gazos Creek
- Waddell Creek
- Greyhound Rock Beach
- Scott's Creek
- Davenport Beach
- Wilder Ranch/Creek, to the Lighthouse at Santa Cruz

### Division E:

- Santa Cruz Boardwalk Beach – pier and
- Capitola Beach
- Seacliff Beach to Sunset Beach
- Moss Landing State Beach – breakwater north and south
- Marina State Beach
- Del Monte Beach

### Suggested items for teams to carry:

1. Water
2. Sunscreen
3. OSPR jacket
4. Raingear
5. Gloves
6. Rubber boots
7. Leather boots
8. Extra socks
9. Binoculars
10. Net
11. Bird boxes
12. Bird bags
13. Beach Search Effort Log

14. GPS unit
15. GPS log
16. Cell phone(s)
17. Pager(s)
18. Lunch, snacks (e.g. power bars, bananas)
19. Enthusiasm
20. Common sense

Bird and search items can be obtained at the OWCN/IBRRC at 4629 Cordelia in Cordelia, or the office in Santa Cruz next to the Long Marine Lab.

## **SAFETY ISSUES**

Please note that all staff conducting search and collection operations **MUST** read and sign the Site Safety Plan, copies of which are located in the DFG office at Cordelia and at the OWCN/IBRRC facility. Please also keep your Hazwoper card up-to-date and available.

Teams shall be of two or more. You should never be out of eye contact with your partner(s). Beach walkers should not be out after dark. Please check out with the OWCN Spill Response Coordinator (OWCN and Santa Cruz Field Office staff) or the Search & Collection Coordinator (OSPR staff) when you leave the beach. . If you feel that conditions are unsafe STOP ALL SEARCH AND COLLECTION OPERATIONS and inform your Coordinator immediately.

## **GPS**

You must write down GPS waypoint coordinates and time as a backup in case the GPS unit malfunctions. You may use the Search Effort Log (appendix attached) to record this information. See the attached GPS appendix for set up and usage.

## **ATV ETIQUETTE DURING BEACH OPERATIONS**

1. Make yourself clearly recognizable to everyone who may observe you on the beach. Try to have some type of official insignia readily visible at all times. The green OSPR jacket and the OWCN windbreakers would be appropriate for use.
2. When approaching someone on the beach, slow down to about twice the walking pace. Do not immediately speed up once you have passed. Instead, try to maintain a “low speed envelope” for at least 50 yards around beach contacts.
3. When contacting people on the beach show some form of acknowledgement – eye contact, a wave or a nod. When possible, talk to people. Tell them who you represent and what you are doing.
4. See attached “Safe Operations of All-Terrain Vehicles”
5. ATV operation in Snowy Plover Habitat (see below SEARCH AND COLLECTION IN SNOWY PLOVER HABITAT)

## **SEARCH AND COLLECTION IN SNOWY PLOVER HABITAT**

1. In general, snowy plovers (SNPL) nest high on the beach, above the high wrack line, but they may nest below it. The most important thing to do to avoid SNPL broods (aside from conducting all search and collection on foot) is to conduct all activities on the wet shoreline, well below the most recent wet wrack line.

2. If survey people see (or hear) vocalizing or displaying (broken wing or tail drag displays) SNPL, they should proceed cautiously out of the area at once—a minimum of 100m away to allow the adult SNPL to return to broods that may be crouching along the wrack line. Similarly, if people observe SNPL chicks, they should proceed cautiously out of the area immediately to avoid separating chicks from parents. The caveat to this is that anytime survey people respond by proceeding out of the area, they may be likely to encounter chicks from the same or other broods in their line of exit. To this end, try to avoid any lower beach areas that are heavily covered in kelp wrack, as detecting chicks with the naked eye would be difficult.

3. In all cases, where plover breeding habitat is marked by rebar, flagging, tape, or any other method, search and collection personnel will not walk into these areas to recover oiled wildlife unless they have spoken directly with the OWCN Spill Response Coordinator. From Santa Cruz north, the OWCN Spill Response Coordinator must obtain approval from the Division Chief of the Endangered Species Division (Chris Nagano), Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, (916) 414-6600/6601, before disruption of nesting plovers can occur. From Santa Cruz south, the OWCN Spill Response Coordinator must obtain approval from the David Pereksta of the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, at (805) 644-1766, before disruption of nesting plovers can occur. If you see a dead oiled bird in these areas, note it on your log, but do not remove it from the habitat.

4. When using ATVs to conduct beach surveys, drivers will stay along the coastline in wet sand to bypass known plover breeding habitat. Drivers will stop approximately every 100 meters to scan for plover nest areas that might be encountered as they travel forward. If nesting areas are encountered, survey via scans or by observing marked nesting habitat. ATV operators will stay on the wet beach area and proceed at less than 5 MPH until they have passed the plover breeding habitat.

5. All search and collection staff will be briefed on these protocols prior to conducting search and collection efforts. Any animals inadvertently injured during search and collection operations will be recovered and the OWCN Spill Response Coordinator will be notified immediately.

As of 6-14-02, there have been over 100 SNPL nests initiated between the Moss Landing Harbor mouth and Reservation Rd. to the south, so there is really now way to exit or “get past” the active habitat without potential disturbance, so please proceed with caution. To the north of Moss Landing Harbor mouth there have been at least 50 nests initiated through the area of Monterey Bay Academy, until you are north of MB Academy/Sunset State Beach.

## **DEACTIVATION OF SEARCH AND COLLECTION OPERATIONS**

Search and collection may cease for a given division when fewer than 6 oiled birds (live, dead on any combination) are recovered within any division for two consecutive days. The Wildlife Branch Director, in consultation with the Planning Chief and the OWCN Response Veterinarian

may extend search and collection within a division or geographic area if warranted by a change in weather or sea state conditions (on-shore winds and/or extreme tidal fluctuations) that could likely bring oiled wildlife ashore.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

Search and Collection operations are not over until you have completed and submitted your Daily Activity Reports. These may be filled out in hardcopy or electronically. The Index code for the Luckenbach spill is N300; PCA, F1060; Activity, 533030. If you record overtime, you must fill out the newly revised form 187 as well. Please be specific but not overly detailed as to your activities. Please state the time you depart, the beaches covered, the times you check out for lunch and back in, and time of return.

ATTACHMENT 1: WILDLIFE RECONNAISSANCE – AERIAL OPERATIONS  
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Jun 7

Jun 12

Jun 20

Jul 11

Jul 17

Jul 24

Jul 29, 30 or 31