

Law Enforcement

TORCH Summary

Phase 1

During the initial phase of the TORCH project, law enforcement actions focused on introducing the Seabird Protection Network (SPN) and its concept to enforcement agencies in the network area. An initial Coordinated Law Enforcement Working Group meeting was held in San Luis Obispo and the SPN was introduced to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Law Enforcement Technical Advisory Committee.

The BLM developed memoranda of understanding with the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff and the Santa Barbara County Sheriff to provide ways for BLM rangers to support state and local protection efforts along the coast in those counties.

Investigation of human caused seabird disturbances and coordination with California Department of Fish and Wildlife wardens began.

Phase 2

During the second phase of the TORCH project, the Working Group continued to meet and expand coordination. This included identifying additional jurisdictions, authorities, laws, and regulations related to the enforcement of seabird disturbance crimes. The Working Group also worked to promote awareness of the significance of seabirds and the legal means to protect them throughout a wide variety of enforcement agencies with coastal jurisdictions.

Actions began to develop disturbance reporting means for both agencies and local residents and means for such reports to reach the appropriate enforcement agencies.

Patrol of sensitive seabird areas and investigation of human caused disturbances continued.

Phase 3

During the third phase of the TORCH project, the Working Group continued to meet and focus patrol, enforcement, and reporting actions of cooperating agencies. Development of a reference brochure regarding seabird disturbance, threats, laws, and procedures began with the intent of distributing it to law enforcement officers and agencies within the network area.

A disturbance reporting process was developed and dedicated email address for sending reports was created, allowing centralized coordination of reports.

Initial efforts to obtain watercraft for patrol of disturbance sites began.

Both land and water based patrols of colony sites, with a focus on areas with known disturbance, continued, supported by agencies with marine watercraft (CA DFW, NOAA). Investigations into human cause disturbances, both by individuals and commercial operators, continued.

Phase 4

During the fourth phase of the TORCH project, the Working Group continued to coordinate patrol efforts among cooperating agencies and focus on areas of disturbance identified by the scientific components of the TORCH project.

Coordination of seabird disturbance prevention continued through education and involvement of enforcement agency partners at working group meetings.

The effort to obtain watercraft for patrol of high-frequency disturbance sites continued.

Phase 5

During the fifth phase of the TORCH project, BLM law enforcement assumed more of a leadership role in engaging enforcement agency officers in the program area for focus patrol, enforcement, and reporting actions in areas of greatest need. Much of the patrol activities were conducted by cooperating agencies. Coordination continued with partner agencies at working group meetings.

Application of information maintained by the SPN web-based disturbance reporting system to enforcement response during seabird disturbance events continued, so that law enforcement agencies could track such disturbances, undertake response actions, and tabulate effectiveness of response for continuous improvement and efficiency region-wide for seabird protection.

Phase 6

During the final phase of the TORCH project, BLM law enforcement obtained non-motorized watercraft (kayaks) and the associated equipment for ongoing near-shore patrol of disturbance areas. Equipment was also purchased for accessing coastal rocks and removing attractive nuisances that increase the potential for seabird disturbance, such as ropes or other infrastructure placed by the public. Patrols from both land and water will continue in subsequent years.

Coordination of seabird disturbance education, reporting, and mitigation topics continued during this phase. This coordination will continue as a part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Law Enforcement Working Group.