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North Coast Oil Spill Investigation Continues

The State Department of Fish and Game's Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) continues to investigate the oil "tar-patties" that have been washing onto California's north coast, this week. The source of the oil is still unknown.

First seen on the beaches and rocks between Point Reyes National Seashore, and MacKerricher State Park, north of Fort Bragg, the oil has now been reported as far north as Crescent City.

Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia have also been experiencing the same phenomenon recently. Oregon's Department of Fish and Wildlife reports the tar patties there have ranged in size from about one inch to two by three feet in diameter.

The spill has had greater environmental impact in British Columbia. Environment Canada reports that the oil on the shores near Vancouver have killed over 450 marine birds. Chemical tests performed by the Canadian government on oil samples from British Columbia and Washington show that it was bunker fuel, from the same source. Bunker is the fuel used by large ships.

The OSPR Petroleum Chemistry Lab in Rancho Cordova is analyzing oil samples collected in California and Oregon, in an attempt to identify its source(s).

Kehoe Beach, the most heavily affected beach, at Point Reyes has been cleaned. A total of 20 dead, oiled, marine birds have been collected from the Point Reyes area. The oiled coastline includes sensitive habitat for seabirds, diving birds, shore-birds, wading birds, waterfowl, crabs, seals, and sea lions.

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