



News Release from the Luckenbach Trustee Council

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\$22.7 Million to Help Restore Wildlife Injured by Mysterious Oil Spills Projects will Address Lingering Impacts from Ship that Sank 57 Years Ago

State and federal trustees were awarded a final \$2.5 million for two projects to address harm from the mysterious Luckenbach oil leaks that killed marbled murrelets, a threatened seabird.

The final component of a damage claim to address the spills, which killed more than 50,000 California seabirds since 1990, brings the total restoration funding to \$22.7 million for injuries to bird species, as well as to sea otters. Last April \$16.9 million was approved for seven restoration projects with \$3.2 million awarded for 5 projects in 2009.

All together, the funds will be spent on 14 restoration projects. The projects will help species impacted by oil that leaked from the *S.S. Jacob Luckenbach*. The freighter sank in 1953 about 17 miles southwest of the Golden Gate Bridge, but was not identified as the source of the oil until 2002 after decades of leaking oil, especially during winter storms, causing massive injury to wildlife.

"This funding will go a long way to restore California's seabird populations that were devastated by oil released from the *Luckenbach*," said Stephen Edinger, administrator for the California Department of Fish and Game's Office of Spill Prevention and Response. "We appreciate the hard work of our trustee agency partners in identifying and developing projects to benefit these valuable natural resources."

To provide the greatest benefit to the injured species, each restoration project will occur at the species' breeding grounds. Ten of the projects will be done in northern California. The other four will benefit long-distance migratory seabirds in Alaska, British Columbia, Baja California, and New Zealand. The projects will:

- Protect and enhance marbled murrelet nesting habitat (old growth redwoods) in the Santa Cruz Mountains;
- Reduce human disturbance at five common murre breeding colonies and four western grebe breeding colonies in California, as well as at many loon nesting lakes in Alaska and five islands used by pelicans and Cassin's auklets off the coast of Baja California;

- Restore dune habitat at Point Reyes for nesting snowy plovers and native vegetation at Año Nuevo Island for nesting rhinoceros auklets;
- Protect nesting common murrelets at Point Reyes, ash storm-petrels on the Farallones, ancient murrelets in British Columbia, and shearwaters in New Zealand from depredation; and
- Protect sea otters from land-based pollution and pathogens thru public education.

In 2002, state and federal officials identified the *Luckenbach* as the source of many mystery oil spills occurring periodically during winter storms. The spills resulted in the oiling of thousands of seabirds along northern California beaches from Bodega Bay to Monterey Bay for decades. Impacted threatened or endangered species include snowy plovers, marbled murrelets and sea otters, as well as waterfowl, loons, grebes, cormorants, brown pelicans, gulls and shorebirds.

In 2002, the U.S. Coast Guard oversaw a \$19-million effort to remove oil from the wreck and to seal it to prevent further oil releases.

The federal and state trustees for the injured natural resources are the U.S. Department of the Interior through the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service, the U.S. Department of Commerce through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the California Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response. Together they form the Luckenbach Trustee Council, authorized to act on behalf of the public under State and federal law to assess and recover natural resource damages and to plan and implement actions to restore, rehabilitate, replace or acquire the equivalent of the affected natural resources injured as a result of a discharge of oil.

The award is a result of a claim filed by the trustees in 2006 for funding from the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund. While the owners of the *Luckenbach* no longer exist, the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund pays for oil spill cleanup and the restoration of impacted natural resources when there is no responsible party. The fund is sustained by fees from the oil industry and managed by the Coast Guard's National Pollution Funds Center (NPFC).

Copies of the Final Restoration Plan, including injury assessment and restoration project details, are available at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/ospr/Science/Luckenbach.aspx> or by contacting Steve Hampton at (916) 323-4724 or shampton@ospr.dfg.ca.gov.

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