

WILDLIFE RESPONSE PLAN FOR OIL SPILLS IN CALIFORNIA



**California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Office of Spill Prevention and Response
2026**



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ACRONYMS USED IN THE WILDLIFE RESPONSE PLAN

ACP	Area Contingency Plan
AC	OWCN Administrative Coordinator
ATV	All-Terrain Vehicle
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CalOES	California Office of Emergency Services
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
DWBD	Deputy Wildlife Branch Director
ES	Environmental Scientist (part of the FRT)
EUL	Environmental Unit Leader
FESA	Federal Endangered Species Act
FOSC	Federal On-Scene Coordinator
FRT	Field Response Team (OSPR)
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GPS	Global Positioning System
GRP	Geographic Response Plan
ICS	Incident Command System
LOFR	Liaison Officer
MMSN	Marine Mammal Stranding Network
MWVCRC	OSPR Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care Research Center
NGO	Non-government Organization
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service



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NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NRDA	Natural Resources Damage Assessment
OPA 90	Oil Pollution Act of 1990
OPS	Operations Section (in ICS)
OSPR	Office of Spill Prevention and Response
OSPRA	Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act
OWCN	Oiled Wildlife Care Network
PC	OWCN Personnel Coordinator
PIO	Public Information Officer
RCP	Regional Contingency Plan
RP	Responsible Party
SITL	Situation Unit Leader
SOSC	State On-Scene Coordinator
SOFR	Safety Officer
UAS	Uncrewed Aircraft System
UC	Unified Command
USCG	U.S. Coast Guard
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
UTV	Utility Terrain Vehicle
VC	OSPR Volunteer Coordinator
VUL	OSPR Volunteer Unit Leader
WBD	Wildlife Branch Director



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WRC	OSPR Wildlife Response Coordinator
WRGS	Wildlife Recovery Group Supervisor
WRNGS	Wildlife Reconnaissance Group Supervisor
WRSTL	Wildlife Recovery Strike Team Leader
WRP	Wildlife Response Plan

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PURPOSE

This Wildlife Response Plan (WRP) details the structure and functional actions of the Wildlife Branch and how the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Office of Spill Prevention and Response (CDFW-OSPR) responds to wildlife threatened or impacted by oil spills and oil spill response activities to provide best achievable capture and care.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This document is written for an audience with an understanding of the Incident Command System (ICS; <https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/>) used for oil spill response in the United States. The purpose of this plan is to provide responders and interested parties detailed information, tools, and background information that informs decision-making and response implementation when responding to wildlife impacted or threatened by an oil spill in California.

The table of contents is integrated with hyperlinks to allow optimal efficiency while navigating the document. In addition, hyperlinks to web pages can be found throughout the document. The WRP will be updated and/or revised as appropriate when policy changes occur, or new protocols are developed. In addition, best practices learned from spills will be taken into account. The WRP should be considered a "living document" subject to unscheduled updates and improvements. At a minimum, the WRP will be thoroughly reviewed every three years to assess the need for revision and should be reviewed any time that the Region IX Regional Contingency Plan (RCP) is updated.

The WRP is a collaborative effort of CDFW-OSPR, the Oiled Wildlife Care Network ([OWCN](#)), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and other interested parties.

1 PREFACE

Wildlife and their habitats are put at risk or injured when exposed to oil in the environment. Both Federal and State laws mandate protection, rescue, and rehabilitation of oiled wildlife. This Wildlife Response Plan for Oil Spills in California (WRP) provides technical and strategic guidance, information, context, and a summary of legal authorities for wildlife response involving oil or hazardous spills in California.

The Wildlife Branch, within the Operations Section of the Incident Command System (ICS), implements response to affected or potentially affected wildlife. The WRP details the Wildlife Branch's responsibilities, purposes, objectives, structure, and strategies. The Branch structure is scalable and will be expanded or contracted to fit the needs of the response, but the mission

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remains unchanged.

In California, the principal objectives (broad categories) and strategies (specific actions) of the Wildlife Branch during spill response are listed below and will be further detailed throughout the WRP:

- Prevent wildlife from becoming oiled or impacted by the response
 - Conduct reconnaissance and assessment (in conjunction with the Environmental Unit) to determine what wildlife are at risk
 - Consider/Implement hazing and exclusion measures to deter wildlife from entering the response area (hazing) or preclude access to the response area (exclusion)
 - Consider pre-emptive capture of wildlife at risk of becoming oiled
 - Assist the Environmental Unit with development and implementation of avoidance and minimization measures for responders to follow to protect wildlife from impacts during response activities
- Provide best achievable capture and care for oiled wildlife
 - Collect live and dead wildlife and document wildlife impacts
 - Provide specialized veterinary care to rehabilitate oiled wildlife
 - Release rehabilitated wildlife back to their natural habitat

Although the Wildlife Branch is fully integrated into the [ICS](#) (within the Operations Section), in California, it is self-directed in many ways and largely self-contained for wildlife response resources (both staff and equipment). The Wildlife Branch gathers much of its own wildlife information through field reconnaissance. This information is used to scale staffing and resources to fit the wildlife response needs. Generally, the Wildlife Branch staffs its own personnel with pre-trained experts (e.g., biologists, veterinarians, rehabilitation staff, processing staff, capture experts, pre-trained volunteers) and typically prepares its own sections of the Incident Action Plan and the Incident-specific Site [Safety](#) Plan.

2 INTRODUCTION

This document serves as both a tool for spill response, and as a reference document describing the processes, structure, and context for oiled wildlife response in California. In accordance with the federal and state mandates described below, this WRP is a joint document of the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), with input from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Oceanic and

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Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as well as the Oiled Wildlife Care Network ([OWCN](#)). This WRP is incorporated as an appendix to Regional Contingency Plan for Region IX.

Additional information (beyond the summaries provided below) regarding legal mandates, regulations, and agreements can be found in Appendices [A](#), [B](#) and [C](#).

3 STATUTORY BASIS FOR WILDLIFE BRANCH OPERATIONS

The following sections describe key state and federal statutes and regulations affecting oiled wildlife response.

3.1 FEDERAL MANDATES REGARDING OILED WILDLIFE

The Federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990 ([OPA 90](#)) requires that a Fish and Wildlife and Sensitive Environment Plan be developed for the National Contingency Plan, in consultation with the USFWS, NOAA, and other interested parties, including state fish and wildlife agencies (33 U.S.C. § 1321(d)(2)(M)). The National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP), calls for Fish and Wildlife and Sensitive Environments Plans to be included in Area Contingency Plans (ACP) “in order to provide for coordinated, immediate and effective protection, rescue, rehabilitation of, and minimization of risk of injury to fish and wildlife resources and habitat.” Code of Federal Regulations Title 40 CFR Part 300, Section 300.210(c), further clarifies the requirements for incorporating these planning elements into ACPs. This WRP is intended to address requirements related to response to oiled wildlife.

3.2 STATE MANDATES REGARDING OILED WILDLIFE

The State of California’s Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act of 1990 ([OSPRA](#)) created the Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) within CDFW, as a dedicated and funded division responsible for prevention of and response to oil spills entering or threatening surface waters of the state. OSPR’s mandate includes response to spills of petroleum products or renewable fuels. Under OSPRA (California Government Code §§ 8574.7, 8670.37.5), wildlife-related oil spill responsibilities include:

- Development of contingency plans for the protection of fish and wildlife;
- Assessment of injuries to natural resources;
- Establishment of rescue and rehabilitation stations for oiled wildlife;
- Requirement for restoration plans for wildlife resources including habitat following spills.

OSPRA and subsequent legislation (California Government Code § 8670.37.5) also provided for

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the establishment and funding of the Oiled Wildlife Care Network ([OWCN](#)), administered by the Karen C. Drayer Wildlife Health Center at the University of California Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. OWCN provides critical wildlife response capabilities on behalf of OSPR (see [Section 8.2](#) for more information on OWCN).

Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Sections 1802 and 711.7, the CDFW is the lead state trustee agency for fish, wildlife, and their habitats. Other state trustee agencies that may participate in spill response activities, and potentially support wildlife operations are:

- Department of Parks and Recreation;
- State Lands Commission (tide lands);
- Department of Water Resources;
- State Water Resources Control Board; and
- Regents of the University of California (on university lands).

Pursuant to OPA 90 and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), the Governor has delegated State trustee authority to the Director of the California Environmental Protection Agency and the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency for resources within their purview (CDFW is part of the California Natural Resources Agency).

The USFWS is the lead federal trustee agency for migratory birds, sea otters, sea turtles while on land, and other terrestrial and freshwater plants and animals. As such, CDFW and USFWS coordinate on response to oil spills, and have signed a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) designating CDFW as the primary contact for wildlife issues related to oil spills ([Appendix B](#)). Similarly, CDFW has an agreement with NOAA regarding response to marine mammals and sea turtles (animals for which NOAA is the lead trustee agency).

The OSPR Administrator also has a statutory mandate to "ensure that, as part of the response to any significant spill, biologists or other personnel are present and provide any support and funding necessary and appropriate for the assessment of damages to natural resources and for the collection of data and other evidence that may help in determining and recovering damages." (Government Code Section 8670.7 (h)(1)). The NRDA process is not a formal part of the Incident Command System but coordinates closely with it. This WRP does not specifically address Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA; for reference see: [OSPR NRDA Overview](#)).

OSPR will respond to and lead Wildlife Branch operations for oil spills entering or threatening Waters of the State. Under OSPR authority, Waters of the State include all surface waters within the boundaries of the state including ephemeral and seasonal waters, and all waters between the mainland and the outermost of the islands, reefs and rocks along and adjacent to the coast of California from which the boundary of the State is measured, and all waters between the

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islands, reefs and rocks themselves. The state marine waters boundaries generally extend three (3) nautical miles seaward from the coastline but extend farther, in some cases significantly farther, as described above. In addition, OSPR may respond to spills outside coastal boundaries if the spill threatens State waters, if the spill threatens wildlife under the trusteeship of the State or if OSPR is requested to assist by the USCG, USFWS, or NOAA.

3.3 OTHER PLANS

The WRP for California is a portion of the RCP for Federal Region IX (California, Nevada, and Arizona), and each ACP in California refers to the RCP for their required Fish and Wildlife and Sensitive Environments Plans.

The USFWS has prepared two related plans: the Fish and Wildlife Service National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (2005) and the Best Practices for Migratory Bird Care During Oil Spill Response (2003). NMFS's Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program has developed [Pinniped and Cetacean Oil Spill Response Guidelines](#) (2015). While this WRP is compatible with these plans, where plans differ, in most cases the WRP structure of the RCP takes precedence for oil spills in California.

3.4 INTERAGENCY AGREEMENTS FOR JOINT RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

In an effort to provide a more efficient and coordinated response, principal Federal and State fish and wildlife trustees have signed cooperative agreements or MOUs clarifying response roles for spills of oil and other toxic substances. Most of these agreements can be found under the heading Memoranda of Understanding on the OSPR Wildlife Response webpage at: [OSPR Wildlife Response Page Link](#). Other agreements can be found on the Regional Response Team Region IX website ([RRT IX CA Supporting Documents Page Link](#)) and the Pacific States-British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force website ([Task Force MOU & Agreements Page Link](#)). Agreements that pertain to oiled wildlife response are discussed in greater detail in [Appendix B](#).

Additionally, there are more than 100 federally recognized Tribes in California and approximately 35 non-federally recognized Tribes. Some Tribal land in California is subject to different jurisdiction than lands belonging to the state. Sovereign Tribes retain authority to manage wildlife resource issues within their land boundaries. [Consultation and coordination](#) with Tribal governments (typically through the Tribal Liaison Officer) is required when Tribal lands or cultural resources may be impacted by an oil spill or response. Regardless of whether an oil spill occurs directly on Tribal lands or moves onto or through Tribal lands, coordination is required to develop appropriate wildlife response strategies to address and support Tribal interests.

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3.5 COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE WILDLIFE REGULATIONS

There are three primary Federal laws for the protection of wildlife relevant to spill response: the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the Endangered Species Act (FESA). Several state regulations are also relevant to response to oiled wildlife. Compliance with Federal and State laws is discussed in greater details in [Appendix C](#). Of note, the California Code of Regulations prohibits members of the public from picking up disabled wildlife in a designated oil/toxic spill area (14 CCR § 679) for their own safety and the safety of the animals. Specifically, “no person may enter a Department designated oil/toxic spill area for the purpose of picking up disabled wildlife or transport or possess wildlife disabled by an oil spill or other spilled toxic substance unless that person has authorization from the Department.”

During spill response, the Wildlife Branch Director (WBD), with support from the Environmental Unit, will ensure that activities of the Wildlife Branch are in compliance with Federal and State laws, including implementation of all measures outlined in MOUs/MOAs (Memorandum of Agreement) and other agreements. In addition, the WBD will assist the Environmental Unit of the Planning Section to help ensure that laws and agreements pertaining to wildlife are complied with during other aspects of spill response.

4 WILDLIFE BRANCH INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM COORDINATION

The following sections describe key elements of the Incident Command System relevant to the oiled wildlife response.

4.1 WILDLIFE BRANCH & COMMAND STAFF COORDINATION

The Unified Command and Command staff are comprised of the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC), the State On-Scene Coordinator (SOSC), and the Responsible Party Incident Commander (RPIC; Figure 1). Some responses also include a Local Government On-Scene Coordinator (LGOSC) and/or a Tribal On-Scene Coordinator. Command Staff are those positions that report directly to the Unified Command and include the Safety Officer (SOFR), Public Information Officer (PIO), Liaison Officer (LOFR), and the Legal Officer.

Adherence to ICS structure and organization is essential to facilitate effective coordination between the Wildlife Branch and all other facets of the response. Depending on the size and complexity of the spill and the response, the size and formality of the ICS structure will be developed to fit the situation. Regardless of the size of the response, establishing optimal communication strategies in the beginning stages is critical for informed decision-making, transparency, efficiency, and safety.

Unified Command (UC): The WBD communicates directly with the UC to keep them informed of Wildlife Branch plans, activities, and wildlife recovery numbers. The WBD typically provides the UC with a daily report of impacted wildlife throughout the response. Often the UC will establish critical information reporting requirements associated with wildlife impacts such as immediate notification of the first oiled animal, immediate notification of special status species being oiled, etc.

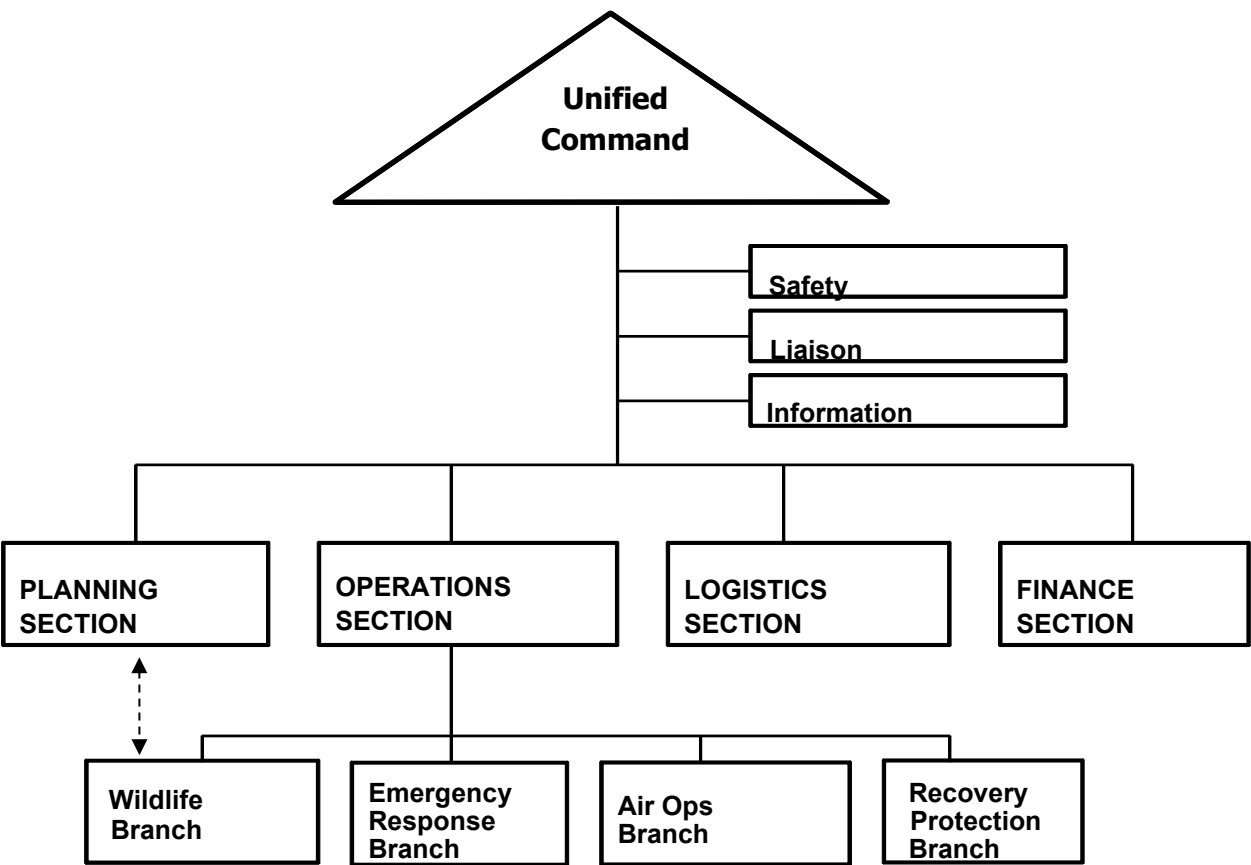


FIGURE 1-INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM ORGANIZATION CHART. Typically, the UC is comprised of an FOSC from the federal government (USCG or USEPA), an SOSC from state government (OSPR), and an IC from the responsible party (RP). Tribal and/or local governments may also be represented in the UC. The Wildlife Branch (within the Operations Section) interacts closely with the Environmental and Situation Units (within the Planning Section).

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Regular communication between the WBD and the UC aids in decision making processes for the development and implementation of incident objectives, and ordering and releasing of resources.

Safety Officer (SOFR): [Safety](#) is the highest priority for all aspects of response, including the Wildlife Branch. The WBD supports the SOFR by providing or developing the Wildlife Site Safety Plan. This plan is to be used independently and/or included as a component of the overall Incident-specific Site Safety Plan for the response. Wildlife response requires its own safety plan because the risks and hazards involved (e.g., bites, scratches, zoonotic diseases, needles, sedatives) are unique to the Branch and would not be covered for the general staff responding to an oil spill. OSPR and OWCN share a template [Wildlife Site Safety Plan](#) that is used before the incident-wide Site-Specific Safety Plan is developed and/or for smaller responses without a formal ICS structure.

The SOFR is responsible for ensuring that all response personnel have reviewed and are compliant with all elements of the Site Safety Plan including PPE for field work, meeting training requirements, and other measures. The SOFR may visit and support wildlife care facilities during spill response.

Safety plans for wildlife response may include:

- Initial Site Safety plan
- OSPR/OWCN Wildlife Site Safety Plan
- Department Boating Safety Manual
- Current CDC recommendations on Zoonotic diseases

See [Section 5](#) Safety for more information on safety considerations during Wildlife Branch operations.

Public Information Officer (PIO)/Joint Information Center (JIC): Public and media interest in wildlife impacts and wildlife care during spill response may be extremely high. The WBD coordinates with PIO/JIC to ensure that all wildlife-related information being shared externally (outside the Unified Command) is accurate and timely. OSPR has formal *Guidelines for Reporting Wildlife Numbers and PIO/Liaison Messaging During Oil Spill Response*. All wildlife-related information to be shared for media or public usage must be reviewed and approved by the WBD prior to release. Only wildlife numbers that are reported directly by the Wildlife Branch for external use (typically those on the current ICS 209) are to be utilized by the PIO/JIC for press releases or other external information about the spill and the response. The WBD is often tasked to provide media briefings and/or to be available for wildlife-related questions during media events and public meetings. For larger spills, it is useful to fill a Wildlife Media Specialist role to assist with media relations.

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Liaison Officer (LOFR): The LOFR is the conduit for information and assistance between agencies, elected officials, and other interested parties not directly part of the Incident Command. The LOFR may coordinate with the WBD to gather information relevant to the LOFR audience regarding wildlife. As noted above, OSPR has formal *Guidelines for Reporting Wildlife Numbers and PIO/Liaison Messaging During Oil Spill Response*. All wildlife-related information distributed by the LOFR must be reviewed and approved by the WBD and consistent with PIO messaging prior to release. Accordingly, the LOFR will only use wildlife numbers that are reported by the WBD for external use (typically those on the current ICS 209). The WBD may be tasked to support the LOFR by providing briefings and/or to be available for wildlife-related questions during LOFR events and meetings. The LOFR may be asked to support the WBD by coordinating with agency representatives and local NGOs that may provide logistical support or other resources to the Wildlife Branch such as special access to local, state, or federal lands, information on wildlife in the area, etc.

Tribal Coordinator: OSPR's Tribal Coordinator supports ongoing engagement, communication and coordination with California Native American tribes whose lands, resources, or interests may be affected by an oil spill or response activities. The Tribal Coordinator may assist in facilitating government-to-government consultation during spill response efforts.

Federally recognized Tribes are sovereign nations and retain authority to manage wildlife resources within their tribal lands. During an oil spill, coordination and consultation related to wildlife occurs through the Tribal Representative, with support from the Tribal Coordinator. Whether a spill occurs on, moves onto, or through tribal lands, coordination is essential to ensure that wildlife response strategies appropriately address and support Tribal interests.

The FOSC has a legal obligation to consult with Tribal governments under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the 1997 Programmatic Agreement (PA) when a spill response may affect resources significant to Tribes, which could include wildlife. OSPR's Tribal Coordinator will support the FOSC if consultations are requested under the NHPA and PA and may request participation from the Wildlife Branch Director to provide subject matter expertise on wildlife response. For more information on how tribes can engage in spill response visit [OSPR Grants and Outreach](#).

Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA): This group works in parallel with but outside the UC/ICS structure and addresses damages to ecological and human use resources. The Wildlife Branch works with the NRDA team to provide relevant wildlife and wildlife response data and records for their future use, through the assigned NRDA Liaison. The Wildlife Branch and the NRDA team may also coordinate to address collection of dead wildlife and or fish and invertebrates. Generally, the Responsible Party and the trustee agencies conduct a cooperative NRDA, but that is not always the case. The WBD should understand the working arrangements of the NRDA data collection program for a given spill by working with the trustee NRDA team and as needed, the trustee legal and UC representatives.

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The primary information of interest to the NRDA team from the Wildlife Branch is search effort for oiled wildlife (collected automatically when using the Wildlife Recovery app), and processing data and evidence collected for all animals recovered. For larger spills, it is useful to assign an NRDA Wildlife Specialist to coordinate wildlife-specific NRDA issues with the Wildlife Branch.

4.2 WILDLIFE BRANCH & GENERAL STAFF COORDINATION

The Wildlife Branch works closely with many staff level components of the ICS response structure, but most closely with the Operations Section (within which the Wildlife Branch is situated) and the Planning Section (particularly the Environmental Unit and Situation Unit).

Operations Section: The Operations Section is responsible for oil containment and recovery and includes all responders coming in contact with oil or oiled materials. The Wildlife Branch is within the Operations Section because like the Oil Spill Response Organizations (OSROs) conducting clean up, the Wildlife Branch staff are also actively engaged in field response operations collecting and cleaning oiled wildlife. The WBD reports to the Operations Section Chief or Operations Deputy Section Chief who sign Wildlife Branch plans and resource requests. The WBD attends Operations Section meetings and coordinates wildlife response efforts with the Operations Section through operational ICS forms (e.g., ICS 204 and 215) as well as through direct discussions. Knowing where cleanup teams are working will help the WBD make informed decisions for wildlife response strategies.

The Wildlife Branch Director (or their designee) must coordinate closely with the Operations Section (and the Planning Section) in preparation and documentation of daily work assignments and any special plans that must be approved by the UC (e.g., a demobilization plan for the Wildlife Branch).

Within the Operations Section, Wildlife Branch personnel may coordinate with various parties, including the Staging Area Manager (to establish and document staging areas used for wildlife response), the Decontamination Leader (who may help with cleaning of oiled field supplies, such as kennels and nets), and the Air Operations Unit (for coordination regarding Wildlife Branch reconnaissance flights in occupied or unoccupied aircraft).

Planning Section: The Wildlife Branch works closely with the Planning Section, particularly the Environmental Unit and Situation Unit, providing and receiving technical support and information about the spill and the response. In addition to working with these units, the Wildlife Branch provides important information for the Incident Action Plan (IAP), developed by the Planning Section.

Environmental Unit (EU): The WBD coordinates with the Environmental Unit Leader (EUL) and EU staff to share and receive ecological and operational planning information as it pertains to wildlife. Initially, a key EU responsibility is the Resources-at-Risk analysis (ICS 232) that provides initial information about wildlife and sensitive habitats expected to occur in the spill

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response area, and that prioritizes implementation of response strategies for sensitive sites. The EU develops impact avoidance and minimization measures for the response actions for Operations to follow (e.g., limiting ingress/egress locations, avoiding night operations, etc.) and seeks to identify potential response strategies that will achieve operational objectives with reduced secondary impacts. The EU will identify and address applicable regulatory permit issues, consultations, and other authorizations, and WBD may be asked to provide technical expertise to support the regulatory process.

Situation Unit (SITU): The SITU gathers, assimilates, updates, maintains, and verifies incident information. The SITU tracks a wide array of incident data including the location and trajectory of the spilled oil, weather, deployed asset locations, geographic and administrative boundaries, and more. The SITU presents this information as a Common Operating Picture (COP) displayed in a common area of the Incident Command Post (ICP). The WBD (and all staff in the ICP) check the COP regularly to maintain situational awareness. For example, the WBD may review the COP to help inform Reconnaissance and Recovery Group assignments. The WBD communicates with the Situation Unit Leader (SITL) to provide daily wildlife numbers (i.e., # collected, # in care, # released, etc.) for the Incident Status Summary (ICS 209). The Wildlife Branch may also provide spatial data, including locations of wildlife that have been recovered, for the COP. Information that is passed on to the SITL must be accurate and provided only by the WBD or their designee.

5 SAFETY

Worker safety must be considered before any Wildlife Branch staff are deployed or assigned. The wildlife portion of the Site Safety Plan is typically prepared by the WBD and submitted to the Site Safety Officer for approval and incorporation into the Site Safety Plan. OSPR has developed a [template Wildlife Branch Safety Plan](#) to serve as a basis for an incident-specific plan. Wildlife Branch personnel are required to read and sign the Site Safety Plan prior to commencing activities. Potential safety hazards for Wildlife Branch personnel include, but are not limited to, slips/falls, toxic vapors, fire hazard, hazardous weather, vessel and vehicle hazards, wildlife handling, zoonotic diseases, and fatigue. Therefore, all Wildlife Branch activities must conform to the Site Safety Plan for the response, and all personnel involved in Wildlife Branch operations must have appropriate job-specific safety training and certifications for the tasks to be performed. They must use the appropriate PPE. To minimize dangers associated with fatigue, Group Supervisors (GS) should establish appropriate staffing rotations, in accordance with the *OSPR Fatigue Policy*.

Personnel conducting wildlife recovery/capture activities must have at a minimum, current 24-hour HAZWOPER training. It is preferred that personnel conducting wildlife care at the primary care and/or field stabilization facility and/or wildlife transportation also have 24-hour

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HAZWOPER training, but at a minimum they must have appropriate Hazard Communication (HAZCOM) training.

Those involved with animal handling must be properly trained in animal capture and restraint techniques that ensure worker safety and cause the least amount of stress to wildlife. All personnel should have and know how to safely don and doff appropriate PPE. All personnel involved in wildlife capture during a spill or response are required to have taken appropriate OWCN trainings (unless otherwise approved by the OWCN or WBD), which include information on topics such as proper PPE, capture and restraint techniques, how to handle wildlife, and protocols related to zoonotic diseases.

An Incident-specific Site Safety Plan can be modified to address the incident's wildlife response operational needs. In the event that an incident-specific Site Safety Plan has not yet been prepared, the OSPR Initial Site Safety Plan or Site Safety and Control Analysis form (ICS 201-5) must be read, understood, and signed. In addition, a task-specific "Tailgate" Safety Meeting should be conducted by the Supervisors/Leaders each shift rotation prior to daily activities and anytime a new team member arrives.

6 ACTIVATION OF WILDLIFE BRANCH

The UC is responsible for activation of a Wildlife Branch in response to known or anticipated need for oiled wildlife response. Because OSPR staff serve as the WBD, activation of the Wildlife Branch is typically done by the SOSC. Activation may include some or all of the functions described in this WRP. In some cases, OSPR Executive may approve implementation of a Wildlife Branch. As noted previously, the ICS structure is fully scalable, and the wildlife response is always right-sized to meet the specific needs of an incident. For a small incident with limited wildlife risks or impacts, the wildlife response may be just a few people working at a care facility with no field response staff. For large complex events, a formal Wildlife Branch may include more than 100 individuals in the ICP, in the field, and in multiple wildlife care facilities (Figure 2: [Wildlife Branch Org Chart](#); Table 1: [Wildlife Branch Staffing Resource Table](#)).

When a Wildlife Branch is implemented, OWCN is normally activated ([Section 6.2](#)) for wildlife care and/or field response, and/or when wildlife are at risk of becoming oiled. Anytime OWCN is activated, it is OSPR policy to designate and engage a [Wildlife Branch Director](#) who will deploy to the site. The USFWS or NOAA staff may serve as WBD or as a Deputy Wildlife Branch Director leading a specific portion of the wildlife response (e.g., NOAA serving as DWBD for marine mammal response operations).

The WBD will maintain close coordination with the evolving UC/SOSC during early initiation of wildlife response to ensure timely mobilization of dedicated resources needed to mount the most effective and successful outcome for wildlife.

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OSPR staffs a full-time Wildlife Response Coordinator (WRC) who can be contacted for all oiled wildlife response needs, including consultation regarding potential wildlife impacts, to provide information on wildlife present in the spill area, and/or to identify a Wildlife Branch Director (WBD) and expand the wildlife response support. The OSPR WBD Subject Matter Expert, in consultation with OSPR management, will assign the WBD for a given spill/spill rotation.

In many cases, wildlife response is prompted through reports to the OWCN Oiled Wildlife Hotline number.

Oiled Wildlife Hotline: 1-877-UCD-OWCN (1-877-823-6926)

This hotline number (above) is maintained by OWCN 365 days a year. Initially, this number is used to notify the OWCN (see subsequent sections below). After OWCN activation, the number will be provided to the public to report observations of oiled wildlife. An oiled wildlife hotline operator will be assigned to monitor the line and collect information including:

- Date and time of call
- Caller's name and return phone number
- Date and time of observation
- Location of oiled animal(s), as specific as possible
- Type of animal (species, if known)
- Whether the animal is alive or dead
- Whether the animal is in hand, on land, or in the water
- What degree of oiling is visible
- If the animal is alive, its behavior, and whether or not it appears to be catchable
- Did or can you safely take a photo of the animal and submit it

When there is no active spill response, the OWCN hotline phone tree directs callers to various resources where they can report a spill to California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), conduct oil spill drill notifications, or be transferred to local rehab centers to report oiled wildlife.

6.1 OWCN NOTIFICATION

When there is a reported spill (i.e., reported to the [CalOES Spill Reporting Database](#)) with potential risk to wildlife, the OSPR Field Response Team (FRT) should notify OWCN (1-877-823-6926) and/or the OSPR WRC, who may be asked to notify OWCN. Notifications should also be made to federal wildlife agencies as applicable.

Notification is an important coordination process with the OWCN. Notifying OWCN of the potential for activation does not incur any costs. Through Notification, OWCN staff are available

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to consult on all aspects of wildlife response for the incident. Notification also allows OWCN to consider staffing availability and to put staff and/or OWCN facility(ies) on stand-by.

Typically, the OSPR WRC will discuss the situation with the on-call OSPR Wildlife Officer (SOSC) and Environmental Scientist, and in consultation with OWCN, to determine if there is a need to activate Wildlife Branch operations. These actions will occur on a case-by-case basis. As one of the first people onsite, the responding OSPR Environmental Scientist initially assesses the situation and considers the level or uncertainty of risk to wildlife and will contact the OSPR WRC or OWCN to prompt additional consideration and resources as needed.

OSPR and OWCN track daily reports of oiled wildlife even when there is no known spill. In the event of significant oiled wildlife risk or oiled wildlife impacts from a mystery event with no known oil source or no known Responsible Party, a Wildlife Branch may still be implemented with approval of OSPR Executive pursuant to OSPR's role as a wildlife trustee in California.

6.2 OWCN ACTIVATION

When a declared spill occurs (i.e., reported to CalOES) with observed or imminent impacts to wildlife, UC will contact OWCN (1-877-823-6926) for OWCN Activation.

Unlike Notification, Activation involves mobilization of people and response resources and the incurring of appropriate costs. Depending on spill response needs, activation may include initial mobilization of Hazing & Deterrence, Recovery, and Field Stabilization teams with group supervisors, and possibly Care & Processing personnel and facilities. [Reconnaissance](#) teams may also be deployed but are not included in this discussion because the Reconnaissance Group is managed directly by OSPR and isn't activated through OWCN.

Upon Activation, OSPR and OWCN will exchange available information about the incident and the incident location, will develop an initial staffing and deployment plan, will consider appropriate response resources to deploy (e.g., field equipment trailers, vessels, etc.), will develop a Wildlife Site Safety Plan, and will develop an initial mobilization plan and schedule.

If there is no reported spill, but oiled wildlife are reported to OWCN (e.g., via its Member Organizations), OWCN will contact the OSPR (normally the WRC) to discuss the report. This often results in the WRC coordinating with the on-call FRT ES and/or SOSC to discuss further investigation and ensure that a report to CalOES is submitted if appropriate. The CalOES reports are the central agency notification mechanism to prompt spill investigation and response.

7 STRUCTURE OF THE WILDLIFE BRANCH

All Wildlife Branch operations during spill response are directed by the WBD, who supervises

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the five Groups listed below and described in the following Sections.

Wildlife Branch: In California, there are typically up to five Groups within the Wildlife Branch.

- [Wildlife Reconnaissance](#)
- [Wildlife Hazing and Deterrence](#)
- [Wildlife Recovery](#)
- [Wildlife Field Stabilization](#)
- [Wildlife Care and Processing](#)

7.1 WILDLIFE BRANCH DIRECTOR (WBD)

The WBD is responsible for all functions of the Wildlife Branch including field and care activities, administration, and documentation. They coordinate with the numerous elements of the response including the UC, EU, SITU, and PIO/Liaison. They continually right-size the response for the next Operational Period and manage the activities of all personnel (primarily via Group Supervisors) in the Wildlife Branch who fall under the authority of the UC during spill response.

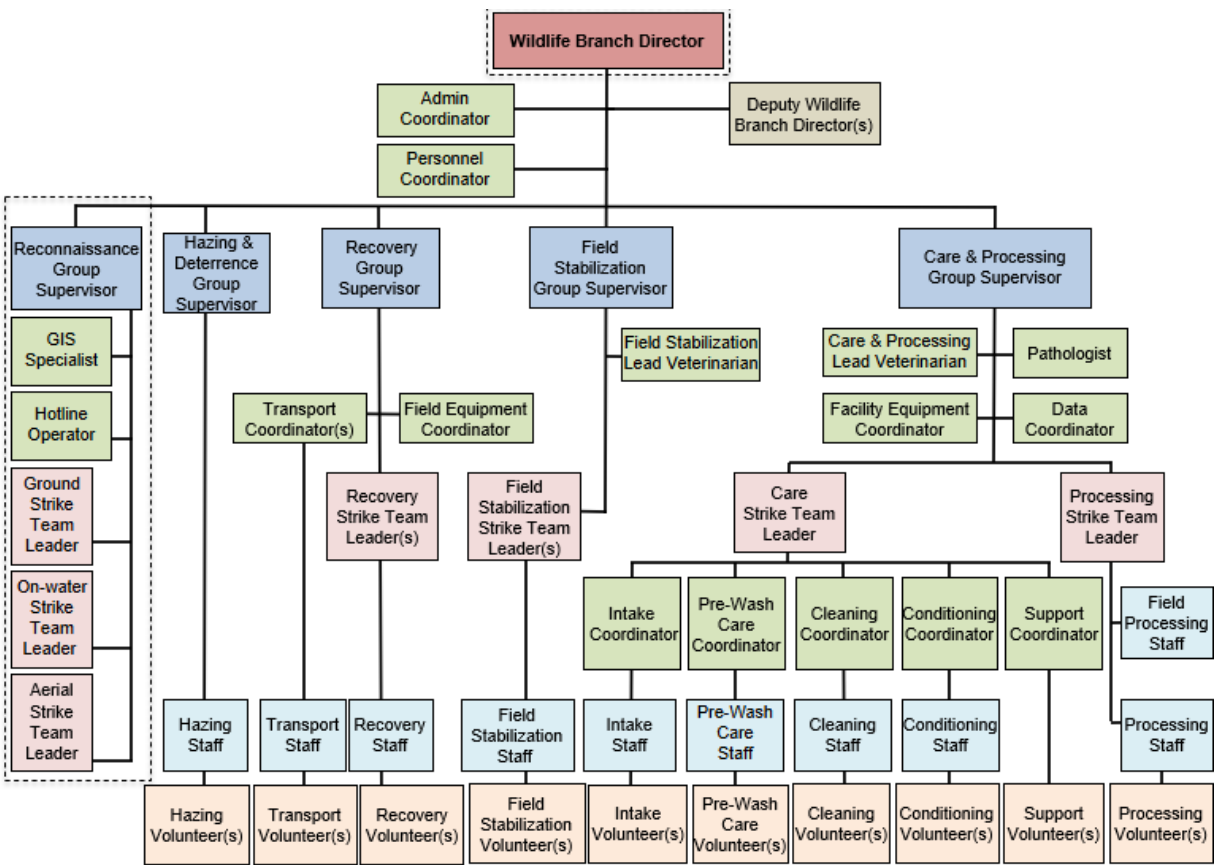


FIGURE 2- Wildlife Branch

Organization Chart. This chart shows the functional positions for a large-scale wildlife response.

OSPR staff typically assume the role of WBD during a spill response because OSPR is the lead state trustee agency for California’s fish and wildlife during response. OSPR has formal agreements and permits in place with other agencies, and has the required expertise, training, and experience to fill this position. OSPR also maintains a Wildlife Branch Director Job Aid to ensure that all tasks are considered and addressed during spill response.

The WBD’s duties include, but are not limited to:

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- Arranging for staffing and deployment of the Branch in collaboration with OWCN
- Developing the Wildlife Branch portion of the Site Safety Plan with approval of the Site Safety Officer and ensuring that the Site Safety Plan is read, understood, and implemented by all members of the Branch
- Developing the Branch-specific portions of the Incident Action Plan for each operational period (ICS forms 204 and 215) through coordination with the Operations Section Chief and the Planning Section
- Determining resource needs in the Branch and arranging resources through the Logistics Section (ICS form 213 RR) and personnel through the [Personnel Coordinator](#).
- Updating the UC, OSC, EU and SITU, JIC/PIO, and LOFR with information on spill-related wildlife statistics (e.g., numbers of live/dead oiled animals; maps of wildlife recoveries)
- Establishing internal communications protocols within the Branch (e.g., daily Group Supervisor call, organizing group texts for field teams, etc.)
- Coordinating with the Sampling Specialist in the Planning Section, EU regarding oil samples (from wildlife) being collected by Wildlife Branch personnel (if applicable)
- Coordinating with LOFR and the various land managers and/or trustee agencies (refer to ACP/GRP Planning Section, Environmental Sensitivity Indices, Site Summary Sheets for land manager/trustee contact information) regarding Wildlife Branch operations, including potential closures of areas to minimize human disturbance to oiled wildlife, and potential wildlife release locations (which may involve media events)
- Coordinating decontamination protocols for all personnel in the Branch and proper disposal of oily waste generated by Branch operations
- Coordinating with the NRDA response liaison
- Potentially activating one or more Deputy Wildlife Branch Directors to assist with management of the Wildlife Branch. Typically, one primary Deputy WBD is activated from OWCN given the extensive activities of OWCN. As described below, deputies may also be activated to assist with the complexities of responding to certain taxa, including sea otters and other marine mammals

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7.2 WILDLIFE RECONNAISSANCE GROUP

The Wildlife Reconnaissance Group identifies wildlife and wildlife habitat that may be affected by or are at risk of being impacted by a spill and/or spill response.

The Wildlife Reconnaissance Group collects and compiles wildlife reconnaissance data via aerial, on-water and ground-based strike team surveys, wildlife hotline calls, and remote sensing methods. Wildlife near the spill that may have become oiled and moved out of the spill area, and/or wildlife that may be at elevated risk of becoming oiled are included. Real time reconnaissance information is typically collected through the OSPR Reconnaissance application and custom aerial mapping program. These data are passed on to the Wildlife Reconnaissance Group Supervisor (WRNGS), Wildlife Recovery Group Supervisor (WRGS), WBD and others in the Wildlife Branch to coordinate operational activities. The WRNGS and WRGS coordinate closely. Reconnaissance data can be viewed by Wildlife Branch personnel in real time through the Recovery Application and through an ArcGIS Online viewing platform as a spreadsheet or map. End of day maps are prepared by GIS that provide a snapshot of data collected. Because Reconnaissance mapping may include oiled and unoled observations, Reconnaissance data and maps are not shared widely at the ICP to avoid confusion with confirmed oiled wildlife.

The Wildlife Reconnaissance Group Supervisor (WRNGS) oversees the methods of reconnaissance data collection employing the following teams, each led by a Strike Team Leader who reports to the WRNGS:

[Aerial Survey Strike Team](#)

[On-water Survey Strike Team](#)

[Ground Survey Strike Team](#)

[Wildlife Hotline Operators](#)

[Remote Sensing](#) – Drone, Satellite Imagery, Trail Cameras

The WRNGS and the WRGS coordinate ground and on-water based search areas with the WBD. The Recovery Group focuses on the oiled and active cleanup areas and the Reconnaissance Group typically focuses on the surrounding areas where oiled wildlife may have taken refuge. Reconnaissance activation should begin immediately, as appropriate, during development of a wildlife response.

WRNGS Duties/Responsibilities:

- Notify/Activate Aerial Survey Team, Pilot/Plane, coordinate with Air Ops (as applicable)
- Notify/Activate On-water and Ground Survey Strike Team(s); as needed, utilize drones, satellite imagery, remote cameras

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- Notify/Activate Wildlife Hotline Operator(s), coordinate hotline transfer with OWCN
- Coordinate use of OSPR Wildlife Reconnaissance Application
- Coordinate with the Wildlife Recovery Group Supervisor to establish the mechanism for the Recovery Group to receive recon information, including hotline reports
- Determine appropriate level of staffing/resources per WBD and use ICS 213 RR and ICS 204 forms to request/assign and track all staff and resources
- Provide Group personnel with Site Safety Plan and ensure staff are aware of Hot Zone boundaries
- Maintain close coordination with the WBD and Group Supervisors
- Exchange Wildlife information with the Environmental Unit (and NRDA as appropriate)
- Coordinate mapping and provide results of Wildlife Reconnaissance surveys to Wildlife Recovery & Hazing Group Supervisors, WBD, and EU
- Coordinate with EU regarding reconnaissance/spotters for dispersant application and/or in situ burning

Baseline and real-time information on the status and distribution of wildlife and sensitive habitats are important in assessing wildlife at-risk of exposure to oil and development of appropriate response actions. During a spill, baseline information is developed by the Environmental Unit (Resources-at-Risk Specialist) through review of established resources and input from people with wildlife knowledge of the area. This information is summarized and shared via form ICS-232. In addition, the daily and seasonal movements of many animal species necessitate rapid, real-time reconnaissance of occurrences in and adjacent to the spill area during the incident. Depending upon the size, type of spill, and the habitats involved, real-time data are collected via aerial, on-water, ground, and/or remote surveys (outlined below) to evaluate the numbers, species, and locations of wildlife in the area.

For entry on public or private land, the appropriate land manager or landowner should be contacted. Staff in the Planning Section and the LOFR can assist with contact information. If private land, the WRNGS may need to coordinate with the Deputy/SOSC to gain access.

Experienced personnel are essential for effective wildlife reconnaissance. Observers should be able to identify species, behavioral characteristics, and be knowledgeable about local ecological factors. At a minimum, personnel conducting wildlife reconnaissance for a marine spill should be experienced at identifying species of marine mammals and California coastal birds, as well as be able to determine at a distance whether a live animal is oiled through physiological and behavioral cues. For an inland spill, reconnaissance personnel should have knowledge of terrestrial species, both nocturnal and diurnal, freshwater fish, reptiles, amphibians, and sensitive habitats. Trustee agency personnel, such as USFWS, USFS, or State Park biologists,

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can be extremely valuable for timely reconnaissance. For small spills, Wildlife Reconnaissance Group teams may be integrated with Wildlife Recovery teams. If specialized surveys for listed species (including listed fish or invertebrates) are needed, additional wildlife specialists may be called in by the WRNGS or WBD. These specialists will advise the WBD about threats to listed species, the locations and numbers of oiled animals, and the potential value/need for pre-emptive capture, hazing or other protection strategies for the protected species.

Although mapping of sensitive resources will occur at the Incident Command Post using a COP within the Situation Unit, for larger spills it is desirable to have regular access to a GIS specialist working within the Reconnaissance Group of the Wildlife Branch if feasible.

7.2.1 WILDLIFE RECONNAISSANCE: AERIAL SURVEY STRIKE TEAM

The **Aerial Survey Strike Team Leader** is responsible for coordinating, conducting, and supervising aerial reconnaissance surveys of wildlife at the spill site and in areas at risk from the spill. Both the WRNGS at the ICP and an Aerial Survey Strike Team Leader in the field coordinate with the Air Operations Branch to create a flight plan that assures clear communication and safety. Other Trustees may be contacted regarding flight altitude, speed, or other restrictions.

Using the standardized protocol *Aerial Survey Methodology for Wildlife Reconnaissance During Oil Spill Response*, the Aerial Survey Strike Team characterizes the abundance, distribution, and species identities of on-water birds, mammals, sea turtles and other larger taxa in or near the spill area. This information is useful for helping direct response resources, both within and outside the Wildlife Branch, and is particularly important for larger spills offshore, and for large lake and wetland habitat spills where ground and on-water reconnaissance may be difficult. OSPR has a long-standing contract with pre-trained experts (through UC Santa Cruz) to lead and perform aerial surveys for wildlife reconnaissance during oil spills. Aerial observers should have previous training regarding identification of birds, mammals, and other viewable taxa from the air, and knowledge of established survey techniques. While in the air or immediately after landing, oral, text, or digital summaries of wildlife observations are reported to the WRNGS who relays the information to the WBD. The associated electronic files are emailed or otherwise transferred to the GIS Team who prepares a map of survey results.

Established protocols for surveys over the ocean or other large bodies of water involve the use of a high-wing, twin-engine aircraft (usually a Partenavia PN68 Observer), two trained observers who each survey a 75-meter strip transect on either side of the plane, and a navigator who helps direct the pilot to appropriate transects, and enters data called out by the observers into a real-time data entry and mapping program (dLog3) on a laptop. Flights are conducted at a speed of approximately 90 knots (167 km/hr or 104 mph) and an altitude of 60 m (200 ft.); low overflights of bird colonies and pinniped rookeries are avoided to prevent disturbance. Transect locations/layout will vary depending on the size and location of the spill. Transects usually run east-west and are spaced 9.6 km apart.

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These flights complement, but do not replace, operational overflights for mapping oil (typically conducted by NOAA or USCG) nor flights to document wildlife abundance and location prior to or following use of aerial dispersants. It is useful to have a qualified biologist participate in overflights for mapping oil, to report back on any large concentrations of wildlife. Although these flights are typically conducted at higher altitudes (making species identification difficult), they may occur before the Aerial Survey Strike Team has arrived on site. Helicopter overflights are also be useful for locating concentrations of oiled wildlife in areas with difficult access.

7.2.2 WILDLIFE RECONNAISSANCE: ON-WATER SURVEY STRIKE TEAM

The **On-water Survey Strike Team Leader** is responsible for coordinating, conducting, and supervising boat reconnaissance surveys of wildlife at the spill site and in areas at risk from the spill. The Strike Team Leader reports observations to the WRNGS who relays the information to the WBD. Specific sightings of oiled wildlife are either called into the Oiled Wildlife Hotline or entered on-water using the Wildlife Reconnaissance application.

On-water surveys complement aerial reconnaissance surveys for wildlife, and the Wildlife Recovery Group's boat-based search efforts. On-water surveys are not always needed but can be useful if fog or other issues prevent aerial surveys. In some cases, on-water surveys can be used to search for oiled wildlife on shorelines not accessible by land, or visible from the air. Dedicated Reconnaissance surveys can cover a larger area than boat-based Wildlife Recovery teams, whose primary focus is collecting oiled wildlife.

On-water reconnaissance surveys are typically conducted by contracted experts or resource agency personnel. The survey method, survey route, and transect design are established prior to the survey to accommodate the specific areas, issues, and species of concern for a particular response. In all cases, at least one member of the team must be qualified to operate the boat, given the habitat, weather, and on-water conditions. Other personnel must be qualified to observe and identify wildlife and determine oiling status. Depending on the boat and search area, crews are a minimum of two people. However, an optimal and preferable boat crew has three people for safety and search efficiency. CDFW LED and agency partners (e.g., USFWS Refuges, Parks, Harbors) often have experienced local vessel operators and boats. If not, the WRNGS can make a request for an on-water vessel and operator through the Logistics Section.

Exact survey methods will vary on a case-by-case basis. If replacing aerial surveys, observers will collect information on species presence and their location and condition (alive, dead, oiled, and unoled); basic weather and sea conditions; and any other notable information that may be useful to response efforts. Upon completing the survey or during the survey if appropriate, survey results should be transmitted to the WRNGS.

Normally, sightings of recoverable oiled wildlife are relayed via the Wildlife Reconnaissance application or by call to the Wildlife Hotline. In rare cases, On-water Reconnaissance Survey Strike Teams may also collect dead wildlife and/or live oiled animals. This would only occur when the Reconnaissance team has all appropriate training and HAZWOPER certification, has

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suitable equipment for recovery and transport, and this would typically be limited to situations when the Recovery Group is not able to respond in an adequate time.

7.2.3 WILDLIFE RECONNAISSANCE: GROUND SURVEY STRIKE TEAM

The **Ground Survey Strike Team Leader** is responsible for coordinating, conducting, and supervising ground reconnaissance surveys, which includes reporting observations to the WBD through the WRNGS to aid in response strategy development. Duties also include coordinating with the WRGS and trustee agencies and land owners/managers in the field.

The WRNGS or Ground Survey Strike Team Leader will provide assignments and reporting instructions. Survey teams will be provided with instructions to utilize the OSPR Wildlife Reconnaissance application to report oiled wildlife sightings and all survey locations. Survey teams should consist of a minimum of two people for safety. Ground survey teams should focus on locating and reporting oiled wildlife outside the spill zone and to document locations supporting wildlife that may move to or from the spill area. To expedite surveying a large area quickly, Reconnaissance Teams typically do not collect live or dead wildlife.

Surveys on foot are the most common and most effective method for locating wildlife with minimal disturbance. However, depending on the terrain and the size of the area to be covered, spotting scopes, four-wheel drive vehicles, or ATVs can also be used effectively to reduce survey time. Prior to authorizing activities using vehicles for surveys or collections, the WBD or WRNGS must obtain authorization from appropriate trustee agencies and/or landowners and abide by special guidelines (e.g., traveling in sensitive habitat, listed species habitat such as Snowy Plover and Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard habitat). Because motorized vehicles may haze animals back into the water, caution and planning must be exercised. There should be close coordination with the WRGS to avoid unintentional hazing of injured wildlife.

7.2.4 WILDLIFE RECONNAISSANCE: OILED WILDLIFE HOTLINE

For spills likely to involve moderate to large numbers of oiled wildlife, the Wildlife Hotline will be staffed to allow the public and field responders a means of reporting oiled wildlife.

Oiled Wildlife Hotline: 1-877-UCD-OWCN (1-877-823-6926)

The number (above) is maintained by OWCN year-round. A phone tree directs callers to various resources and allows callers to report oiled wildlife, to report a spill, or conduct spill drills. During an active spill response, an additional option to report spill associated oiled wildlife is turned on and a **Wildlife Reconnaissance Hotline Operator(s)** will be activated to monitor this line and input these data to the OSPR Reconnaissance App for live monitoring by the WRGS and others. The hotline operator is also responsible for inputting voicemail data that comes in overnight early the next morning. This number is provided in press releases (along with the Volunteer Hotline number to ensure calls are routed effectively).

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The Hotline Operator informs callers that for their safety and the safety of the animals, they should not attempt to capture oiled wildlife themselves.

The Hotline Operator(s) is usually an OSPR employee but may be any qualified individual, such as staff of a trustee agency or a qualified volunteer. Preferred qualifications include local area knowledge (e.g., local location names) and ideally some biological knowledge (appearance and behavior of common species). CalOES or local Emergency Operations offices may be able to facilitate multiple parallel operators (facilitated through the UC Liaison Unit).

7.2.5 WILDLIFE RECONNAISSANCE: REMOTE SENSING

Remote sensing of oiled wildlife may be an option when it is not safe and/or physically or geographically feasible to survey for oiled wildlife utilizing the methods outlined above. Drones, fine-scale satellite images, and remote cameras are all useful tools. The WRNGS requests and manages these resources.

Trail cameras are especially useful to deploy for night monitoring of wildlife activity. Trail cameras can be deployed in large numbers and require minimal maintenance time. Drones provide high resolution video and still imagery, and in some cases provide thermal infrared imagery detecting heat signatures. Satellite imagery covers a large area, but may have limited clarity when zoomed in unless high-resolution, location-targeted services are contracted.

7.3 WILDLIFE HAZING AND DETERRENCE GROUP

The goal of wildlife hazing and deterrence (H&D) is to keep wildlife from entering oiled areas and/or cleanup operation areas. Hazing and Deterrence can also be used to direct/persuade animals to utilize clean habitat a safe distance away from the spill response.

Resources: Specialized Hazing and Deterrence equipment is maintained by OWCN at the U.C. Davis location and in various locations throughout the state. OSROs also tend to carry basic hazing equipment including propane cannons (aka Zon guns) and plastic sheeting (e.g., Visqueen).

Bird hazing techniques and considerations:

Bird Hazing Manual: Techniques and Strategies for Dispersing Birds from Spill Sites:

[Bird Hazing Manual](#)

Marine mammal hazing techniques:

NMFS's Pinniped and Cetacean Oil Spill Response Guidelines

[Pinniped and Cetacean Oil Spill Response Guidelines](#)

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The Hazing and Deterrence Group is under the direction of the WBD or their Deputy and is responsible for keeping wildlife from environments where they may become oiled or injured due to a spill and spill response activities.

Hazing and Deterrence Group Supervisor Duties/Responsibilities:

- Determining optimal hazing techniques to be used (dependent on environment and species) and frequency of rotation or change to prevent acclimatization
- Ensure H&D methods comply with Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and Marine Mammal Protection Act ([Appendix C](#))
- Activating and deploying H&D teams
- Oversight of hazing and deterrence protocols
- Management of data
- Working with the Wildlife Recovery and the Wildlife Reconnaissance groups to determine wildlife at risk in the vicinity of the spill
- Regular reporting of pertinent information (number/type/species hazed) to the Wildlife Branch Director
- Coordinating with Operations to ensure H&D measures do not unduly impede cleanup work and that Operations staff are aware of and understand the use of H&D measures

Wildlife H&D (along with [pre-emptive capture](#)) is considered a Secondary Response intended to keep wildlife away from oil and to avoid or minimize injuries to wildlife from spill response operations. H&D activities are implemented to prevent animals from establishing or continuing regular use patterns within an oiled area or an area predicted to become oiled. While H&D activities may cause stress to wildlife, that impact is normally less than becoming oiled.

Oiled habitats that support wildlife may be candidates for H&D because wildlife often continue to use their traditional sites even after they've been oiled. H&D actions are intended to encourage wildlife to use alternative habitat from the oiled area. For that reason, it is critical to ensure that suitable unoiled habitats are known to be available in the vicinity so that the hazed wildlife have a safe place to go. Similarly, when installing exclusionary fencing, it is critical to ensure that the fencing is not trapping some animals inside the fenced and oiled area with no means of escape.

The Hazing & Deterrence Group encompasses three distinct strategies to keep wildlife away from oil. These include "Exclusion" which employs barriers such as fences or plastic sheeting (e.g., Visqueen/tarps), bubble curtains, and others to prevent wildlife from accessing oiled areas; "Deterrence" which employs passive strategies such as placement of reflective mylar tape or balloons, effigies, lights or predator sounds to discourage wildlife from approaching an

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oiled area; and “Hazing” which employs more active tools such as propane cannons (aka zon guns), air horns, or pyrotechnics to discourage wildlife from approaching an oiled area.

H&D is most effective when the oiled area, or access routes to the oiled area, are relatively discrete and can be effectively targeted. In large open areas, such as a large lake or ocean, hazing is likely to be ineffective or even counterproductive due to the risk of the animal reacting to the H&D but still entering an oiled area. Despite this, H&D efforts should be considered as an effective tool in every spill event. In addition to protecting wildlife, there is also a strong economic incentive for H&D by avoiding the cost of cleaning oiled wildlife (and subsequent compensatory restoration).

Before implementing H&D efforts, it is important to be aware of the phenological status of species being hazed (e.g., breeding, migrating, hibernating/aestivating, etc.), as well as potential negative effects on non-target animals. Hazing and deterrence of animals without proper awareness and planning can negatively impact survival rates more than the threat of oiling (e.g., if parent birds are hazed off a nest and abandon dependent chicks). Additionally, wildlife that has already been oiled should not be hazed as this creates additional stress and may make capture more difficult. Rather, oiled animals should be captured as soon as practical, and preferably before any hazing activities occur in the vicinity. Therefore, clear communication channels should exist between the Hazing and Deterrence Group Supervisor, the Recovery Group Supervisor and the WBD.

Through the WBD, the Hazing & Deterrence Group Supervisor will consider the anticipated benefits and limitations associated with H&D actions and will make a recommendation to implement H&D, potentially requiring UC approval. The recommendation will be guided by site-specific and species-specific factors and availability of proven H&D techniques for the situation. H&D team members are trained in the use of hazing equipment, and must use appropriate PPE and other safety precautions, per the Site Safety Plan. Hazing activities must take place only under the authority and oversight of trustee agencies, in coordination with the UC. A FESA Section 7 consultation with USFWS or NOAA-NMFS will be required to haze federally listed wildlife species. H&D activities, observations, and results will be reported to the WBD and the Wildlife Recovery Group Supervisor.

A variety of hazing, deterrence, and exclusion tools can be used, but the selection of the specific tool/strategy will depend on the species being hazed, the habitat, and other factors. To exclude wildlife from a spill area, there are many types of physical barriers that can be used, including fences of different material and mesh size. And different heights depending on the target species in the area. Wildlife exclusion fencing may include one-way doors to allow wildlife inside the fenced area to exit, while precluding entry from outside the fence. Exclusion can also include isolating the spilled oil from wildlife by covering the oiled surface with tarps, plastic sheeting (e.g., Visqueen), floating balls (on water), etc. Depending on the size of the area, it may also be possible to include netting over the top to exclude flighted wildlife (birds and bats). If exclusion isn't an option (or to compliment exclusion), deterrence and hazing tools should be considered. This includes a variety of acoustic or visual devices. Visual tools include mylar tape,

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aluminum pie plates, pennant flags, balloons, effigies, wavy blow-up man, lasers, lights, etc. Acoustic tools include radios, air horns, propane cannons, drones, pyrotechnics, sonic buoys, predator calls, etc.

For guidance associated with fish exclusion measures (e.g., bubble curtains), the OSPR Fisheries Closure Coordinator may be engaged with Regional CDFW staff and MOAA NMFS/USFWS for inland or marine fisheries. Although difficult, impact avoidance and minimization measures for fish and aquatic invertebrates are feasible in some situations. For sensitive species such as black abalone, trustee agencies have evaluated and documented the viability of and developed strategies for preemptive capture when oiling is imminent.

7.4 WILDLIFE RECOVERY GROUP

Under the direction of the WBD or DWBD, the Wildlife Recovery Group Supervisor (WRGS) is responsible for the search and recovery of live and dead impacted wildlife and their transport to Field Stabilization sites/center(s) or Primary Care Facilities. Specially-trained personnel are selected by the WRGS to form field strike teams. These teams are strategically sent out with required PPE and capture equipment to search for and recover oiled and/or injured wildlife throughout the impacted area.

Wildlife Recovery Methods:

Wildlife Recovery: [Field Methods](#)

Wildlife Recovery: [Marine Mammals](#)

These activities occur under the direct supervision of the WRGS, typically an OWCN staff member. Wildlife collection (i.e., Recovery) by any agency or organization must be conducted under the direction of the WBD via the WRGS. Their activities must comply with agreements and permits from the appropriate management agencies (e.g., CDFW, NOAA-NMFS, and USFWS; see 14 CCR § 679(d)).

Trained Recovery personnel are selected from OWCN member organizations, OSPR, other state and federal trustee agencies, and approved contractors. Detailed guidelines for Wildlife Recovery (e.g., capture techniques for different taxa) are maintained by OWCN and updated on a regular basis; they include details for inland and marine species.

WRGS Specific duties include (but are not limited to):

- Overseeing all activities and safety of the Recovery Group
- Informing the SOFR via the WBD of any anticipated hazards or protective procedures related to wildlife recovery so they can be included in the Safety Plan
- Staffing, deployment, and oversight of current and future Recovery Group personnel and

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managing resources to maximize effective recovery of oiled wildlife

- Ensuring that all Recovery Group personnel have read and signed the Site Safety Plan and are following proper safety and training protocols for wildlife recovery (e.g., wearing of PPE, if appropriate)
- Developing communication protocols, including morning and evening briefings, and ensuring that field teams have proper communication equipment such as mobile phones and/or two-way radios
- Identifying proper capture techniques based on the species impacted or known species in the area and ensuring that field teams have the proper equipment, including PPE, nets, and animal carriers
- Ensuring the integrity of field data collection and data transfer by the field Strike Teams. Confirm that cell phones are loaded with the Wildlife Recovery App and personnel are trained using the app to record search effort, survey track lines, and animal collection locations
- Documenting daily field assignments (which search areas were covered and by whom)
- Providing information to field teams on protocols to avoid collateral damage to sensitive species or habitats
- Coordinating with the WRNGS to clarify the mechanism for the Recovery Group to receive recon information, including hotline reports
- Providing timely information to the WBD on the status of Recovery Group activities
- Provide Recovery teams with information on which animals should be captured; an effort should be made to avoid capturing animals that are not impacted by the spill or for which capture would be considered a more significant threat than a small amount of oil on the animal
- Overseeing the Wildlife Transport Coordinator
- Specific protocols for the Recovery Group Supervisor are maintained in internal OWCN guidelines.

The WRGS can coordinate with the WBD, local land managers (through the LOFR), and the Operations Section Staging Area Manager to locate appropriate staging areas. The Recovery Group is typically based at a staging area with needed support features such as electricity, water, restrooms, etc. The Recovery Group typically uses an OWCN van or trailer as the staging post, which can sometimes be co-located with the Field Stabilization staging area (see [Section 7.5](#)). The Recovery Group staging site will act as a secure hub for animal transport, a check-in and check-out site for staff, a staging area for capture equipment, and a site for personnel and field equipment decontamination.

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Communication with the Transport Coordinator, Personnel Coordinator, Field Stabilization Group Supervisor and the Care & Processing Group Supervisor is essential to ensure timely, safe, and efficient transfer of animals from field to facility, and delivery of data to the WBD.

The WRGS coordinates with the Environmental Unit and Wildlife Reconnaissance Group through the WBD in conducting surveys of wildlife in the vicinity of the spill. The establishment of multiple field teams may be necessary to survey the entire spill area.

The **Wildlife Recovery Strike Team Leader** (WRSTL), under the direction of the WRGS, is responsible for the search for and collection of dead and live impacted wildlife within a discrete geographic spill area.

Duties include:

- Assisting the WRGS in determining current and future recovery needs
- Deployment and oversight of recovery personnel
- Management of ongoing data collection

It is essential for the WRSTL to communicate with other WRSTL and the Transport Coordinator(s) to ensure full coordination for collected animals.

It is recommended that the WRGS and the WRSTL have oil spill and crisis management experience and a background in oiled wildlife capture and response. It is also recommended that the WRGS and WRSTL have a full understanding of ICS and have experience managing media inquiries.

Note: If a role is not mobilized, the duties fall to the role's supervisor.

7.4.1 WILDLIFE RECOVERY: FIELD METHODS

Once animals have become oiled, habitat-specific and species-specific strategies to recover and oiled live animals and collect dead wildlife are required. Under the direction of the WRGS, systematic surveys for collecting affected wildlife should be carried out several times per day, including at least one survey as early as is safely possible after dawn. Note that the WRGS may coordinate through the WBD to request that wildlife surveys be allowed to proceed prior to initiation of the day's cleanup operations so that oiled wildlife may be assessed and potentially captured before the disturbance of the cleanup crews haze the animals away. Successful captures not only depend on the condition of the animal, but also on the training and experience of the Recovery team, along with techniques and equipment used. OWCN has developed detailed job aids with detailed guidelines that are provided to staff and agency personnel that conduct approved OWCN training; all Recovery Group personnel should receive this training.

Surveys are often conducted on foot or by boat; however, the use of spotting scopes, ATV/UTVs and four-wheel-drive trucks can expedite searches. Special considerations pertaining

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to collateral injuries to animals and habitat must be taken into account when using vehicles, or when surveying on foot along wetlands, rivers, or streams, or on beaches that may support nesting birds, breeding activities, critical foraging areas, or other sensitive life-cycle activities.

Each Recovery team should consist of at least two people and should be outfitted with the resources and equipment necessary to complete the assignment. At a minimum, the team should have proper PPE, long-handled nets, appropriate animal transport boxes, binoculars, a cell phone loaded with the Wildlife Recovery App, Animal Collection Tags, and a device capable of communication with the Group Supervisor.

The Wildlife Recovery Application was created by OSPR and OWCN to allow care facilities to know when and what species of oiled wildlife have been captured, and to track Recovery search effort, locations, and photos of animals collected. Recovery Strike Teams should be fully trained in the use of this app. In the event that the Wildlife Recovery App is not working properly, or fails to accurately obtain GPS coordinates of the survey search effort (start and end locations and times) and collected animal, responders should use an alternative device, such as a GPS, to determine accurate coordinates and use the screen shot function to capture a photo of these coordinates (if using a phone). In addition, the WRGS should record daily field assignments in case search effort data are not recorded properly in the field. The photo of the collected animal location should then be uploaded into the Wildlife Recovery App as part of the photo evidence for that animal. Daily mapping of wildlife recoveries and search effort is important for internal review and planning of search effort for following days. In addition, daily maps of wildlife recoveries (after validation of species ID by the Processing Strike Team) are typically provided via the WBD to the UC.

While conducting Wildlife Recovery, it is important that dead animals are collected, documented, and held as evidence until disposal is approved by the trustees. It is not always feasible, reliable, or practical to attempt to discriminate in the field between spill-related and non-spill-related casualties; thus, all dead animals should be collected. The prompt removal of dead oiled animals from the environment can be critical to minimizing the risk of secondary oiling to predators and scavengers. Recovery Team members should note the location of any sign of possible secondary oiling to the Group Supervisor. Signs may include oiled mammalian, reptilian, or amphibian tracks or scat, periodic oil spotting along wildlife trails, or near burrow and den entrances.

When animals are recovered, the Recovery Group personnel should provide the following information (at a minimum) directly on each animal transport container or on an Animal Collection Tag attached to the container with the corresponding QR code:

- The date and time the animal was recovered from the location
- Collector's name (and phone number if not part of the Recovery Group effort);
- Collection location: general name and GPS coordinates; and

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- Species or known taxa (e.g., “gull”, “frog”) of animal.

Although the standard method for Recovery of live birds and many other animals is capture on the ground with long-handled nets, various other techniques may be considered depending on conditions and species. For example, cannon nets or handheld net guns may be considered for captures of large groups of birds (although there is a substantial collateral risk to birds from this technique), and boat-based dip-netting may be appropriate in some cases. For the capture of mammals, various sized live traps may be considered. Snare poles or cover boards could be considered for amphibian or reptile capture. The WRGS, in coordination with the WBD, will ensure that Recovery Teams use the most appropriate methods for wildlife collection. A Wildlife Field Equipment Coordinator can be activated to coordinate logistics of field equipment procurement, transportation, storage, and maintenance.

Recovery (or relocation) of fish and aquatic invertebrates such as crab, lobster, or abalone affected by oil spills is more complex than recovery of terrestrial wildlife. Per internal OSPR guidelines, the NRDA group is the default lead for collection of fish and invertebrates, but this collection must be coordinated closely with the Wildlife Branch. In some cases, Wildlife Branch personnel may collect fish and invertebrates. For guidance associated with fish capture or exclusion measures (e.g., bubble curtains), the OSPR Fisheries Closure Coordinator may be engaged with Regional CDFW staff for inland or marine fisheries. Although difficult, impact avoidance and minimization measures for fish and aquatic invertebrates are feasible in some situations. For sensitive species such as black abalone, trustee agencies have evaluated the viability of preemptive capture when oiling is imminent.

7.4.2 WILDLIFE RECOVERY: MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES

The WBD and the WRGS should evaluate the need for marine mammal and sea turtle capture on a case-by-case basis in consultation with those trustee agencies that have specific regulatory authority: USFWS (sea otters, sea turtles while on land, including nests/eggs), NOAA-NMFS (pinnipeds, cetaceans, and sea turtles). If there is a potential for marine mammals to be oiled, one or more DWBDs will be activated (typically from these trustee agencies) to oversee response to marine mammals. Specific instructions for coordinating with NMFS regarding dead animal recovery and live mammal capture can be found in the [MOU](#) with NMFS.

Typically, during large oil spill events, a separate Oiled Marine Mammal Recovery Strike Team or Recovery Group (composed of members of the California Marine Mammal Stranding Network [MMSN] acting within the OWCN) will respond to reports of live or dead oiled marine mammals. Standard protocols will be used to capture/recover marine mammals, in coordination with the NMFS MMSN Coordinator or DWBD overseeing marine mammal operations. For pinnipeds and cetaceans, response will be in alignment with the 2015 NOAA Pinniped and Cetacean Oil Spill Response Guidelines. Live oiled or dead marine mammals encountered by Reconnaissance or Recovery Group personnel will be reported to the WRGS, who will assign Oiled Mammal Strike Team personnel to collect the animal, or (if a dead animal is too large to collect) will coordinate

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with the Wildlife Care & Processing Group Supervisor to deploy a field Processing Team to collect either information/evidence from the carcass as appropriate. However, during smaller events and/or where minimal risk of oiling exists to marine mammals, field teams deployed to collect oiled birds can conduct initial observations, and a small number of marine mammal-specific teams can be deployed without initiating a separate Strike Team.

Southern sea otters are a special case because they are extremely susceptible to oil and they are a Federally-listed threatened species. Capture and treatment of sea otters is addressed in internal OSPR and OWCN protocols. In California, sea otters will generally be captured by specialized crews led by Federal or State trustee agency personnel under an assigned DWBD specifically for sea otters. Sea otters that are not visibly oiled and are not displaying abnormal behavior will not be intentionally captured unless there is a substantial risk of oiling. Under dire circumstances, preemptive captures of animals at risk of oiling may be considered, if approved by the UC and USFWS and adequate facilities for transport and holding are available. OSPR's Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center is a purpose built facility for sea otter care and maintains a staff of trained sea otter experts in capture and care. The facility also maintains critical resources such as floating pens to house cleaned otters prior to release.

7.4.3 WILDLIFE TRANSPORTATION

The **Wildlife Transport Coordinator** arranges transportation of wildlife from the Recovery Group staging area(s), Field Stabilization Group area(s), and/or from secondary care facilities to the primary care facility. The WRGS coordinates with the Transport Coordinator on transportation needs.

The Transport Coordinator works closely with the Personnel Coordinator and/or OSPR Volunteer Coordinator (VC) to find drivers. The Transport Coordinator reports to the WRGS. OWCN maintains *Guidelines for Transport of Oiled-Affected Animals* that details qualifications and expectations for transport drivers.

Specific duties of the **Transport Coordinator** include:

- Ensure transporters are properly trained for oiled wildlife transport and have a valid CA license
- Advise transporters as to appropriate temperature control or safety protocols to follow
- Ensure transporters are following OWCN *Guidelines for Transport of Oil-Affected Animals*
- Maintain communication (e.g., via cell phone) with transporters with regular updates on animal concerns or arrivals/departures
- Coordinate with the Wildlife Field Stabilization Group Supervisor or the Wildlife Care & Processing Group Supervisor regarding estimated time of arrival for oiled animals transported from the field

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More details on the Transport Coordinator position can be found in the *OWCN Transport Coordinator Job Aid*. Transport of oiled wildlife from the field to the Recovery/Field Stabilization area(s), and/or to the Primary Care Facility should be done as quickly and efficiently as possible. However, if a long transport is needed, animals should be checked periodically during transport by properly trained staff, and if needed, provided hydration, temperature control (e.g., heating pad) and nutrition. Wildlife should be transported in a portion of the vehicle separate from the driver (to avoid exposing the driver to oil vapors from the animals) that should be maintained comfortably warm if animals are hypothermic, or purposefully cooled if they are hyperthermic; the Field Stabilization Group Supervisor and/or the Care & Processing Group Supervisor can provide guidance on proper vehicle temperature. Vehicles should be kept as quiet as possible (i.e., radios or stereos turned off, voices kept low). Drivers should avoid high speed turns and hard braking or accelerating as that may injure the animal being transported.

Transportation vehicles should be protected from oil contamination by lining animal holding areas (cargo areas) with impermeable plastic. Oiled plastic should be disposed of in an oily waste container at the Recovery staging area, stabilization trailer, or care facility by personnel with appropriate training and PPE (including consideration of potential zoonotic disease exposure). Carriers (either cardboard or plastic pet carriers or plastic sky kennels) should be placed in the vehicle so that the boxes are level and should be positioned so that there is space between each box to allow adequate ventilation. Carriers should be large enough to allow the animal to maintain as normal a posture as possible. At no time should oiled animals be transported in vehicles with children (under 18 years old) or other animals (i.e., pets, especially other birds).

Oiled animals should not be transported in open-air trucks. Instead, cargo vans or trucks with camper shells (if appropriate ambient temperature exists) should be used. Transport of oiled marine mammals or turtles will be arranged by the responding OWCN/California Marine Mammal Stranding Network member organization using appropriate species-specific protocols. Transportation protocols of other unusual animals (e.g., fishes) will be determined as needed.

Transporters must ensure that data for each animal is transferred with that animal. This includes information related to animal capture (see above) and Chain of Custody forms if required (i.e., for marine mammals or sea turtles). Transporters should maintain communication (e.g., via cell phone) with the Transport Coordinator. At a minimum, the transporter should inform the Coordinator when they depart the field or staging area with oiled wildlife, and when they expect to arrive at the stabilization site or the primary care facility.

7.5 WILDLIFE FIELD STABILIZATION GROUP

The Wildlife Field Stabilization Group provides immediate medical assessment and short-term supportive care to oiled wildlife that cannot be transported directly to a Primary Care Facility. By stabilizing animals prior to transport, the group improves survival outcomes, safeguards animal welfare, and supports efficient use of response resources.

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Field stabilization may be conducted in a variety of settings depending on spill location and operational needs. The OWCN Mobile Animal Stabilization Hospital (MASH) trailer and the OSPR mobile veterinary labs may be deployed to provide mobile capacity for stabilization operations. Existing OWCN network facilities (e.g., wildlife rehabilitation centers) or temporary structures (e.g., Western Shelters) may also serve as Field Stabilization sites. In the absence of a suitable OWCN network facility, the WBD, or their designee at the Incident Command Post, can assist in identifying and securing an alternative staging site for the Field Stabilization Group. The most common location for Field Stabilization is at the primary staging area used by the Wildlife Recovery Group, though it is important to consider loud noise and lighting conditions if animals are expected to stay overnight at the temporary facility.

The **Field Stabilization Group Supervisor** oversees activities and personnel at all field stabilization sites, including the Field Stabilization Lead Veterinarian, if activated. In large responses, separate Field Stabilization Strike Teams (each with a designated Strike Team Leader) may be necessary when multiple stabilization sites are activated. Standard stabilization measures consist of, but are not limited to, thermal regulation, rehydration, and nutritional support. These interventions are intended as short-term care, generally lasting no more than 24–48 hours, to prepare animals for transport to a Primary Care Facility. Detailed protocols are maintained internally by OWCN.

Field Stabilization Group Supervisor Duties/Responsibilities:

- Develop a plan for effective and efficient stabilization of wildlife, including activation of one or more field stabilization sites
- Make staffing recommendations to the WBD and work with the Personnel Coordinator to fill necessary roles within the Field Stabilization Group
- Inform the SOFR via the WBD of any anticipated hazards or protective procedures related to stabilization functions to be included in the Site Safety Plan
- Ensure that all responders have read and signed the Site Safety Plan and are following established safety protocols (e.g., biosecurity, disinfection, PPE)
- Oversee operations at field stabilization site(s), including animal care, responder safety, and data collection and management
- Coordinate with the WRGS and/or Transport Coordinator to ensure timely and organized transport of animals from Field Stabilization to the Primary Care Facility
- Ensure that the stabilization sites are equipped with necessary supplies and equipment to provide appropriate care for wildlife;
- Work with the WBD and other Group Supervisors to establish and maintain an effective communication plan

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- Collaborate with the WRGS and Care & Processing Group Supervisor to coordinate animal transport, address medical or biosecurity concerns, and maintain alignment across field, stabilization, and care operations

7.6 WILDLIFE CARE & PROCESSING GROUP

The Wildlife Care and Processing Group ensures that oiled animals are fully evaluated and receive the best achievable care by providing access to veterinary and wildlife rehabilitation services, while concurrently collecting data for a variety of purposes, such as keeping the UC informed of wildlife statistics, response strategy development, and media updates.

OWCN maintains *Protocols for the Processing of Oiled Wildlife in the State of California*, these detailed forms and protocols provide operational guidance for personnel processing wildlife during oil spill response. The Care & Processing Group is typically the largest Group within the Wildlife Branch. For large responses, this group can include more than 10 ICS positions and more than 100 personnel ([Figure 2](#)).

The Wildlife Care & Processing Group has two dedicated Strike Teams that can be activated:

Wildlife [Care Strike Team](#)

Wildlife [Processing Strike Team](#)

Wildlife Care & Processing Group Supervisor Duties/Responsibilities include (but are not limited to):

- Activating and maintaining wildlife processing, and primary care centers during a response (permanent wildlife rehabilitation facilities are located throughout the State; see [Figure 3](#))
- Making staffing recommendations to the WBD and working with the Personnel Coordinator to staff necessary roles in the Group and ensuring that proper safety protocols are followed by everyone
- Working with the Transport Coordinator(s) in the Recovery Group to coordinate activities and ensure transportation to established treatment centers for oiled animals with efficient communications
- Receiving and processing dead and live wildlife, which includes collecting and securing necessary evidentiary photos and samples (feather, fur, carapace swab, and/or tissue) from all animals, following the detailed procedures outlined in the OWCN Protocols
- Coordinating combined resources and capabilities of all OWCN member organizations to provide optimal treatment and rehabilitation services, following detailed OWCN Protocols for Care of Oil-Affected Birds and Marine Mammals

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- Providing the WBD daily updates (typically on an ICS 209) on the status of animals (number, type, species, locations, and disposition of oiled wildlife at the care and processing facilities)
- Coordinating release of rehabilitated wildlife, including communication of this information to the UC through the WBD
- Informing the SOFR via the WBD of any anticipated hazards or protective procedures related to Care & Processing functions so they can be included in the Site Safety Plan
- Ensuring that members of the Group have read, understood, and signed the Site Safety Plan and are following proper safety protocols (e.g., wearing of PPE, as appropriate)
- Working with the WBD and other Group Supervisors to develop a communications plan

The Wildlife Care & Processing Group Supervisor reports to the WBD or (if activated) a DWBD. In addition to the two Strike Team Leaders, also reporting to the Care & Processing Group Supervisor are the:

- Care & Processing Lead Veterinarian; responsible for overseeing veterinary care of live animals
- Pathologist; responsible for overseeing postmortem exams and assessing possible medical risks to wildlife in care
- Facility Equipment Coordinator; responsible for maintenance and operation of the Primary Care Facility and the Field Stabilization staging area; also acts as the safety officer for the facility
- Data Coordinator; responsible for overall data management related to animals in care

For large spills where high numbers of sea otters, marine mammals or sea turtles are collected, entirely separate Bird and Sea Otter/Marine Mammal Care & Processing Strike Teams or Groups may be activated. These Teams/Groups are scalable based on classes of animals affected or predicted to be affected. Each Strike Team Leader is responsible for receiving live oiled animals requiring extended care and treatment at established centers, recording essential medical information, conducting triage, stabilization, treatment and rehabilitation. These personnel work out of different Primary Care Center(s) and have entirely separate staff. Depending on the complexity of the event, the WBD may activate one or more DWBDs to assist with the coordination of bird and sea otter/marine mammal operations.

Similarly, depending on the size of the spill, Live Animal and Dead Animal Processing Task Forces can be formed within the Processing Strike Team to improve initial procedures for incoming animals. Dead animal task forces focus on documentation, sample collection, and post-mortem exams of dead animals. Live animal task forces initially begin with documentation

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and sample collection, then transfer live animals to the Care Strike Team for full medical evaluations.

For exceptionally large spills in which rehabilitation centers may be overwhelmed, the Care & Processing Group Supervisor, in consultation with the WBD and the UC, may implement protocols for triage and potential euthanasia of some animals, to maximize survival of as many animals as possible. In the case of cleaned animals that require prolonged time to recover, transport to long-term care facilities may be considered (particularly for marine mammals).

7.6.1 WILDLIFE CARE & PROCESSING: CARE STRIKE TEAM

The **Wildlife Care Strike Team Leader** is responsible for examining, cleaning, and rehabilitating live oiled wildlife; as well as coordinating the release of rehabilitated wildlife. To provide optimum treatment and rehabilitation services, the Strike Team Leader coordinates the combined resources and capabilities of all activated OWCN member organizations. OWCN maintains specific specialized protocols and SOPs for oil-affected animal care & processing, reflecting the most current information available.

The Wildlife Care Strike Team may include up to five coordinators shown in [Figure 2](#): Wildlife Intake, Pre-Wash Care, Cleaning, Conditioning, and Support. In small spills, the Wildlife Intake Coordinator can also assume all live and dead processing duties following the same procedures used by the Wildlife Processing Strike Team. In moderate-sized events, Intake can process live animals, leaving dead animal processing to the Processing Strike Team. However, in large-scale spills, live and dead animal processing may be accomplished through the Wildlife Processing Strike Team with the establishment of separate Live and Dead Animal Processing Task Forces. Specific protocols for both Strike Teams and the other Coordinators of the Wildlife Care Strike Team are maintained in internal OWCN guidelines. Animal care records are tracked in the Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Medical Database (OWRMD).

Time in care depends on many different factors, including (but not limited to) spill location, type of petroleum product involved, the effect of the product on different species, pre-existing injuries, seasonal conditions, and other logistical concerns. In some cases, for example with hibernating or aestivating species, cleaned animals may need to remain in captivity for weeks or months until the appropriate season to release. When rehabilitated animals are ready for release, clean, non-oiled release sites are chosen after consulting the appropriate trustee agency or agencies and the Environmental Unit of the Planning Section (typically through the WBD). While exceptions can be made during spill emergencies, some agencies have specific requirements or policies regarding releasing animals on their properties. Landowner approval is required for all release sites. For example, trustee agencies, such as California State Parks or National Marine Sanctuaries, may only allow the release of an animal on their property if that animal was captured from the subject area or if there has been a determination that the release will not be detrimental to the ecosystem. Additionally, it may be necessary to obtain land-owner permission prior to selecting a release site on private or restricted access property.

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As a part of spill response actions, birds and mammals are banded (with leg bands) or tagged for post-release monitoring.

OWCN Primary Care Facilities ([Figure 3](#)) are typically used for wildlife rehabilitation during oil spills in California. Primary Care Facilities can be expanded if needed (e.g., with additional outdoor tents and pools), and additional temporary facilities can be created. Any existing or created veterinary facilities used for oil spill response must meet minimum space and infrastructure requirements and incorporate all required aspects of wildlife treatment and rehabilitation. An ideal facility should include:

- Security Plan (restricted public access)
- Facility-specific Safety Plan
- Areas for intake, physical exam, and evidence processing that can be easily cleaned and disinfected
- Locked storage for animal carcasses and evidence
- Capabilities for infectious animal isolation quarantine & space to implement measure to ensure worker protection from zoonotic disease
- Indoor ventilation with temperature regulated wildlife housing and caging
- Food storage and preparation facilities
- Animal washing infrastructure with hot and cold water at appropriate pressure and volume, rinsing areas, and wastewater containment
- Indoor drying pens
- Outdoor pool and pen areas
- Controlled containment for oily water and waste
- Outdoor space for unooled waste disposal
- Pathology/necropsy facilities
- Restroom, dining and break space, and volunteer training facilities
- Administrative offices with multiple phone lines, internet access, and conference space
- General and secured storage
- A large parking area

Typically, spill response is focused only on native wildlife. It is illegal to release non-native wildlife back into the environment, with the exception of the species listed in the [CDFW-OWCN](#)

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[Wildlife Rehabilitation MOU](#), which makes certain exceptions for the rehabilitator despite CDFW's recommendation against release of these species. Non-native wildlife (introduced, invasive, hybrid, feral, or peri-domestic animals) that are oiled (dead or alive) should be collected using standard protocols for native wildlife, with the purpose of minimizing animal suffering and removing oiled wildlife from the environment. The standard practice for most non-native wildlife found alive should be humane euthanasia as soon as is practicable after capture. Another rare exception may be raised by the UC for non-native species when the local community has a strong connection to a resident individual or group of animals, the land manager is supportive, and special approval has been granted by the CA Fish and Game Commission. In some cases, non-native oiled wildlife may be cleaned, rehabilitated, and placed permanently in captivity, if a suitable facility is identified and the UC approves.

Domestic pets should be brought to their local veterinarian with instructions on cleaning provided by the Wildlife Care Strike team leader or WBD.

7.6.2 WILDLIFE CARE & PROCESSING: PROCESSING STRIKE TEAM

The **Wildlife Processing Strike Team Leader**, who reports to the Wildlife Care & Processing Group Supervisor, is responsible for receiving, documenting, and storing all data and evidentiary samples from all animals that have been collected, following detailed procedures outlined in the *Protocols for the Processing of Oiled Wildlife in the State of California*. Wildlife processing is necessary to provide sufficient information to enable the WBD to make timely and accurate statements concerning effects on wildlife, to help determine whether or not the animals collected are spill-related, and for injury determination. If provided in a timely manner, this information is also useful to help in directing Recovery efforts. Timely information on the number of animals affected each day is typically one of the most pressing issues for the UC, the JIC/PIO and LOFR. Once the Processing Strike Team confirms the numbers, the WBD reports them out once a day. In an absence of a Processing Strike Team Leader, the Care & Processing Group Supervisor will assume these responsibilities.

The Processing Strike Team Leader is responsible for maintaining and reporting information on wildlife collected including number, type, species, locations, and disposition of oiled wildlife. This information is recorded electronically into the Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Medical Database (OWRMD) employed by OWCN member organizations, which links individual animal care records to data collected in the field for that same animal using the Wildlife Recovery App via QR codes on Animal Collection Tags. The Wildlife Care & Processing Group Supervisor collates this information in the *Wildlife Branch Daily Report Form*. The Wildlife Care & Processing Group Supervisor and WBD need to be briefed at least daily by the Processing Strike Team Leader (typically at the end of day Group Supervisor call). The roles of the Processing Strike Team Leader and Care Strike Team Leader may be filled by the same person during small spills, and if not activated, the Care & Processing Group Supervisor assumes these responsibilities.

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Ideally, all live and dead animals are transported to the primary care facility (or facilities), where the Processing Strike Team is based. However, in instances where large dead marine mammals are found, per NOAA and OWCN protocols, in situ processing through deployment of a Field Processing Strike Team composed of trained and experienced marine mammal experts may occur.

In most circumstances, only dead animals will be processed by the Wildlife Processing Strike Team. During such spills, all processing responsibilities for live animals will be absorbed by the Wildlife Care Strike Team and live animal protocols will be followed. However, during large-scale incidents, separate Live and Dead Animal Processing Task Forces within the Processing Strike Team may be mobilized and staffed according to the needs of the response.

In all spills, photographs must be taken and oil samples collected and preserved in case chemical fingerprinting of the oil becomes necessary. OSPR has created *Guidelines for Oil Sample Collection and Shipment* to ensure oil samples are accurately collected and preserved. Photographs will aid in species identification and document oiling information. All processing information is collected before animals enter the care process or dead animals are taken into storage. Data are entered into OWRMD, or if OWRMD is not available, paper copies of live and dead animal logs may be used. Detailed protocols for the Processing Strike Team are maintained internally by OWCN.

Post-mortem exams or necropsies may be conducted on wildlife that were collected dead or that die in care. Post-mortem exams are initial detailed exams to inform care and to collect samples for future analysis. Necropsies, in contrast, are detailed exams with subsequent case review intended to determine likely cause of death and document other morbidities. The Wildlife Branch plans on conducting post-mortem exams as standard practice on any animal as appropriate to inform immediate veterinary care, and as time and resources allow, to collect data for future use to aid in our understanding of effects of oil on wildlife. Post-mortem exams to inform care are pre-approved under OWCN's rehabilitation permits; for post-mortem exams to inform our understanding of effects of oil on wildlife, USFWS approval would be needed for any migratory birds or any species listed under the Federal ESA. Full necropsies are not planned as standard practice for birds or terrestrial animals during spill response but are considered standard practice for pinnipeds and cetaceans in accordance with NOAA's *Pinniped and Cetacean Oil Spill Response Guidelines*.

Remains of animals examined for necropsy or post-mortem exams shall be placed in the original bag (if possible) with the following information added to the original label: the word "Necropsied" or "Post-mortem Exam" along with the date and initials of the person who performed the exam. Carcasses and samples should be kept locked and only leave the facility following appropriate Chain of Custody procedures.

Following processing and documentation, all dead animals that have had appropriate evidence collected (photos, feather samples and fur/carapace/skin swabs) should be systematically packaged and stored in locked freezers on site until the conclusion of the event. In certain instances when on-site storage capacity is exceeded, carcasses and samples can be transported

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(following appropriate Chain of Custody protocols) to a secure freezer for storage, such as those at the OSPR Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care & Research Center in Santa Cruz, San Francisco Bay Oiled Wildlife Care & Education Center in Fairfield, or the Los Angeles Oiled Bird Care & Education Center in San Pedro. This will protect the interests of trustees, RP, and state and federal agencies. If necessary, the carcasses can be re-examined to resolve problems with body counts and species identification, or to secure additional samples for investigations. When federal and state trustee agencies give authorization, carcasses will be disposed of in accordance with applicable laws.

8 WILDLIFE BRANCH STAFFING

Staffing the Wildlife Branch requires cooperation and coordination between many different entities. Staffing adequate numbers of trained and qualified personnel for response roles is paramount for the safety and success of responders and wildlife.

Wildlife Branch staffing is comprised of:

[OSPR](#)

[OWCN](#)

[Volunteers](#)

[Wildlife Experts/Contractors](#)

[Agencies](#)

The largest Groups within the Branch are typically the Care & Processing Group and the Recovery Group, each of which may require dozens to hundreds of personnel. In the event of a large spill both staff and volunteer personnel may be required. In this case, special training sessions may need to be conducted, potentially including 4-hour Oil Spill Clean-up Worker abbreviated safety training, a one-time, incident-specific training.

OSPR has developed a Wildlife Branch staffing table ([Table 1](#)) to be used as a general guide to meet adequate staffing for a variety of spills and Wildlife Branch needs. Primary personnel typically come from OSPR or OWCN, as described below. Three response levels of Wildlife Branch personnel are shown in [Table 1](#). Each response must be right-sized based on an assessment of spill response area and anticipated wildlife impacts.

As with personnel, mobilization of equipment is highly dependent on the situation, and the level of activation for equipment must be determined on a case-by-case basis by the WBD in consultation with the Wildlife Branch Group Supervisors. In all cases, an OWCN Primary Care Facility would be utilized for animal care. OSPR and OWCN maintain specialized equipment (e.g., boats, vehicles, hazing equipment) that will be deployed as needed.

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8.1 OFFICE OF SPILL PREVENTION AND RESPONSE (OSPR)

When the Wildlife Branch is activated, OSPR personnel fill the role of [WBD](#), [Reconnaissance Group supervisor](#), and if needed one or more DWBD positions. OSPR communicates closely with OWCN and other responding agencies to facilitate a coordinated and successful wildlife response.

Typically, during spill response, the OSPR Field Response Team (FRT) responding biologist will conduct an initial assessment of potential wildlife response need upon arrival at the scene. If a wildlife response is potentially warranted, the FRT will contact the OSPR Wildlife Response Coordinator or the Wildlife Branch Director SME to develop a response strategy and lead continuing discussions with OWCN. OSPR staff may also fill various other roles within the Branch, such as Deputy WBD and/or various Reconnaissance roles.

Based on the severity of the spill, the potential wildlife impacts, and associated staffing needs, the WBD will scale the response to fit the need. To provide best achievable capture and care for wildlife, OSPR will generally seek to respond robustly up front and downsize as warranted by field conditions, rather than respond with a small team initially and be forced to scale up if needed.

8.1.1 RECOMMENDATION FOR STAFFING WILDLIFE BRANCH OPERATIONS PERSONNEL

Wildlife Branch resources should be right-sized to meet the needs of each incident. The number of people and the required skill sets activated for a wildlife response, both staff and volunteers, are determined and scaled based on the needs of the response. The impacts to wildlife and the resources needed are not necessarily proportional to the amount of oil spilled. Contributing factors include:

- Time of year
- Product type(s) spilled (persistence, toxicity, viscosity)
- Habitat(s) impacted
- Weather
- Diversity and concentration of wildlife in and around the affected area
- Proximity to an existing oiled wildlife rehabilitation center
- Existing infrastructure for oiled wildlife response
- Biosecurity implications and/or pre-existing health issues in affected

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populations

- Actual numbers and species collected
- Complexity of the incident (e.g., political drivers)

It is prudent to initially bias towards activating larger numbers of responders and to scale down as appropriate rather than minimizing expected resources, with a subsequent plan to scale up if needed. Personnel numbers may be adjusted rapidly, but ensuring availability of needed personnel is never guaranteed prospectively, and a staffing deficiency early on may have significant impacts on the effectiveness of the wildlife response.

Personnel numbers in Table 1 provide general guidance around how many response personnel may be needed based on typical oiled bird responses in the marine environment. For incidents involving different taxa (marine mammals and sea otters; semi-aquatic animals [e.g., amphibians]; terrestrial mammals, inland waters), staffing levels may be less or greater than those shown based on the response needs and complexity of the overall response. For spills with concurrent taxa (e.g., birds and marine mammals), staffing numbers will increase above levels shown to allow for parallel recovery, transport, care, and processing. For large catastrophic events (e.g., a Spill of National Significance) staffing levels may be increased beyond the maximum values shown here. Wildlife response addressing wildlife populations with infectious disease threats such as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza may also require higher staffing to facilitate parallel pathways for suspect and non-suspect individuals and protection of response workers.

Table 1: Wildlife Branch Staffing Resource Table

This table should be used as a general guide for staffing the Wildlife Branch for oil-affected birds only. Staffing numbers refer to the number of personnel needed on any given day.

Staff	Tier I (<100 birds)	Tier II (100-500 birds)	Tier III (>500 birds)
General Command Staff			
Wildlife Branch Director	1	1	1
Deputy Wildlife Branch Director	0-2	1-2	2
Personnel Coordinator	0-1	1-2	2

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Admin Coordinator	0-1	1-2	2-3
Reconnaissance Group			
Reconnaissance Group Supervisor	1	1	1
GIS Specialist	0-1	1-2	2
Hotline Operator	0-1	2-4	4-6
Ground Strike Team Leader and Staff/Volunteers	0-1	1-6	4-8
On-Water Strike Team Leader and Staff	0-1	1-3	3-6
Aerial Strike Team Leader and Staff	0-4	4	4
Hazing & Deterrence Group			
Hazing & Deterrence Group Supervisor	0-1	0-1	0-1
Hazing & Deterrence Strike Team Leader	0	0-1	0-2
Hazing Staff	0-10	0-20	0-20
Hazing Volunteers	0-5	0-10	0-10
Wildlife Recovery Group			
Wildlife Recovery Group Supervisor	1	1	1
Wildlife Recovery Strike Team Leader	0-1	1-4	3
Wildlife Recovery Staff	1-20	10-30	30-45
Wildlife Recovery Volunteers	0-5	5-15	10-20
Transport Coordinator	0-1	1-2	2-4

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Transport Staff/Volunteers	0-4	2-10	6-20
Field Equipment Coordinator	0-1	1	1-2
Field Stabilization Group			
Field Stabilization Group Supervisor	0-1	1	1
Field Stabilization Strike Team Leader	0-1	0-1	1-3
Field Stabilization Lead Veterinarian	0-1	1-2	1-2
Field Stabilization Staff	0-1	2-6	2-12
Field Stabilization Volunteers	0-2	0-10	0-20
Wildlife Care & Processing Group			
Care & Processing Group Supervisor	1	1	1
Care Strike Team Leader	0-1	1	1
Care Staff Area Coordinators	1-5	5	5
Care Staff	0-10	5-20	20-30
Care/Processing Volunteers	0-20	15-40	30-100
Lead Veterinarian/ Pathologist	0-1	1	1-3
Processing Strike Team Leader	0-1	1	1
Processing Staff	0-3	2-6	4-10
Facility Equipment Coordinator	1	1	1-2
Data Coordinator	0	0-1	1-2

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8.2 OILED WILDLIFE CARE NETWORK (OWCN)

The Oiled Wildlife Care Network ([OWCN](#)) fills roles within the Wildlife Branch, coordinates volunteers, and maintains member organization response readiness across California. OWCN is notified if there are potential wildlife concerns during spill response activities, and is activated with SOS/UC approval when wildlife are impacted or when impacts are anticipated. (See Sections [6.1 OWCN Notification](#) and [6.2 OWCN Activation](#) for details).

The OWCN, a statewide cooperative system of specialized wildlife health centers and organizations set up by statute (California Government Code § 8670.37.5), is integral to Wildlife Branch operations in California filling key leadership and functional roles. Approximately 45 [Member Organizations](#) within the OWCN are maintained in a state of preparedness to provide the best achievable capture and care for wildlife affected by an oil spill.

The OWCN and key OWCN Member Organizations hold state and federal Wildlife Salvage and Rehabilitation Permits which allow them to temporarily collect and treat injured wildlife.

OWCN is administered by the Karen C. Drayer Wildlife Health Center (WHC) at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. The WHC has a Memorandum of Understanding with OSPR related to OWCN for the establishment and equipping of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation stations and providing services for the rescue and rehabilitation of oiled wildlife. Specifically, this Memorandum states that "in the event of any oil spill that impacts or threatens to impact Surface Waters of the State the WHC will provide to the Administrator, upon request, the services of the Program Director and the administration and coordination of all necessary and available trained OWCN personnel to provide services for the best achievable hazing, exclusion, recovery, transportation, medical treatment, and rehabilitation of oiled wildlife."

OWCN maintains veterinarians, and professionally trained wildlife capture, hazing and deterrence, processing and care, and administrative support personnel (both staff and volunteers). OWCN member organizations include wildlife rehabilitation organizations, zoos and aquaria, and NGOs) to actively participate during oil spill responses. Some member organizations provide permanent wildlife care facilities for use during a spill with the primary care facilities being the San Francisco Oiled Wildlife Care and Education Center and the Los Angeles Oiled Bird Care and Education Center. In total, there are approximately 12 primary care facilities across the state and have oiled wildlife response purpose-built areas (or are completely purpose built), to handle a high volume of oiled animals in a short timeframe. During a spill, if a particular wildlife care facility becomes overwhelmed, additional capacity or facilities may be utilized. OWCN member organizations each hold MOUs with OSPR regarding the expectations for response to oil spills. For more information on the OWCN, see the OWCN website at [OWCN](#).

The Recovery, Field Stabilization, Care & Processing, and Hazing & Deterrence Groups are typically staffed and managed by the OWCN. Through continual regular training programs, OWCN maintains a corps of pre-trained personnel with training in wildlife response techniques

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(capture, care, hazing, processing, etc.) including field staff who maintain 24-hr HAZWOPER certification. The OWCN is typically activated by OSPR, but may also be contacted directly by responsible parties, including [Contingency Plan](#) holders that list OWCN as their wildlife rehabilitation organization. If the OWCN is contacted by an organization other than OSPR, they will immediately contact OSPR for official activation and will work under the direction of the OSPR Administrator, and the UC through the WBD. When OWCN is activated, the Responsible Party can choose to contract directly with OWCN for billing rather than going through OSPR.

The Wildlife Branch Organization chart was recently updated to reflect a position change for the OWCN Personnel Coordinator (PC) and the OWCN Administrative Coordinator (AC; [Figure 2](#)). These positions are vital for finding the staffing needed to fill the OWCN groups that are activated during spill response along with any logistical needs or resources related to those activated positions.

8.2.1 OWCN PERSONNEL COORDINATOR (PC)

The OWCN PC reports to the WBD. This position works in coordination with the OWCN DWBD (when activated), Group Supervisors, and the OWCN Member Organization contacts. Note: Reconnaissance Group staffing is typically managed directly by the OSPR WRNGS, but all Branch staffing is unified under the PC for reporting and tracking.

The Personnel Coordinator is responsible for:

- Identifying and activating current and future personnel needed for response
- Organizing, scheduling, and activating spill response personnel daily, for field and facility roles (both staff and volunteer-level positions)
- Ensuring responder work hours are tracked
- Scheduling and conducting orientations and safety briefings as needed
- Addressing logistical needs for staff and volunteers (e.g., meals)
- Managing staff and volunteer issues and concerns (reporting them to the appropriate GS as necessary).

If multiple facilities are activated during a spill event, a PC may be mobilized for each site to support response activities. Additionally, if the incident requires, a separate Field PC and Facility PC may be mobilized. The Personnel Coordinator will work closely with the Administrative Coordinator (AC) and the OSPR Volunteer Coordinator when activated. See [Section 8.3](#) for additional details on volunteers.

8.2.2 OWCN ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR (AC)

The OWCN AC reports to the WBD. This position works in coordination with the OWCN DWBD (when activated), appropriate Group Supervisors – (Hazing & Deterrence, Recovery, Field Stabilization, or Care & Processing) and the Member Organization (MO) contacts to address associated administrative and logistical needs for the response, including tracking of costs incurred by the OWCN. This position will also work closely with the Personnel Coordinator to ensure administrative and logistical needs for responders are met (e.g., meals, lodging, etc.) If needed, additional Admin support may be activated either as an additional Coordinator, or Admin staff.

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Figure 3 – Map of oiled wildlife care facilities and OWCN member organizations.

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8.3 VOLUNTEERS

Wildlife Branch personnel may include “pre-trained” volunteers, “community” volunteers, or both, whose training may range from highly skilled to none. During a spill, the WBD will coordinate with the OWCN Personnel Coordinator to determine the need for volunteer assistance based on input from the Care & Processing Group and Recovery Group Supervisors. Most pre-trained volunteers assisting in animal care activities are provided by OWCN Member Organizations and managed by the OWCN Personnel Coordinator. Community (un-trained) volunteers, that may be utilized for tasks both related and unrelated to wildlife response, are coordinated by the OSPR Volunteer Unit Leader (VUL) or Volunteer Coordinator (VC) who identifies potential roles through coordination with the WBD. The OWCN Personnel Coordinator can reach out to the OSPR VUL/VC in the Planning Section, to request additional volunteers as needed.

The OSPR Volunteer Coordinator and OWCN Personnel Coordinator may establish volunteer outreach mechanisms (e.g., toll free numbers, public information announcements, press releases, and social media posts) if necessary. If there is a need for an Emergency Volunteer Center specific to wildlife response volunteers, Coordinators may work directly with an OWCN Member Organization volunteer coordinator for additional staffing, facility use and outreach. The OWCN Member Organization’s volunteer coordinator must be trained by both the OSPR VUL/VC and the OWCN Personnel Coordinator on the process for volunteer activation during an oil spill response. Community volunteers who wish to assist with oiled wildlife will be jointly screened by the OWCN Personnel Coordinator and OSPR VUL/VC. Volunteers are required to be registered with OSPR or the appropriate emergency volunteer management program before participating in spill response, and they must have proper certifications (e.g., HAZWOPER). Once onsite, volunteers need health and safety training per the Site Safety Plan. Volunteers must meet all safety requirements for the response provided by the Safety Officer. Note that all volunteers in the Wildlife Branch, including OWCN Member Organization volunteers, are technically volunteers for CDFW-OSPR, and sign appropriate CDFW paperwork to this effect.

8.4 WILDLIFE EXPERTS/CONTRACTORS

Specialized experts and environmental contractors may assist with Wildlife Branch operations (e.g., for Wildlife Reconnaissance). OSPR maintains a current list of experts from other resource agencies, including USFWS, National Park Service, NOAA, California State Parks, other regional agencies, and contractors. Other experts from academia or other sources may also be utilized. Agency personnel may be activated through their agency in consultation with the WBD. Standard contracting for specialists and contractors occurs through the Logistics Section. In some cases, specialists may be contracted directly through OSPR. All contracted personnel in the Wildlife Branch, including staff from other agencies, must be properly activated and documented using an ICS 213 RR form.

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8.5 RESPONSE INTERACTION WITH AGENCIES

Local and Federal government agencies and NGOs can serve in the Wildlife Branch providing logistical and operational support. Operational support is engaged by the WBD for specific roles (e.g., DWBD for marine mammals, Reconnaissance, etc.). These roles are described in the sections above. For logistical support, interactions with agencies and other groups are typically initiated through the Liaison Officer. Agencies can provide expertise on known sensitive sites and resources in the area, can assist with staffing the Wildlife Reporting Hotline, can assist with beach or other area closures to reduce disturbance to wildlife, and can provide staging and/or stabilization sites for Wildlife Recovery and Field Stabilization. Although they typically do not have HAZWOPER certification, local animal control agencies can potentially provide logistical support.

9 CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING RESPONSE COUNTERMEASURES

Oil cleanup up and recovery activities themselves pose risks to wildlife in the cleanup area. The following sections discuss measures to protect wildlife while implementing response.

9.1 AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES

The primary objective of the Wildlife Branch is to provide best achievable capture and care to impacted wildlife, and to implement measures to prevent wildlife from becoming oiled/impacted such as hazing and deterrence measures. The Environmental Unit is responsible for the development of impact Avoidance and Minimization Measures (AMMs) to allow cleanup operations to proceed with the lowest practical risk to wildlife and sensitive resources while still achieving cleanup objectives. For federally listed species under the ESA or MMPA, AMMs should be developed with FWS/NOAA NMFS coordination through the emergency consultation process. The Wildlife Branch should review and provide input to the EU, as appropriate, on proposed AMMs. Common AMMs include:

- Limiting routes of ingress and egress, minimizing creek crossings, etc. to minimize habitat disturbance
- Establishing parking and staging areas outside sensitive areas. Utilize carpooling/shuttles when appropriate to avoid the need for clearing habitat for parking at the spill site
- Establishing speed limits for vehicles and vessels to avoid wildlife strikes. Require vehicle pre-start surveys to ensure no wildlife are taking refuge under the vehicle
- Requiring biological monitors during operations to assist operations in avoiding or minimizing impacts to wildlife and sensitive habitat areas where feasible. Monitors should have stop-work authority to temporarily halt work in the area and cooperatively consider modifications to avoid or minimize impacts when risks to wildlife are identified

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- Restricting operations in sensitive areas or during certain times of day (e.g., avoiding vehicle access in wetlands, prohibiting night operations)
- Minimize unnecessary human activity - Live oiled or injured wildlife typically avoid areas with constant intensive human activity. This causes wildlife to stay on the water or search for more isolated locations which in turn reduces capture success and decreases chances of survival. Similarly, members of the public may not be able to recognize capture actions in progress and may inadvertently disrupt wildlife operations. Thus, when feasible, it is advisable for the UC to have the Liaison Officer work with trustees or local jurisdictions to close such areas to the public (especially to off-leash dogs) and allow access only to response personnel. OSPR Wildlife Officers, CDFW Natural Resource Volunteers, local law enforcement, and/or community volunteers can potentially be used to help direct the general public away from impacted areas.
- Special protocols and avoidance and minimization measures have been developed for response within potential habitat for Ridgway's Rails, Snowy Plovers, and Least Terns
- At the Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge, special protocols have been developed that greatly limit spill response activities to minimize impacts to sensitive wildlife resources
- At Channel Islands National Park, biosecurity protocols have been established to minimize the possibility of introduction of non-native species, and wildlife Recovery activities should occur only after consultation with National Park natural resource personnel
- For other particularly sensitive sites, such as islands used by nesting birds (e.g., Año Nuevo Island, San Clemente Island, or Castle Rock NWR), wetlands, active breeding areas, etc. special protocols should be developed through consultation with appropriate trustees early in the response. Personnel involved in response activities should be alerted via Special Instructions on ICS-204 Work Assignment Form, or via maps and detailed instructions on ICS-204a form, to the presence of nesting birds, pinniped pupping and haul-out areas, listed critical habitat, and other sensitive habitats. Sensitive habitats should be posted, and access should be restricted
- The public and response personnel outside of the Wildlife Branch should be instructed not to attempt to capture, disturb, or dispose of oiled wildlife, but to contact the Oiled Wildlife Reporting Hotline, (877) 823-6926, to report observations of oiled or injured wildlife. The public should also be alerted (via the Joint Information Center) to leave both live stranded animals and dead animals in place and undisturbed so that they may be retrieved by trained response personnel. It is particularly important to keep dogs away from incapacitated wildlife.

In order to minimize wildlife and sensitive habitat impacts, the WBD should work with the Environmental Unit to identify practical actions to eliminate or reduce impacts associated with the oil spill and/or the oil spill cleanup activities.

9.2 PRE-EMPTIVE CAPTURE OF WILDLIFE

Pre-emptive capture of wildlife is generally not a practical tactic during spill response, but may be considered in situations where a species of high conservation value is at risk. The primary factor limiting the efficacy of this technique is the question of what to do with the animals once they are captured. For sea otters, for example, facilities exist (including mobile floating pens) in which otters can be housed for the duration of a spill event. However, OWCN facilities may become filled with oiled birds and mammals during larger spills; thus, before pre-emptive capture is considered, an appropriate site for animals in captivity should be identified.

It is important to consider that pre-emptively captured (or washed and rehabilitated) wildlife may not be able to be released even to a separate location until the cleanup is complete as they may return to the oiled area. Additionally, animals that hibernate, estivate or have other seasonal constraints may not be releasable at all times of year and may require long-term housing and care. Pre-emptive capture may be prioritized for certain special-status species for which loss of even a few individuals could have population-level consequences, or for birds that are flightless during wing-feather molt (e.g., alcids during late summer/fall). For special-status species, pre-emptive capture may include the collection of eggs or chicks for captive rearing. Pre-emptive capture of marine or anadromous fishes, sea turtles, or black abalone would be conducted in coordination with NOAA.

Pre-emptive capture would be conducted by a special team of the Wildlife Recovery Group likely engaging a Deputy WBD specifically over pre-emptive capture. Pre-emptive capture would require prior approval from the UC and relevant Trustee agencies and could require special permits.

9.3 PREVENTING THE INTRODUCTION OF INVASIVE SPECIES (BIOSECURITY)

Invasive species can cause harm to the environment, economy, and human health. Invasive species are non-native organisms including plants or plant parts such as seeds, animals (particularly aquatic invertebrates), or microbes with characteristics that include the ability to quickly establish, reproduce, and spread. During spill response, the introduction of an invasive species via a responder or equipment can cause more damage to wildlife and habitat than the oil spilled. It is far more cost effective to prevent the arrival of an introduced species than to attempt to eradicate them after arrival. In many cases, it may be impossible to eliminate an invasive pest species once it has arrived. CDFW has an entire program dedicated to preventing the spread of Quagga Mussels and New Zealand Mudsnails in California State Waters. For more information about the CDFW Invasive Species Program visit: [CA Invasive Species](#). Links to CDFW Guidelines for preventing the spread of these aquatic invasive species are located in [Appendix D](#). Biosecurity measures and decontamination guidelines are paramount when working on islands and remote areas when using response equipment (i.e., boats, ATVs, trucks, boom). These guidelines should be followed when working in any California location, particularly

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those that are biologically rich or critical habitat. When aware of biosecurity concerns in a response area, the WBD should bring this issue to the EU to develop a prevention plan.

10 DEMOBILIZATION OF WILDLIFE BRANCH RESPONSE

Planning the scaling down and eventual demobilization of the Wildlife Branch is a critical process that should be undertaken early in a response. There may be wildlife in care long after the shoreline cleanup has been completed. Conversely, there may be situations where wildlife recovery operations are no longer necessary even though the cleanup continues (e.g., when the cleanup area has been effectively isolated from wildlife). Every response is different, but OSPR has developed demobilization plan templates as a basis for individual spill response.

10.1 CRITERIA FOR DEMOBILIZING WILDLIFE BRANCH

The WBD, in consultation with the UC, Wildlife Branch Group Supervisors, and other trustee agencies, will determine at what point to deactivate Wildlife Branch operations. Demobilization criteria and phasing is typically provided in a Wildlife Branch Demobilization Plan, approved by the Operations Section Chief, the Planning Section Chief, and the UC.

Incident-specific criteria will be established such as "Recovery will continue until field effort results have no additional recoveries for one or more days." In areas along the Central Coast of California where natural oil seeps occur, the demobilization criteria must consider that oiled wildlife not associated with the spill may continue to be observed in the area.

For a tiered draw-down, as the number of observed and recovered wildlife decrease, individual "Hot Shot" Recovery teams may be established to only respond to reports of oiled wildlife and not conduct daily Recovery surveys throughout the cleanup area. These teams may be established and staged in the field or placed on stand-by at strategic locations.

The WBD may extend Recovery within a division or geographic area if warranted by a change in weather or habitat conditions (e.g., onshore winds, extreme tidal fluctuations, rain events) that may bring more oiled wildlife to the area.

Once Recovery teams have been demobilized, Wildlife Branch operations will continue while animals are still in care. Wildlife Branch operations will be fully deactivated when no animals remain in care.

Upon conclusion of Wildlife Branch operations, activities are demobilized, following standard checkout procedures identified through the ICS and coordinated with the UC. Demobilization of Wildlife Branch Groups and Strike Teams will often lag behind that of response equipment and personnel, primarily because of animals remaining in rehabilitative care.

One of the last resources of the response to be demobilized will often be OWCN care personnel, equipment, and facilities. Before fully demobilizing, after the last animal leaves care, facilities

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will be decontaminated, sanitized, restocked and prepared for the next response, and all evidence will be signed over to the proper trustees and/or secured under the direction of the WBD.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix A. Key Reporting Phone Numbers
- Appendix B. MOU Interagency Agreement Summaries
- Appendix C. Compliance with State and Federal Wildlife Regulations
- Appendix D. List of Internet Resources
- Appendix E. Template Wildlife Branch Safety Plan

APPENDIX A – KEY REPORTING PHONE NUMBERS

Report an Oil Spill:

CalOES Oil State Warning Center

(800) 852 - 7550

Report Oiled Wildlife:

OWCN Oiled Wildlife Hotline

(877)-823 - 6926

(877)-UCD - OWCN

Report an Oiled/Injured Marine Animal:

NOAA Marine Mammal Stranding Network

(866) 767 - 6114

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APPENDIX B - MOU INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT SUMMARIES

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Trustee Responsibility

The “Memorandum of Understanding Designating California Department of Fish and Game as Primary Contact for Fish and Wildlife Issues in the Event of Oil or Toxic Substances Spill within the State of California” (1988; linked [Here](#)) acknowledges that USFWS and the CA Department of Fish and Game (now the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife) share trustee responsibilities for endangered species, migratory birds, and migratory fishes. This document directs CDFW to designate a primary contact person for support of the UC regarding fish and wildlife issues in California during oil spill response. The stated duties of this person are to:

- Advise on and coordinate activities related to fish and wildlife problems and issues related to the spill
- Advise and direct efforts to minimize injury to wildlife
- Coordinate efforts to recover and care for oiled wildlife
- Immediately contact USFWS and maintain communication with USFWS
- Adhere to conditions of federal and state wildlife permits

NOAA-NMFS; Response to Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles

The “Memorandum of Agreement Between the California Department of Fish and Game Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response (now CDFW – OSPR) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Southwest Region Regarding the California Marine Mammal Stranding Network and the Oiled Wildlife Care Network” 1997; linked [Here](#)) relates to the rescue and rehabilitation of pinnipeds (seals and sea lions), cetacea (dolphins and whales), and sea turtles. This MOA gives specific instructions for coordinating with NMFS about dead and live marine mammal recovery or capture, rescue attempts, transportation, rehabilitation, and marine mammal and sea turtle stranding reports. The primary purposes of the agreement with NMFS are:

(a) to ensure that pinnipeds, cetaceans, and sea turtles affected by oil spills in marine waters of the State receive the best achievable treatment; and

(b) to ensure the collection of sound biological and chemical data on such affected resources. The agreement ensures consistency with NMFS guidelines and protocols on the rescue and release of live, stranded pinnipeds, cetaceans, and sea turtles and incorporates them into the OWCN protocols for response, rescue, rehabilitation, medical treatment, and eventual release of these animals, as outlined in the NMFS/OSPR Contingency Plan (Attachment A of the MOA).

Other conditions include: The use of rehabilitation facilities that are members of both the California Marine Mammal Stranding Network and OWCN, to the extent possible; cooperative

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information and data exchange programs; and the collaborative development of training materials.

Bureau of Land Management; Management of the California Coastal National Monument.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the State of California signed a Memorandum of Understanding (2000; Linked [Here](#)) that pertains to collaborative management of the California Coastal National Monument (islands, rocks, exposed reefs and pinnacles above mean high tide within 12 nautical miles from shore). Under this MOU, the State (CDFW) conducts day-to-day management of the Monuments (including protection of nesting birds), but the BLM has ultimate legal responsibility for the area.

International and State Borders

Because oil spills can cross state and national borders, agreements pertaining to California have been entered into with all the western states, British Columbia and Mexico through the Pacific States/British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force. The states of Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington, and the Province of British Columbia entered into a Memorandum of Cooperation in June 2001 ([Task Force MOC](#)). This Memorandum was developed to ensure effective coordination and resource sharing between the states and British Columbia in the event of a spill. International cooperation during spill responses is also enabled by the MEXUSPAC, an accord signed by the United States and Mexico. This accord also includes information needed for spill responders to cross the international border. ([MEXUSPAC Annex](#))

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APPENDIX C - COMPLIANCE WITH STATE AND FEDERAL WILDLIFE REGULATIONS

The WBD will ensure that activities of the Wildlife Branch are in compliance with Federal and State laws, including implementation of all measures outlined in MOUs/MOAs and other agreements. In addition, the WBD will assist the Environmental Unit of the Planning Section to help ensure that laws and agreements pertaining to wildlife are complied with during other aspects of spill response.

Federal Regulations

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) prohibits anyone without a permit from pursuing, hunting, killing, possessing, or transporting (or attempting to do any of these things) most native birds in the United States. The MBTA applies to live and dead birds, and active nests (nests with eggs or chicks). The trustee agency overseeing the MBTA is the USFWS.

The OWCN, as well as key OWCN rehabilitation partners, holds a Migratory Bird Rehabilitation Permit as well as a Scientific Collecting permit that allows for personnel (including volunteers) working under OWCN to collect and rehabilitate birds during oil spills. This includes dead birds and live oiled birds, as well as live un-oiled birds that may be captured “for the purpose of removing them from imminent danger.”

Birds captured or collected must be reported to the USFWS (typically through direct communications with the WBD or through LOFR), and birds listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act must be reported within 24 hours. Disturbance related to spill response activities that would result in loss or abandonment of nests is not covered under the Migratory Bird Rehabilitation Permit; such disturbance should be avoided.

No federal permit is required for non-lethal deterrence (hazing) of migratory birds.

The OWCN also holds a Federal Bird Banding Permit to allow marking of rehabilitated birds prior to release.

Marine Mammal Protection Act

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) prohibits the take of marine mammals (including pinnipeds, cetaceans, and sea otters); “take” is defined under the MMPA as “to harass, hunt, capture, kill or collect, or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, kill or collect.” Under Section 109(h) of the MMPA (implemented by 50 CFR 216.22), Federal, State and local government officials, or designees of the relevant Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior and Commerce, may take marine mammals during the course of official response duties, if such taking is for the

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protection or welfare of the mammal, the protection of public health and welfare, or the non-lethal removal of nuisance animals. Other exemptions to the take prohibition that are relevant to oil spill response include activities conducted under a permit or agreement issued by NMFS or USFWS. CDFW has a Memorandum of Agreement with NMFS regarding the California Marine Mammal Stranding Network (which is part of the National Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program). Under this agreement, NMFS recognizes that OSPR and OWCN will participate in oiled wildlife response in California, with a mutual flow of information with NMFS via the California Marine Mammal Stranding Coordinator. OWCN uses trained members and approved Stranding Agreement holders of California's Marine Mammal Stranding Network for collection and rehabilitation of marine mammals.

The MOA contains specific instructions for coordinating with NMFS regarding dead and live mammal sightings and/or capture and provides directives for submitting Marine Mammal Stranding Reports. This agreement also includes sea turtles, which are not protected under the MMPA, but which are managed by NMFS if found in ankle-deep water or deeper. Sea otters are not addressed in this agreement, as they are managed by the USFWS; response for sea otters is addressed separately in the Sea Otter Contingency Plan, which calls for close cooperation between CDFW and USFWS.

The MMPA and the MOA between NMFS and the CDFW do not allow for disturbance or take of marine mammals or sea turtles incidental to aspects of spill response other than wildlife recovery. Permit 932-1905/MA-009526, issued jointly by the NMFS and USFWS to the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program allows members of the Marine Mammal Stranding Network to incidentally take marine mammals during emergency response; this permit specifically allows "close approach" to marine mammals, and "hazing away from harmful situations." Other incidental disturbance during spill response may be covered under the MMPA, allowing take by government agency employees or designees, or would be addressed through consultation with NMFS during spill response.

Federal Endangered Species Act

The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) prohibits take of species listed as threatened or endangered under the Act. "Take" under the FESA is defined as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct." Any federal response action that may affect any federally listed species or designated critical habitat requires inter-agency consultation with the Services (USFWS or NOAA-NMFS). USFWS oversees incidental take authorization of listed terrestrial species, non-marine fish, birds, sea turtles (on land), and sea otters; and NOAA-NMFS oversees incidental take authorization of other marine mammals, sea turtles (in water), and marine and anadromous fishes.

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In 2001, the USFWS and other Federal agencies signed an MOU regarding oil spill planning and response activities related to the FESA. This MOU recognized that oil spill response is a Federal action and thus is subject to Section 7 of the FESA, which involves inter-agency consultations regarding threatened and endangered species when potential effects to listed species may occur. The MOU includes guidelines for pre-spill planning and guidelines for emergency Section 7 consultations during and after spill response.

As discussed above, the "Memorandum of Understanding Designating California Department of Fish and Game as Primary Contact for Fish and Wildlife Issues in the Event of Oil or Toxic Substances Spill within the State of California" acknowledges that USFWS and CDFW share trustee responsibilities for protected species in California. For more information on the consultation process, see RCP Section 4300, Endangered Species Act Consultation. In short, the FOSC from the federal response agency (USCG or USEPA) will request an emergency Section 7 consultation with the lead trustee agencies (USFWS and/or NOAA-NMFS) to be initiated during the response. After the response is completed, the FOSC will make a determination whether adverse effects to listed species or critical habitat occurred and based on that determination, the consultation will be concluded with either a biological opinion issued by the Service if adverse effects likely occurred, or a statement of concurrence with a "may affect but not likely to adversely affect" determination.

In California, the OWCN's Migratory Bird Rehabilitation Permit authorizes recovery, temporary possession, transport, and rehabilitation of oiled federally listed threatened and endangered bird species. In addition, 50 CFR 17.21 and 17.31 allow any employee or agent of the CDFW to take listed species if such action is necessary to aid a sick, injured, or orphaned specimen (among other things). To aid in minimizing potential impacts to threatened and endangered species that could be encountered during spill response, special protocols have been established for key species, such as western snowy plovers.

For issues related to take of listed pinnipeds, cetaceans, or sea turtles, the WBD should confirm that the Environmental Unit Leader (EUL) is working with the California Marine Mammal Stranding Coordinator and other NMFS personnel to facilitate a FESA Section 7 Emergency Consultation with the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC).

The FESA does not specifically authorize deterrence and preemptive capture of endangered species during oil spill response (although as noted previously, members of the California Marine Mammal Stranding Network may haze marine mammals, including species listed under the FESA). The Wildlife Branch, in consultation with the appropriate trustee agencies, will develop response strategies, if appropriate, for deterrence and preemptive capture of listed species for a specific spill incident. The emergency Section 7 consultation process ensures that

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any adverse effects to listed species resulting from approved response actions will be avoided and minimized to the extent practicable, and any take incidental to the primary action of the spill response will be exempted unless otherwise authorized by a preexisting permit.

State of California Wildlife Regulations

Fish and Game Code 1001

California Fish and Game Code 1001 provides broad authority for the Department to take any plant or animal life for a variety of reasons, including “prevention or relief of suffering”; thus response activities for these species under the auspices of CDFW are permitted.

California Endangered Species Act

The California Endangered Species Act (CESA) prohibits “take” of species listed as endangered or threatened by the State, or candidate species for listing. “Take” is defined by the State as to “hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill.” However, “possession or take of endangered, threatened, or candidate species by employees and agents of the Department for scientific, educational and management purposes, and for law enforcement purposes, is not prohibited” (14 CCR § 783.1).

Other Regulations

Native wildlife in California are also protected under a variety of other regulations (e.g., Fish and Game Code Section 3500). OWCN and key OWCN Member Organizations hold Wildlife Rehabilitation Permits issued by the State which allow them to temporarily collect and hold injured and oiled wildlife.

Non-native restricted species cannot be released or transferred without written permission from DFW (14 CCR § 671).

California Code of Regulations states that spill contingency plans for marine facilities and tank vessels must either: 1) utilize OWCN to meet oiled wildlife care requirements, or 2) describe procedures that clearly outline how oiled wildlife care will be provided, including equipment, personnel, and facilities. (14 CCR § 817.02(i))

For the safety of the public (as well as for wildlife), the California Code of Regulations prohibits members of the public from picking up disabled wildlife in a designated oil/toxic spill area (14 CCR § 679). Specifically, “no person may enter a Department designated oil/toxic spill area for the purpose of picking up disabled wildlife or transport or possess wildlife disabled by an oil spill or other spilled toxic substance unless that person has authorization from the Department.”

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APPENDIX D – INTERNET RESOURCES

General Resources

- Wildlife Response Plan for California
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/OSPR/Science/Wildlife-Response>
- Oiled Wildlife Care Network:
<http://www.owcn.org>

Resources-at-Risk

- Geographical Response Plans & Area Contingency Plans (see sections 9800)
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/OSPR/Contingency>
- Environmental Sensitivity Index maps: [ESI Maps and Data](#)
- ERMA (Emergency Resource Management Application) is a web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) tool that assists both emergency responders and environmental resource managers in dealing with incidents that may adversely impact the environment
[ERMA Southwest](#)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) is a system designed for public access to information about the natural resources for which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has trust or regulatory responsibility. Examples include Threatened and Endangered species, migratory birds, National Refuge lands, and NWI Wetlands. Use of IPaC is required to generate a species list and initiate FESA consultation with the USFWS.
<http://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/>
- iNaturalist is a public biodiversity database with observations of plants and animals, used for scientific research and conservation. Can be used to discover common species in an area
<https://www.inaturalist.org/signup>
- eBird is an online platform developed by Cornell Lab Ornithology is allows users to record and share bird sightings.
<https://ebird.org>

Species & Habitat Information

- Lists of Threatened and Endangered Species in California (animals only)
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CESA#species>

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- California Wildlife Habitat Relationship (CWHR) Database is a predictive model for California's regularly occurring birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians; and four aquatic habitats – Riverine, Estuarine, Lacustrine, Marine. Queries by location are possible (e.g., county), T&E Status
[California Wildlife Habitat Relationships \(CWHR\)](#)
- NOAA NMFS' Habitat Protection – Essential fish habitat includes all types of aquatic habitat—wetlands, seagrasses, rivers—where fish spawn, breed, feed, or grow to maturity. Essential Fish Habitat Mapper is an on-line GIS mapping tool
<https://www.habitat.noaa.gov/apps/efhmapper/>
- California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB) is a program (available by CDFW subscription only) that inventories the status and locations of *some* rare plants and animals in California
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDB>
WARNING: this database is not comprehensive, it represents positive detections only, i.e., a blank spot on the map does not indicate absence.

Biosecurity

- CDFW California Invasive Species Decontamination Protocols
[CDFW Invasive Species](#)
(link to protocol can be found on the website)
- CDFW Aquatic Invasive Species Disinfection/Decontamination Protocols
[CDFW Aquatic Invasive Species Disinfection Protocol](#)
(Northern Region)

APPENDIX E – WILDLIFE SAFETY PLAN TEMPLATE

See Following Pages

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Site Hazard Assessment and Control (FORM A)- Wildlife	1. Incident Name:		2. Date/Time Prepared:	3. Operational Period:
4. Supervisor/Leader (with ph. #):	5. Safety Officer (SOFR; with ph. #):	6. Emergency Contact(s):		7. Attachments: (Attach SDS's for each chemical)
9. Prepared By;		10. Date/Time Briefed:		
8a. Location/Activity	8b. Hazards	8c. Potential Injury & Health Effects	8d. Controls: Administrative, PPE, Policy, Procedures	
GENERAL ACTIVITIES				
Lifting/material handling	Heavy/unstable load	Ergonomic, bodily injury, musculoskeletal injury. Crush. Pinch.	Proper lifting techniques will be used when lifting/handling large and/or heavy objects. Whenever possible, loads will be broken down. When loads cannot be reduced, lifting/carrying aids or the buddy system will be used. Avoid placing fingers or feet between equipment and other hard objects.	
Working hours	Fatigue	Loss of situational awareness, drowsiness, reduced focus.	Workers need to be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of fatigue and possible ways to reduce its onset. Rest breaks will be taken as needed to remain mentally alert. Leads should regularly check with teammates and evaluate fatigue levels.	
Steep/unstable, slippery terrain	Slips/trips/falls	Musculoskeletal injury, cuts/scrapes, bruises, broken bones, death	Be aware of vehicles and traffic around you. Assume the drivers do not see you unless you make eye contact. Walk well off roadways if possible. Never turn your back on traffic. If working on or near roadways, wear high visibility vest. Pay special attention to backing vehicles.	
Encounter with hostile/violent person	Violent confrontation	Musculoskeletal injury, cuts/scrapes, bruises, broken bones, death	Remain aware of people around you and listen to your gut. Don't go into areas you are unsure of. Do not argue or participate in the confrontation. Ignore sarcastic and/or rude comments. Stay calm and control your emotions. Apologize for inconvenience and move toward co-workers. Remove yourself from the situation as soon as possible and inform enforcement staff.	

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Outdoor daytime work	Ultraviolet/non-ionizing radiation	Sunburn	Employees will be informed of the risks of sunburn and taught preventive measures for reducing injury, (blocking agents for ultraviolet light, hard hats, sunglasses, etc.). Sunscreen must be applied, per the manufacturer's instructions, for protection from ultraviolet radiation.
Working in heat	Heat stress	Heat rash, syncope, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, death	Understand the symptoms of heat stress prior to work including (dizziness, thirst, heavy sweating, nausea) and heat stroke (confusion, dizziness, unconsciousness). Workers will be provided with at least 1 quart of water per hour, take appropriate rest breaks, and participate in heat stress monitoring when wearing chem. protective clothing in temperatures above 70° F. A shade area will be provided for staff during periods of potential heat stress.
All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use	Collision, roll-over, hot objects	Musculoskeletal injury, cuts/scrapes, bruises, broken bones, death	Wear appropriate riding gear: ANSI-approved helmet, goggles, gloves, over-the-ankle boots, long-sleeve shirt and long pants. The mechanical condition of your ATV (including tires, chain, fuel, oil, lights and switches) must be inspected prior to each ride. The ATV should not be operated if the driver is fatigued.
Biological field hazards	Site-specific biological hazards (poisonous plants, spiders, reptiles, animals and/or insects)	Bite, rash, infection, illness	Disease-causing organisms that can infect site staff will be evaluated and discussed with field. Poisonous plants (poison oak), insects (bee, wasp, ticks, black widows), and dangerous animals will be evaluated, considered, and communicated to staff prior to the start of work. Preventive methods and appropriate avoidance and protection techniques (e.g., snake chaps) will be communicated to staff prior to work. Use insect repellent.
WILDLIFE HAZING			
Use of electrical equipment/tools	Electric shock, fire	Electrocution, burns	Proper handling and grounding methods will be used by staff when working on or around electrical hazards. Preventive methods will be employed to reduce or eliminate potential electrical hazards. Extension cords and/or surge strips will not be employed along docks or waterways without SOFR review and approval. Extension cords should not be "daisy chained" or strung through walls/windows.

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Pyrotechnical hazing	Explosion, fire, vapor exposure, noise	Burns, eye injury, hearing damage	Wear protective clothing, boots, gloves, safety glasses, and ear protection. Operate equipment at a safe distance from personnel and away from ignitable material. Store fuel in fire safe containers. Direct exhaust away from personnel. Use hearing protection when operating loud equipment.
Light/laser hazing	Laser light, intense light. Slips/fall/pinch	Vision impairment, eye damage	Ensure that light/laser hazing devices are pointed in safe directions and do not disturb or jeopardize personnel, vehicle or vessel operations in the area. Wear protective clothing, boots, gloves, safety glasses.
AIR OPERATIONS			
Flying in aircraft	Any manned aircraft	Musculoskeletal injury, cuts/scrapes, bruises, broken bones, dismemberment, death	Passengers must receive a safety briefing from the pilot before liftoff. The briefing should include flying in the wire environment (calling out observed wires during flight), safety features, equipment, and their location on the individual aircraft; PPE; helicopter underwater escape procedures when appropriate; and emergency information.
Flying in aircraft	Any manned aircraft	Musculoskeletal injury, cuts/scrapes, bruises, broken bones, dismemberment, death	Passengers shall always wear seat belts, and personal floatation devices when flying over water bodies.
Approaching/departing helicopter	Helicopter	Musculoskeletal injury, burns, cuts/scrapes, bruises, broken bones, dismemberment, death	Passengers and ground crew member approaching helicopters shall stay in a crouched position and must be in clear view of the pilot while approaching or departing the helicopter. Approaching/departing the helicopter should only occur from the FRONT, and only when signaled by the pilot. Passengers and crew should never walk under or around the tail rotor or exhaust.
Eye protection	Helicopter	Foreign objects in eye	Loose fitting clothing, hats, hard hats, or other gear which might be caught in rotor downwash must be secured or removed within 100 feet of helicopter operations. Downwash creates a high wind environment and stirs up particulates of varying sizes. Eye protection is recommended when approaching/departing or working in the landing zone.

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OILED BIRD/ANIMAL HANDLING			
Animal transport	Toxic vapors	Toxic vapor exposure, headache, nausea, intoxication, illness	Freshly oiled animals are often emitting vapors; always maintain adequate ventilation in the vehicle to protect both humans and animals from inhaling high vapor concentrations. Oiled animals should not be in the same compartment as the driver.
Working around wildlife	Potential elevated pathogen levels	Rash, illness	Personnel shall wear appropriate PPE, such as nitrile exam gloves, Tyvek (or similar) coveralls when handling oiled animals. Hands must be washed after handling any debris, animals, or their caging material before eating, drinking, applying cosmetics, or smoking.
Restraint/capture	Beaks, claws, teeth, fins	Puncture, scratch, eye damage, laceration, loss of digit	Handling and restraint techniques vary from species to species; work will only be conducted by trained personnel, familiar with appropriate techniques for the species. Safety glasses or goggles and appropriate PPE must be worn when handling animals due to the risk of serious eye injury. If bitten, scratched or otherwise injured, seek appropriate medical attention immediately and report injury to the supervisor
Animal washing	Heat lamps, toxic vapors	Fire, vapor exposure	Oiled wildlife handlers must recognize and identify site-specific sources of potential for harm to both humans and animals, e.g., heat lamps hanging near sheets, inadequate ventilation leading to an accumulation of toxic vapors, and certain drugs or disinfectants that may have undesirable secondary effects. See also animal restraint considerations.
Animal washing	Beaks, claws, teeth. Ergonomic strain	Puncture, scratch, eye damage, laceration, musculoskeletal injury	Oiled animals must always be washed by at least a two-person team; never alone. One person is designated to restrain/secure the animal, and the other person is the washer. Large animals should be washed by at least a three-person team. Animals should be held at waist level to avoid potential injuries to the handler's face. When moving from one area to another or between people transfer the body first, then head, making sure to communicate actions.
Animal washing	High heat, high humidity environment	Heat stress/illness	To protect oiled wildlife under care at a facility, animal washrooms are kept at relatively high temperature and humidity during the washing process. Workers will be trained to recognize

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			heat stress/illness signs and symptoms. Supervisors will monitor worker condition and take steps to encourage adequate hydration before, during and after shifts as well as coordinate shifts to minimize heat exposure to workers.
Animal handling	Chemical exposure	Skin/eye burns, chronic health effects of exposure to petroleum products and other chemicals	Wear appropriate PPE when handling oiled wildlife. Ensure proper dilution of used chemicals.
NIGHT OPERATIONS			
Field work at night	Slips/Trips/Falls. Cold temperatures	Musculoskeletal injury, cuts/scrapes, bruises, broken bones, death. Hypothermia	Be aware of terrain and footing at all times. Workers will be equipped with flashlights and/or headlamps. Workers should verify battery conditions at the start of a shift and know where to find replacements if needed. All staff will be fully informed of the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and ways to reduce its onset. Workers will be equipped with weather appropriate clothing. Workers will check out upon departure and check in upon return.
BOAT OPERATIONS			
Vessel transport and launch	Struck by. Crush. Pinch. Lifting/Ergonomic. Slips/trips/falls. Water immersion	Smashed fingers, cuts and bruises, broken bones, back/joint injury	Use spotter for backing vehicle. Wear gloves, closed toed shoes. Use proper lifting technique or lift in pairs. Wear PFD within 10-ft of water. Observe foot placement, take time when moving. Three points of contact when using ladders or getting in or out of vessel. Ensure vessel has all required safety gear. Do not jump gaps between vessel and dock.
Weather	Fog, wind, rain, cold, heat. Non-ionizing UV radiation	Unpredictable weather can lead to capsizing, sinking, and water immersion. Non-ionizing UV skin burns	Obtain weather forecast prior to launch. Ensure all navigational tools are on the boat and functional. Develop a contingency plan in case weather changes. Notify Group Supervisor of planned route and estimated return time. Rain gear, layered warm clothing, gloves, hats, sunglasses and sun block. CDFW staff follow boater safety plan requirements.

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Vessel passenger	Water immersion	Drowning. Hypothermia	Wear PFD when working on vessel and within 10-ft of water when on shore. Ensure enough PFDs for every passenger on board vessel. Use buddy system and maintain visual contact on small vessels. Identify throw rings or floatation devices to deploy if passenger goes overboard. Remove from water and warm as soon as possible.
Vessel operation	Collisions, grounding of vessel, capsizing, sinking	Bodily injury, water immersion, drowning	Operate vessel at slow speeds, especially around obstacles, wildlife, docks, containment assets. Maintain 360-degree awareness at all times. Vessel speeds should be as low as practical while still maintaining full operational capacity. Do not exceed vessel weight limits.
Working on vessel	Slips, trips, falls, lifting/ergonomic, reaching from vessel	Bodily injury, water immersion, drowning, back/joint injury	Wear appropriate closed-toe shoes with non-slip traction for wet surfaces. Use proper lifting technique or lift in pairs. Maintain three points of contact. Wear PFD. Avoid extending reach over water allowing center of gravity over the side of the vessel; bring the vessel to the work.