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Ship Owner and Operator to Pay \$1.4 million in Damages for Dubai Star Oil Spill

The owners and operators of the Dubai Star vessel that spilled over 400 gallons of oil into San Francisco Bay Oct. 30, 2009 agreed to pay natural resource damages and response costs totaling more than \$1.4 million.

The settlement includes \$850,000 to oversee and implement restoration projects to benefit birds and shoreline habitats at or in the vicinity of Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary as well as projects benefiting public recreation at Crown Beach or nearby area. A portion of the funds will be also used for rocky intertidal habitat restoration along the Alameda County shoreline.

EBRPD will implement the wildlife and habitat restoration projects as well as the public recreation projects with oversight and input from the California Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR). The DFG will administer the rocky intertidal projects. EBRPD and DFG will also be reimbursed for their response costs and natural resource damage assessment costs incurred following the spill.

The Natural Resource Trustees for the resources injured by the spill included DFG; the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); and the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Although not parties to the settlement, the USFWS and NOAA participated in the natural resource damage assessment and restoration planning activities and support the natural resource damages settlement. The EBRPD participated in the natural resource damage assessment as a technical advisor to the Trustees.

"We are very pleased with this settlement, especially the fact that restoration funds will come directly to the Park District," said Doug Siden, EBRPD director. "We will put the funds to good use on projects that are mutually agreed upon by the Park District and the California Department of Fish and Game."

"We achieved this settlement through the tremendous cooperation among the federal and state Natural Resource Trustees and East Bay Regional Parks," said Scott Schaefer, OSPR Administrator. "This settlement will provide multiple benefits to the local community, including funding for local projects to restore bird and wildlife habitats impacted by the spill and to benefit public recreation at Crown Memorial State Beach, one of the most popular beaches in Alameda County."

"The San Francisco Bay is a vital estuary rich in natural resources," said Susan Moore, Field Supervisor for the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife. "This settlement demonstrates how the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration process can bring multiple parties together to ensure the ongoing health of these resources following an incident that impacts birds, wildlife habitat, and human use opportunities."

The oil tanker Dubai Star lost over 400 gallons of Intermediate Fuel Oil during a re-fueling accident in 2009 while anchored in the San Francisco County. After remaining offshore temporarily, the oil moved east and stranded along the shorelines of Alameda County and Bay Farms Islands. The heaviest occurred at Robert W. Crown Memorial State Beach. The oil contaminated more than 200 acres of rocky intertidal, sandy beach, saltmarsh/tidal flats, and eelgrass habitat. An estimated 186 birds died during the event including grebes, brown pelicans, coots and other shorebirds. The spill also resulted in recreational use losses due to beach closures lasting 25 days, posted warnings at Crown Beach and Crab Cove, closure of shore-based recreational fishing in parts of Alameda and Bay Farm Islands for 27 days, and impacts to marina boating.

In conjunction with the natural resource damages settlement, the District Attorneys for Alameda and San Francisco counties filed a Stipulated Judgment requiring the Owner and Operator of the Dubai Star to pay an additional \$550,000 in penalties and civil liability and to stipulate to a permanent injunction (in addition to paying damages and penalties the responsible party agreed to a number of requirements to prevent a similar spill from happening in the future).

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