

Date: November 18, 1997

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## Point Reyes Tarball Incident-Update

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### **CONTACT:**

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Time: 6:30 p.m

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POINT REYES, Calif. -- Today Coast Guard, California Department of Fish and Game, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, and Point Reyes National Seashore staff are working to assess environmental impact, rescue sea birds and clean up oil "tarballs" that have washed up along the shores of Point Reyes National Seashore, Calif.

The Department of Fish and Game has set up mobile veterinary labs at the Point Reyes National Seashore Headquarters in Point Reyes, where the Unified Command Center has been established, and is treating oiled birds. Since the globules of oil were first reported Sunday morning, 200 oiled birds have been observed alive, 50 have been captured for treatment and 100 oiled birds have been found dead. The Coast Guard has opened the Federal Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund to pay for costs associated with the cleanup. Erickson Environmental, of Richmond, Calif., has been hired to clean up the tarballs, which have been spotted on Drakes Beach, Limantour Beach and inside of Drakes Estero. Helicopter overflights during the day indicated no oil was visible on the water.

The source of the oil is unknown and is currently under investigation. Oil samples have been collected and sent to the Coast Guard Marine Safety Lab in Groton, Conn., and the Department of Fish and Game Petroleum Chemistry Laboratory in Sacramento for testing and identification.

Efforts will continue Wednesday, focusing on animal rescue and rehabilitation, and shoreline assessment by emergency response staff.

The Gulf of the Farallones area has nationally significant resources. The area is under the protection of two national parks, two national marine sanctuaries, five marine reserves, and an international biosphere reserve. The largest concentration of sea birds in the continental United States, the largest diversity of marine mammals, and several threatened and endangered species, including western snowy plovers and brown pelicans, live at Point Reyes. It is also a large commercial fishing area.

Point Reyes National Seashore remains open to the public. No beaches have been closed. Park visitors are asked not to attempt to remove oiled birds or marine mammals. To

report oiled wildlife or tarballs, please call 415-663-8525, 800-228-4544, or notify a ranger of its location and the time you saw it.

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