



Unified Command News Release

SAN MATEO MYSTERY OIL SPILL

DATE: December 21, 2001

TIME: 3:30 P.M.

Number of seabirds caught in oil climbs

The oiled bird incident under investigation by the California Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) and the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Office - San Francisco remains a mystery. As of this morning, over 725 oiled seabirds have been taken to the San Francisco Bay Oiled Wildlife Care and Education Center in Suisun City, since November 24. But despite daily overflights and on-water searches, the oil affecting the birds has not been found.

Of the birds taken to the Oiled Wildlife Care Network's Center (since Nov. 24), 313 were alive and 412 were dead on arrival. Of the 313 live birds, 113 are still receiving care; 150 have died, and 50 have been returned to the wild. Yesterday, four injured birds were captured at Half Moon Bay, Pillar Point and South San Francisco County. Nine dead, oiled birds were collected at Pillar Point and Salinas River State Beach. Throughout this incident, oiled birds have been found between Point Reyes and the Monterey Peninsula, and out to the Farallon Islands.

The Coast Guard continues daily overflights to search for the oil, as the weather permits. Oil samples taken from affected birds has been sent to the Coast Guard's Marine Safety Laboratory in Groton, Connecticut, as well as OSPR's Petroleum Chemistry Laboratory. The PCL has reviewed all the data they have for natural seeps and crude oils, and the samples from this incident do not match anything in their library of oil samples. Analysis and comparisons of samples taken from oiled birds over the past three weeks continues.

Other organizations working on this response include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Park Service, California State Parks, Peninsula Humane Society, Native Animal Rescue of Santa Cruz, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, SPCA of Monterey County, Monterey Bay Aquarium, WildCare of Marin and Gulf of the Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries' Beach Walk programs.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

PO Mark Jimenez, U.S. Coast Guard: 510-437-3091 — MJimenez@d11.uscg.mil
Robert Hughes, OSPR Public Affairs: 916-323-6286 — rhughes@ospr.dfg.ca.gov
SF Bay Oiled Wildlife Care & Education Center: 707-207-0380
Dana Michaels, OSPR Public Affairs: 916-327-9948 — dmichael@ospr.dfg.ca.gov

WEBSITES

Dept. of Fish & Game - OSPR — <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/Ospr/index.html>
U.S. Coast Guard — <http://www.uscg.mil/D11/index.htm>
Oiled Wildlife Care Network — <http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/owcn/default.asp>
International Bird Rescue Research Center — <http://www.ibrrc.com>

