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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CLEANUP AT NEWPORT BAY COMPLETE BUT MONITORING CONTINUES

NEWPORT BAY--The Department of Fish and Game's Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) released cleanup crews today from the estimated 100 gallon crank case oil spill at Newport Bay that occurred on November 27, 1995. OSPR personnel will continue to monitor for birds into next week.

The OSPR mobile veterinary laboratory and trailer arrived with personnel to care for the wildlife rescued from the area. "The birds collected on Tuesday and Wednesday are being washed and will be taken to be rehabilitated," said Jonna Mazet, wildlife veterinarian with OSPR. Mazet said that to date, nine live birds have been rescued. The species include pied-billed grebes, American coots, a common golden eye, and a ruddy duck. Another five birds have been confirmed dead and necropsies will follow to determine actual cause of death. Mazet said reports from staff in the field indicate that the death toll may rise to 10 or more.

OSPR personnel say quick reporting of the spill by the public saved the lives of many birds and additional damage to the environment. "We're thankful to the local community

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who called and notified us," said Tom Napoli, OSPR Environmental specialist. "We got down there [to Newport Bay] in enough time to keep the impacts low. If the oil had gotten into the

bay, it would have been a much larger problem." The channel flows near 257 acres of marshlands and wildlife feeding areas, and then into the bay.

OSPR staff will monitor the absorbent boom left in the channel through Monday. They will check the boom for additional oil and decide how much more wildlife observation will be required. The OSPR estimates that the cost of cleaning up the crank case oil may exceed \$50,000. The cost will be paid for from the Oil Spill Response Trust Fund which is supported by a periodic per barrel tax on oil. If the individual(s) who illegally dumped the crank case oil are found, they may be held liable for the cost of cleanup. Anyone with information on who caused the spill is asked to call CalTip at (800) 952-5400.

Public support means a great deal when the issue is protecting the environment. The OSPR looks to California residents to be additional "eyes and ears", reporting sheen or oil on California waters or beaches. Anyone wishing to report a spill should call (800) OILS-911. This number can be used for reporting all spills in California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and British Columbia. It automatically connects the caller with the equivalent of California's Office of Emergency Services.