

STATE OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response

CONTACT: Long Beach office
PHONE: 310-499-6374

DATE: Friday, January 10, 1997
TIME: 3:00 p.m.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Diesel Fuel Spilled into Ballona Creek

(Marina del Rey, CA) — The California Department of Fish and Game's Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) is responding to a red diesel fuel spill in Ballona Creek, adjacent to Marina del Rey. The source of the fuel spill is unknown, and officials suspect it may have been illegally dumped into a storm drain.

The spill was reported Wednesday evening by the Culver City Fire Department, whose personnel estimated the spill to be approximately 100 gallons. OSPR began response activities in partnership with the Los Angeles County Public Works department and U.S. Coast Guard, as prescribed in the Area Oil Spill Contingency Plan. The OSPR wildlife veterinary team and the Oiled Wildlife Care Network were activated.

County Public Works contracted the local oil spill response firm, Ocean Blue, for response and containment work. Hard boom has been deployed (to contain the spill) across Ballona Creek at Centinella, just below the 90 freeway overpass, and at the footbridge near the mouth of the creek. Both hard and sorbent boom were placed at Culver Blvd. and Lincoln Blvd. The Coast Guard opened the Federal oil spill response fund to finance clean-up and wildlife rescue efforts.

"The spill is under control," State Incident Commander Ken Walton said, "but we're concerned about the sensitive wildlife in the area. Because so many birds use this area, including endangered brown pelicans and snowy plovers, as well as California

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least terns, which are a protected species, we're anxious to get this diesel cleaned-up as quickly as possible."

Thus far, about 50 oiled birds and ducks have been brought to the OSPR Veterinary Van for acute care. These include ducks, grebes, coots, and one brown pelican. Trained capture teams from International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC) and All Creatures Care Cottage are assisting OSPR Wildlife Services staff.

In an incident completely unrelated to the oil spill, an infant gray whale beached itself at Marina del Rey, Friday morning. Fish and Game staff became concerned when Los Angeles County lifeguards and animal control personnel got the whale back into the water, because it swam toward the mouth of Ballona Creek. Fortunately, it turned west, avoiding any contact with either the diesel fuel or deployed boom.

The OSPR and Coast Guard are investigating the exact cause and source of the spill, and would appreciate the public's help. We suspect this red diesel entered the flood control system within the jurisdiction of the City of Los Angeles. Anyone who saw somebody dumping anything down a storm drain or into Ballona Creek, this past week, should call CalTIP (Californians Turn In Poachers and Polluters) at (800) 952-5400, or the National Response Center at (800) 424-8802, as soon as possible.

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MEDIA NOTE: After Monday, January 13, 1996, your spill information contact will be Dana Michaels, OSPR Public Affairs Officer, at 916-327-9948.