

*On September 26, 1998, as the tanker T/V Command left San Francisco Bay bound for Panama, it released an estimated 3,000 gallons of fuel. Four days later, scattered tarballs and oil began to wash ashore over 15 miles of beaches, mainly in San Mateo County, but reaching as far south as the Salinas River mouth in Monterey County.*



## Final Restoration Plan Released

In June 2004, after two years of scoping and planning, the Command Oil Spill Trustee Council released the *Command Oil Spill Final Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment*. The Plan outlines the Trustees' proposed actions for using the \$4 million settlement to restore the resources injured as a result of the spill, and to compensate the public for lost human use during the spill.

After the final consent decree was signed in 1999, the Trustees began organizing restoration alternatives and soliciting the help of scientists and the public to develop a suite of restoration projects. A period of public scoping, restoration planning and

institutional and public review resulted in a variety of projects that will benefit seabirds, restore shoreline habitat and improve human use in the areas affected by the spill.

A final list of the projects to be implemented is included on the second page of this Update, as is a summary of the T/V Command Trustee Council budget and funds disbursed to date.

The *Command Oil Spill Final Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment* can be found online at: <http://www.darp.noaa.gov/southwest/command/pdf/command.pdf>.



**Above:** The oil spill affected many species of seabirds, including Common Murres.

**Top:** The Coast Guard escorts the T/V Command tanker off the coast of South America.

## Case History

The oil and tarballs resulting from the T/V Command spill affected large numbers of seabirds, including common murres, California brown pelicans, and endangered marbled murrelets. Sandy beach and rocky intertidal shoreline habitats were also affected, and human recreation was interrupted at several beaches in the area.

The group of federal and state agencies, together known as the Natural Resource Trustees, that initiated legal action against

the Pearl Shipping Corp. and Anax International Agencies, Inc are:

- US Fish and Wildlife Service,
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,
- CA Department of Fish and Game,
- CA Department of Parks and Recreation, and
- CA State Lands Commission.

# Shearwater and Murrelet Restoration Projects Underway

## Sooty Shearwater Restoration Project

During the Command oil spill response, one of the 12 shearwaters collected had been banded on Whenoua Hou Island, New Zealand. In fact, the majority of Sooty Shearwaters found off the coast of California migrate from New Zealand breeding colonies. Their dispersion near offshore shipping lanes makes them particularly vulnerable to oil pollution.

The Sooty Shearwater Restoration Project will protect and enhance their nesting habitat by eradicating non-native rats from breeding areas on nesting grounds in New Zealand. The three main objectives are:

- Eliminate rodents from four shearwater breeding islands, thereby eliminating egg and chick predation;

- Establish quarantine contingencies to prevent reintroduction of rats to restored island colonies; and
- Monitor the restoration progress and project effectiveness.

Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge has been selected to manage the Sooty Shearwater Project. Oikonos will collaborate closely with the Rakiura Moari (New Zealand's southern most indigenous people) and the University of Otago, New Zealand to plan and implement the project. Eradication will occur in summer 2005. This year Oikonos will complete New Zealand's permitting process, make preparations for eradicating the rats, conduct baseline and reference site surveys, and appoint quarantine officers.

## Marbled Murrelet Restoration and Corvid Management Project

The endangered Marbled Murrelet is a small seabird in the alcid family (akin to puffins) found along the Pacific Coast from Alaska to California. Unlike most alcids, the Marbled Murrelet nests up to 50 km (30 miles) inland in old growth coniferous forests. The Marbled Murrelet population of the Santa Cruz Mountains is small, isolated and declining. The Command spill is estimated to have killed six to twelve of these birds.

The Marbled Murrelet Restoration and Corvid Management Project aims to improve the nesting success of marbled murrelets in the Santa Cruz Mountains by actively managing corvids (ravens and jays) at area campgrounds. Corvid predation occurs at nesting areas around the four

campgrounds with large corvid populations, and is likely a significant cause in the recent decline of marbled murrelet nesting success.

California Department of Parks and Recreation, the lead agency on this project, has identified a project manager and is in the process of developing brochures and signs to educate the public about the dangers of feeding wildlife.

Project staff are also in the process of replacing old dumpsters and garbage cans with new animal-proof bins throughout the public campgrounds and day use areas in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The project may also involve actively removing ravens and their nests, as well as protocols to monitor the success of these efforts.



Left: A Marbled Murrelet nests on an old growth tree.

## The Administrative Record Has Moved

The hard copy of the *T/V Command* Administrative Record (AR), originally on file at the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary offices in Crissy Field, San Francisco, has moved. It will now be housed at the California Department of Fish and Game offices in Sacramento. Arrangements may be made to review the Record by contacting:

### California Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response

1700 K St., Suite 250  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 323-4724  
Contact: Steve Hampton

The Administrative Record is also available online at:

<http://www.darp.noaa.gov/southwest/command/admin.html>

### T/V Command Restoration Program Preferred Restoration Projects

#### Natural Resource Restoration Projects

1. Marbled Murrelet Restoration and Corvid Management Project
2. Marbled Murrelet Land Acquisition and Enhancement Project
3. Seabird Colony Protection Program
4. Common Murre Nesting Ledge Creation
5. Brown Pelican Roost Site Enhancement and Protection
6. Brown Pelican Entanglement Reduction and Outreach Program
7. Sooty Shearwater Restoration Project

#### Lost Human Use Restoration Projects

1. Improve beach access at Half Moon Bay State Beach
2. Improve beach access at Seal Cove Beach (Fitzgerald Marine Reserve)
3. Create coastal trail and coastal access at Mirada Surf Property

### Summary of T/V Command Trustee Council Budget

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| Original Natural Resource Damages Settlement             | \$ 3,973,159        |
| Total Interest Accrued                                   | 502,410             |
| <b>Total Amount Available for Restoration:</b>           | <b>\$ 4,475,568</b> |
| Marbled Murrelet Restoration Project (2004-05)           | \$ 285,965          |
| Sooty Shearwater Restoration Project (2004-05)           | 297,369             |
| <b>Total Project Expenditures (to date):</b>             | <b>\$ 583,334</b>   |
| <b>Total Admin/Planning Expenditures (to date):</b>      | <b>\$ 448,407</b>   |
| <b>Total Funds Allocated (to date):</b>                  | <b>\$ 1,031,741</b> |
| <b>Total Amount Remaining for Restoration (to date):</b> | <b>\$ 3,443,827</b> |