

California Department of Fish and Game News Release

November 7, 2012

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Five years after *Cosco Busan*: prevention and response improved; restoration under way

The San Francisco Bay Area is better prepared and restoration of natural resources continues after the container ship M/V *Cosco Busan* released more than 53,000 gallons of oil five years ago today. The ship struck a Bay Bridge support tower on Nov. 7, 2007, causing a 212-foot long gash from which intermediate fuel oil spilled, impacting birds, marine mammals, fish, habitat and recreation throughout San Francisco Bay.

Measures implemented by the Department of Fish and Game's Office of Spill Prevention and Response (DFG-OSPR or OSPR) in the years since have dramatically improved OSPR's ability to effectively help prevent and respond to oil spill emergencies.

"The *Cosco Busan* spill has resulted in much stronger alliances between all stakeholders in spill response, ranging from the various levels of government to industry to concerned volunteers. There were a lot of things that did not go well those first several days of the spill in 2007 and we have instituted improvements to our plans and procedures to keep them from happening again," said Thomas Cullen, OSPR Administrator.

These measures include the distribution of grants to local governments to support their participation in the Area Contingency Planning process, and for response equipment (particularly boom) and deployment training to protect local resources during an actual spill.

Legislation also created the local government on-scene coordinator who sits with the Unified Command (usually comprised of U.S. Coast Guard, OSPR and the Responsible Party) to represent all local interests. OSPR also developed a training course for local governments that provides the opportunity to learn about OSPR's oil spill program and the important role local government plays in oil spill response. OSPR refined its volunteer program to encourage pre-registration and volunteer organization affiliation.

To assist with communication and distribution of information about spills, OSPR created "Cal Spill Watch," a combination of web pages and social media to provide instant and ongoing information about oil spills around California. They can be accessed at <https://calspillwatch.dfg.ca.gov>, www.facebook.com/CalSpillWatch, and twitter.com @dfg_ospr. Photos, briefs, updates, and news are posted regularly.

Recently, the passage of Assembly Bill 1112 added spill prevention staff assigned to ports in San Francisco and Los Angeles/Long Beach to ensure safer operations during bunkering (taking on fuel) and lightering (off-loading oil from larger to smaller vessels) activities in the ports.

Restoration of natural and recreational resources in the Bay Area has been initiated on multiple fronts, with several projects implemented, several more poised to start, and even more under consideration. A settlement with Regal Stone Limited and Fleet Management Ltd., the owners and operators of the M/V *Cosco Busan*, designated approximately \$32.3 million to be spent on a variety of projects to restore damaged natural resources and compensate for recreational opportunities lost due to the oil spill.

Two restoration projects already under way include marbled murrelet restoration in the Santa Cruz Mountains and Aramburu Island restoration in Marin County's Richardson Bay.

Marbled murrelets are critically endangered seabirds that nest in old-growth redwood trees, often around campgrounds. A female murrelet lays only one egg a year, and eggs often suffer predation by ravens and jays attracted to campground trash. Based upon the success of an earlier aversion training experiment, this restoration project disburses hundreds of fake marbled murrelet eggs that have been treated so they cause ravens and jays to feel ill after attacking the egg. In this way, ravens and jays learn to avoid murrelet eggs.

At Aramburu Island, the Richardson Bay Audubon Society is restoring habitat for birds, harbor seals, native vegetation and native oysters. Many shorebirds are already making the restored island their home, with black-necked stilts and killdeer nesting successfully. A harbor seal haul-out is under construction.

Projects slated to begin in 2013 include diving duck foraging habitat management in the South Bay Salt Ponds, additional marbled murrelet restoration efforts, and a number of recreational use projects on National Park Service (NPS) lands in Marin and San Francisco Counties. A list of NPS projects scheduled to begin in 2013 is at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsList.cfm?parkID=303&projectID=44006>. The NPS is continuing to identify projects on its lands in San Francisco County that will be implemented in 2014 and later.

The *Cosco Busan* Trustee Council also narrowed to 38 a list of recreational use projects around the Bay, with a final selection occurring soon with up to \$6.8 million being awarded. The Council is also reviewing several proposals to restore surf scoters and to evaluate the recovery of eelgrass near Tiburon. Several more Requests for Proposals will be released shortly, focusing on restoration of eelgrass, native oysters, and rockweed around the Bay. Additional projects will begin next year. See the *Cosco Busan* restoration webpage and Restoration Plan at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/ospr/Science/cosco_busan_spill.aspx

The *Cosco Busan* Trustee Council is comprised of the California Department of Fish and Game, California State Lands Commission, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service.

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