

Oiled Wildlife Program

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Oil Spill Team

2008 Annual Report



This 2008 Annual Report summarizes the efforts and accomplishments made by the Oiled Wildlife Program (Program) within the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) Oil Spill Team. Oiled wildlife rescue and rehabilitation planning and response capabilities in the Northwest were significantly advanced in 2008. Although the report is authored by WDFW the successes of 2008 were, and will continue to be, largely dependent on the many individuals in the various federal and state agencies, the petroleum industry, the response community (oil and wildlife), aquaria, and wildlife rehabilitation groups who work together in a cooperative manner to achieve mutual goals. We look forward to working with you in 2009. Thank you.

We would like to acknowledge the efforts of the following groups and organizations:

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission
Washington Department of Ecology
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
NOAA Fisheries – National Marine Fisheries Service
National Response Team
United States Coast Guard, Sector Seattle
Region 10 Regional Response Team/Northwest Area Committee
Washington Oil Spill Advisory Council
Contingency Plan Holders
Clean Rivers Cooperative
National Response Corporation Environmental Services
Marine Spill Response Corporation
Focus Wildlife
International Bird Rescue Research Center
PAWS Wildlife Center
Islands' Oil Spill Association
Oiled Wildlife Care Network in California
Washington Wildlife Rehabilitation Association
SeaDoc Society
Oregon Coast Aquarium
Point Defiance Aquarium
Seattle Aquarium
Vancouver BC Aquarium
Genwest Systems, Inc.

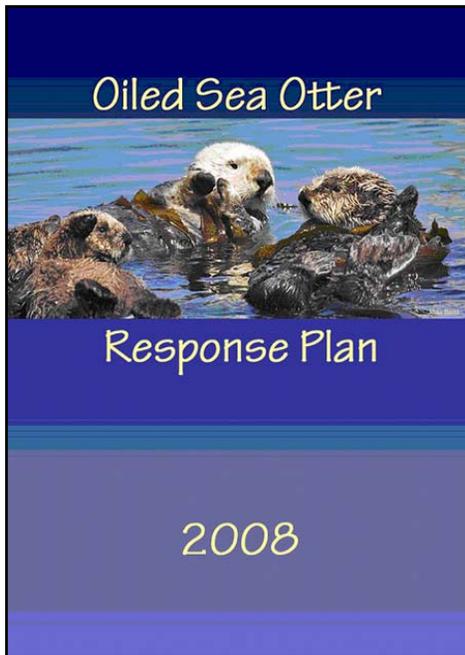
United States National Response Team (NRT): The NRT is composed of representatives from 16 federal agencies and is responsible for coordinating emergency responses to oil and hazardous substance pollution incidents throughout the country. The Oiled Wildlife Program was invited to give a presentation to the NRT on how Washington would use volunteers (convergent and pre-trained) for oiled wildlife rescue activities in the event of a spill in the state. Washington currently has about 130 pre-trained volunteers who can assist oiled wildlife response efforts. Washington is one of the leading states in the nation when it comes to pre-training volunteers.

Northwest Area Committee (NWAC), Region 10 Regional Response Team: The Regional Response Team coordinates and develops regional oil spill response plans for the states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Program staff co-chairs the NWAC Wildlife Workgroup and helped lead the development and implementation of a Wildlife Response Plan for the Northwest in 2007. This plan has received national attention and has become a model for other regional wildlife plans. The plan was tested in 2008 during spill drills.

Oiled Wildlife Planning Standard and Mobile Facilities: The Department of Ecology (DOE) established a 24-hour planning standard for oiled wildlife in 2007. In 2008 the Program assisted petroleum facilities to update their contingency plans. The Program also coordinated an effort with federal stakeholders, DOE, the petroleum industry, and response contractors to develop mobile equipment to meet the 2007 planning standard. This mobile equipment is capable of meeting the rehabilitation needs of 130 oiled birds. This is the equivalent of Level 3 and 4 responses as described in the Northwest Area Wildlife Plan. The equipment will be available for use by mid-2009 and will be owned by Clean Rivers Cooperative (CRC) and the National Response Corporation (NRC). The equipment will be available to all plan holders through a Mutual Aid agreement. Meeting the planning standard with two response contractor's instead of independently by each of the petroleum facilities results in a coordinated and modular approach to wildlife rescue activities. This is a very unique approach and it has received attention throughout the country. In addition to the contractor equipment, WDFW owns oiled wildlife response equipment too. WDFW issued a Letter of Commitment to WDOE and the response contractors to verify the availability of WDFW wildlife response equipment for drills



and spill response. Use of the trailer during spill response will be funded based on a fee for use basis.



Marine Mammal Planning: Program staff drafted an Oiled Sea Otter Response Plan and a Killer Whale Hazing and Monitoring Plan for inclusion in the 2009 version of the Northwest Area Contingency Plan. A separate document that describes sea otter husbandry and rehabilitation techniques was also written. Development of these plans involved the coordination of a number of federal and state agencies, tribes, and aquaria staff throughout Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. The National Marine Fisheries Service (Office of Protected Resources, Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Conservation Division) is currently drafting a letter that will provide the Wildlife Branch Director (i.e. WDFW) with pre-authorization to use Oikomi Pipes, seal bombs, and/or aircraft to haze killer whales away from oil. This letter provides legal coverage for both the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act.

Worst Case Oil Spill Drill Participation: The Program managed the Wildlife Branch at the Alaska Tanker Company (ATC), National Preparedness for Response Exercise Program (NPREP), and Marine Fire and Safety Association (MFSA) worst case spill drills. The Branch Director is responsible for all oiled wildlife activities and personnel during a spill response. During the ATC drill, Program staff planned and organized a wildlife facility capable of supporting the rehabilitation needs of at least 500 oiled birds. This was accomplished by using existing BP infrastructure along with the mobile oiled wildlife equipment. This exercise helped show other stakeholders how useful the mobile equipment could be in the early stages of an oiled wildlife response. It also demonstrated how much easier and quicker it would be to build up a larger oiled wildlife response when starting with the mobile equipment. During the MFSA drill, Clean Rivers Cooperative set up their new oiled wildlife equipment and identified an ideal setting to conduct oiled wildlife rehabilitation operations at a former Naval Sea Plane Base in Astoria.



Drill experience taught us the value of having oiled wildlife equipment and resources listed on the Western Response Resource List (WRRL). The WRRL is an on-line database of equipment available for spill response in the Pacific Northwest. Each piece of equipment on the list is specifically identified and includes contact information. WDFW, Clean Rivers, and NRC's oiled

wildlife equipment is now included in the database. Additionally a new “equipment type” category has been added to the WRRRL that identifies dedicated wildlife rescue equipment.

Oil Spill Advisory Council: Oiled wildlife response was a primary topic of interest to the Council and WDFW made four separate presentations the Council. As a result of these briefings, the Oil Spill Advisory Council presented a recommendation to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission requesting that additional FTE’s be added to the Oiled Wildlife Program to assist with volunteer training and marine mammal planning.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Permits

(WAC 232-12-272): Oiled wildlife facility standards were first adopted in 2004. In 2008 the standards were amended to account for improvements in animal husbandry techniques and air treatment equipment. Specific amendments were made to the air and water standards that will still provide oiled birds with the best achievable care, yet make it easier and more cost effective for rehabilitators. In addition to the rule modification, a process was



developed whereby rehabilitators who specialize in oiled wildlife rehabilitation - but do not own or operate a rehabilitation facility in Washington - can attain their Washington rehabilitators permit. Two such groups, Focus Wildlife and the International Bird Rescue Research Center, have secured a Washington rehabilitation permit via this process.

Areas of Emphasis for the Oiled Wildlife Program in 2009:

The 2009 Oiled Wildlife Program work-plan includes a combination of completing tasks begun in 2008 as well as initiating new projects in 2009. Efforts that support WDOE’s Spills Program and WDFW’s trust resources will receive top priority. One of the main initiatives will involve developing plans to respond to Level 1 and 2 events (>500 birds). We will also complete the mobile facility project, and finalize the Oiled Sea Otter Response Plan and the Killer Whale Monitoring and Hazing Plan. Training “general citizens” to the appropriate levels so that they can assist us in oiled wildlife response will remain a priority but will be largely dependent upon funding availability. Initiatives internal to WDFW such as creating a “drill/spill” desk manual for managing the Wildlife Branch based on our drill experience, developing carcass management protocols, and working with established rehabilitators to develop plans to respond to the occasional events that involve only a few oiled birds will also be undertaken.