

2009 Annual Report

Oiled Wildlife Response Unit



Department of Fish and Wildlife Oil Spill Team



Photo Courtesy of British Petroleum Cherry Point Refinery



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This 2009 Annual Report summarizes the efforts and accomplishments made by the Oiled Wildlife Response Unit within the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) Oil Spill Team. The mission of WDFW is to preserve and protect fish, wildlife and their habitats. The Wildlife Response Unit supports this mission by planning for and managing oiled wildlife incidents in Washington. Our primary goal is to minimize impacts to Washington's wildlife by ensuring that the proper equipment, personnel and response strategies are available to oiled wildlife in a timely manner.

Oiled wildlife rescue and rehabilitation planning and response capabilities in the Northwest were significantly advanced in 2009, especially in the areas of facilities, equipment and training. Although this annual report is authored by WDFW, the successes of 2009 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 continuing to work with you in 2010. Please visit our web page at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hab/oil_spill/rescue.htm for additional information and links.

We would like to acknowledge the efforts of the following groups and organizations for their contributions to oiled wildlife planning and response efforts in 2009:

Washington Department of Ecology
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
NOAA Fisheries – National Marine Fisheries Service
Washington's Citizen Volunteers
British Petroleum Cherry Point Refinery
Clean Rivers Cooperative
Marine Spill Response Corporation
National Response Corporation Environmental Services
United States Coast Guard, Sector Seattle
Focus Wildlife
International Bird Rescue Research Center
Islands' Oil Spill Association
PAWS Wildlife Center
Oiled Wildlife Care Network in California
Clallam County Marine Resources Committee
Surfrider Foundation
Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Region 10 Regional Response Team/Northwest Area Committee (NWAC)
NWAC Wildlife Workgroup and Taskforce members
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife – Wildlife Management Program
Washington Wildlife Rehabilitation Association
Oregon Coast Aquarium
Point Defiance Aquarium
Seattle Aquarium
Vancouver BC Aquarium
Portland Zoo
SeaDoc Society
Kinder Morgan
ExxonMobile
Blue Water & Associates
Genwest Systems, Inc.

Mobile Oiled Wildlife Rescue Unit



In 2007 the Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) established a 24-hour planning standard for oiled wildlife readiness. The standard applies to specific oil handling facilities, pipelines and vessels. In 2009 the planning standard was achieved in the form of equipment purchased by the Clean Rivers Cooperative (CRC) and the Marine Spill Response Corporation (MSRC). This equipment can be deployed and operational anywhere in the state within 24 hours and can meet the rehabilitation needs of as many as 100 oiled birds. Having this equipment available at the time of a spill allows us to focus our efforts on treating oiled wildlife as opposed to building facilities. The Mobile Response Unit includes specially built semi-trailers, tent structures, and associated wildlife care supplies, as well as generators, heaters, water filters and other supporting equipment.

Northwest Area Committee (NWAC), Region 10 Regional Response Team

The Regional Response Team coordinates and develops the oil spill response plan for the states of Washington, Oregon and Idaho. This plan is known as the Northwest Area Contingency Plan, or NWACP. The NWAC has established a wildlife workgroup tasked with maintaining a Wildlife Response Plan. WDFW co-chairs this workgroup with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Two significant additions were made to the Wildlife Response Plan in 2009. Sections specific to sea otters and killer whales were added. The killer whale section establishes hazing and monitoring activities. The sea otter plan establishes protocols for capture and rehabilitation of oiled otters.

The Wildlife Response Plan can be found at <http://www.rtt10nwac.com/NWACP/Default.aspx> (scroll down to the bottom of the page to Chapter 9970). In addition to the wildlife workgroup, WDFW staff is involved with the NWAC volunteer workgroup. This workgroup is establishing the protocol by which volunteers are admitted into a spill response and how they are utilized. Specific oiled wildlife rescue jobs that can be performed by volunteers are being identified and described.

Oiled Wildlife Rescue Training

Three oiled wildlife rescue classes were provided to citizen volunteers in 2009. Twenty-four students attended a two-day “Basic” class at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, where they were given a basic overview of oiled wildlife care and they earned an 8-hour Hazwoper Certificate. Twenty students attended a one day “Search and Collection” class on Lopez Island, where students were given instruction regarding how to capture and transport oiled birds. Forty-two people attended a one-day Basic class in Port Angeles that was sponsored by the Clallam County Marine Resources Committee. Over 80 students attended classes for oiled wildlife rescue in 2009.



8-Hour Hazwoper Course (Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response 29 CFR 1910.120)

Over 80 volunteers attended two eight-hour Hazwoper Certification classes in 2009. The primary purpose of this class is to provide volunteers with the skills needed to protect themselves from the hazards associated with an oil spill event. The class covered hazardous situation recognition, site assessment, air monitoring, personal protective equipment, decontamination procedures, and an overview of spill response operations. An emphasis was placed on oiled wildlife response activities. The U.S. Coast Guard, Marine Spill Response Corporation, Washington State Department of Ecology and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife provided instructors for the classes. Twenty-one students attended a class in Everett and 60 students attended a class in Port Angeles.

Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitator Permit

The Progressive Animal Welfare Society’s (PAWS) Wildlife Center in Lynnwood has met the permitting requirements to become a permitted oiled wildlife rehabilitation facility. Although the Center’s primary mission is not necessarily geared toward oiled wildlife, its facility has the resources and staff expertise to provide oiled wildlife rehabilitation services. Because the PAWS Center operates 365 days a year, and is up and running at all times, it will be very useful when only a few oiled animals are recovered.



2009 Clean Pacific Conference

WDFW’s Oiled Wildlife Rescue Coordinator moderated the Wildlife Response Planning Session of the Conference. Members of the WDFW Oil Spill Team delivered two presentations during the session: “Cooperative Approaches to Oiled Wildlife Planning and Response” and “Marine Mammal Response Planning.” The International Bird Rescue Research Center presented “A wildlife contractor’s perspective on development and implementation of wildlife facility regulations in Washington” and Focus Wildlife presented on “Oiled Wildlife Response in the Pacific Northwest: A Canadian Perspective.” The session was very well received and attended.

One of the primary objectives of WDFW's Oiled Wildlife Response Unit in 2009 was to generate more exposure to oiled wildlife planning and preparedness efforts. The following list summarizes a few examples of our outreach activities.

Presentations/Exercises/Drills

- The Northwest Oil Spill Awareness Course: An overview of oiled wildlife planning and response was provided to course participants. The course is designed to provide information to key leaders and journalists regarding how oil spill response works. Many of the attendees were representatives of local governments.
- Washington Wildlife Rehabilitators Association Annual Meeting: We provided the group with an update on our oiled wildlife response efforts and talked about the role that traditional wildlife rehabilitators can fill during an oil spill response.
- Sea Otter Conservation Workshop: This workshop is held every two years and is attended by government and private sea otter researchers and aquarium curators from around the world. An update on Washington's "Oiled Sea Otter Response Plan" was provided to the group.
- Oil Spill Advisory Council (OSAC): OSAC was disbanded in July of 2009. Between January and July of 2009 we provided technical input to OSAC relative to oiled wildlife response capabilities and needs in Washington.
- Kinder Morgan Worst Case Drill in Mount Vernon: We established and ran the Wildlife Branch at Kinder Morgan Worst Case Drill in Mount Vernon. Focus Wildlife, an oiled wildlife response contractor, was hired by Kinder Morgan to assist the Wildlife Branch. This was our first opportunity to work directly with Focus Wildlife in a drill situation and they did an excellent job.
- Outer Coast Bird Wreck Event: In the fall of 2009 Washington experienced a massive algae bloom off the outer coast that impacted thousands of sea birds. WDFW's Wildlife Management Program provided funding that allowed the Agency's Oiled Wildlife Rescue Trailer to be deployed to the PAWS Wildlife Center to wash the algae off of recovered birds. The algae caused the same mechanical feather damage as oil and thus the birds became hypothermic when cold sea water was allowed to come in contact with their skin. Approximately 100 birds were washed and rinsed in the trailer at PAWS. This was the largest "bird event" that the trailer has responded to and it performed very well.
- WDFW Oiled Wildlife Trailer Familiarization Exercise:

Once a year WDFW invites oiled wildlife rescue personnel to a familiarization exercise with our Oiled Wildlife Rescue Trailer. This exercise gives us the opportunity to make sure that the trailer is operational, fit for service, and it gives us an opportunity to perform yearly maintenance. We are also able to familiarize oiled wildlife responders with the trailer and its operation.



Areas of Emphasis for WDFW's Oiled Wildlife Response Unit in 2010

Efforts that support WDFW's mission and a cooperative approach to oiled wildlife planning and response among regulatory agencies, oil spill response organizations, oiled wildlife response contractors and the petroleum industry will continue to receive top priority in 2010. Building on the accomplishments of 2009 we will continue to plan and prepare for dealing with oiled wildlife.

- We will develop a personnel list that identifies the number and experience level of people needed to deploy industry's new Mobile Response Unit and we are going to develop plans for responding to events which involve more than 100 birds.
- An implementation plan will be developed for the recently adopted killer whale and sea otter response plans that include protocols and procedures for putting these plans to work in the field.
- Citizen volunteer training will continue to include an 8-hour Hazwoper Certification class in Port Angeles and Everett. However, funding limitations most likely will limit our ability to provide training specific to oiled wildlife.
- Remaining training funding will be used to support oiled wildlife classes being held by the Clallam County Marine Resources Committee in the Port Angeles area.
- We will be reaching out to traditional rehabilitators to find ways to involve them and their facilities in oiled wildlife response.

We look forward to even more progress in 2010!

Thank you.

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