

## Monterey Bay Area Oil Spill Volunteer Response Workshop Summary



### Coordination of Convergent Volunteers

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Monterey, CA



**The Otter Project**

[www.otterproject.org](http://www.otterproject.org)

The Monterey Bay Area Oil Spill Volunteer Response workshop was organized and coordinated by The Otter Project in collaboration with the California Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response and with participation of the United States Coast Guard, Sector San Francisco. The workshop aimed to convene federal, state, and local agencies and organizations that are an official respondent organization, have a stake in oil spill response due to their investment and involvement in the health of the coastal ocean, and organizations that are likely to be contacted by the public during an oil spill event. The primary goal of the workshop was to increase understanding of the non-wildlife and wildlife volunteer plans and how local organizations in the Monterey Bay Area fit into the overall picture of oil spill response before, during, and after an event. A secondary goal was to seek input on what the needs are to improve local capacity in the Monterey Bay Area.

Objectives:

The objectives of the workshop were to: 1) increase understanding of the oil spill response command structure and how it is implemented; 2) identify and clarify agency (federal, state, county, city) and local organization (non-profit, NGO) roles and responsibilities; 3) identify and address gaps in local oil spill response; 4) discuss the management of convergent volunteers; 5) clarify coordination of communication and messaging issues in the event of a spill.

Synopsis:

The overarching themes for the day long workshop were increased awareness, communication, participation, and integration of local organizations into oil spill event preparedness and response. The workshop had 27 attendees and was separated into a morning and afternoon session. The morning session consisted of presentations conducted by a US Coast Guard representative and three staff members from the California Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response. The presentations were an overview of U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Francisco operations and responsibilities, an overview of oil spill response during an event and the role of the Unified Command (USCG/OSPR mobilization), an overview of the Oiled Wildlife Response Plan (OWRP) and the Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN), and an overview of the Non-Wildlife Volunteer Plan (NWVP).

The afternoon session was an open group discussion of agency needs and local organization capacities. The discussion was focused on readiness, communication/messaging, how local organizations can help, and oil spill response.

*Readiness:* Discussion about readiness capacity in the Monterey Bay Area focused primarily on OSPR and the US Coast Guard being the lead organizations and that they are ready for an oil spill event. They conduct regular ongoing training with local, state, and federal government agencies and official respondent organizations such as the Oiled Wildlife Care Network. Local capacity for preparedness was also discussed. The Monterey Fire Department, Shoreline Operations, has emergency response plans and available resources to respond to local incidents in coordination with OSPR. Other local responding agencies are Monterey County Offices of Environmental Health and Emergency Services, Public Works, and California State Parks.

Readiness capacity was also addressed through the non-wildlife and wildlife response plans. Non-wildlife volunteers that are signed up with OSPR and/or through an Emergency Volunteer Center (EVC) will be called upon as needed. OSPR has a current list of approximately 3000 volunteers statewide to fill various roles. This list is updated every few years. Skill sets of volunteers are matched to appropriate opportunities/tasks.

The Oiled Wildlife Care Network is the oil spill response organization that provides the best possible care for oil-affected wildlife. The Monterey Bay Area's local primary care facility is the [Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center](#) (DFG-OSPR) located in Santa Cruz at UC Santa Cruz's Long Marine Labs. It is the primary care facility for sea otters. The facility has a full time staff of 7 people but has capacity for 200 people for recovery and transportation and 100 for processing. It can accommodate 125 sea otters and 100 sea birds during a spill event. There are three local participating/member organizations that assist with oil-affected wildlife in the Monterey Bay Area. They are Monterey Bay Aquarium, SPCA of Monterey County, and Native Animal Rescue. The capacity of these organizations to respond during an event is uncertain at this time.

*Communications/Messaging:* Proper Communications and Messaging was a critical theme that was stressed by OSPR staff. Many lessons were learned during Cosco Busan and this is a key area where local organizations and their volunteers can play a significant role. Proper and effective communication with, and getting the message out to, the public is critical to ward off unintentional harm to wildlife and human exposure to oil, which is a hazardous material. Local organizations have ties to the community and maybe contacted by individuals during an oil spill event seeking information on what they can do to help or to get information on what is being done. Social Media was discussed as an effective tool that should be harnessed beyond the online tools that OSPR already has in place ([calspillwatch.dfg.ca.gov](http://calspillwatch.dfg.ca.gov)).

Utilizing local organizations, their members, and volunteers to disseminate oil spill event response messaging is a component that can have a huge impact on how the public responds to an oil spill event.

*Local Organizations:* How to integrate NGO's into preparedness and response was broached through pre-registration and training opportunities. Pre-registering your organization and encouraging your members and volunteers to register with the local Emergency Volunteer Center (EVC) is the best way to be prepared to assist during an oil spill event.

Training opportunities for local organizations and individuals was discussed and debated. Keeping organizations and individuals engaged in training and up to date for a once in a decade event has been a challenging exercise for OSPR staff. Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training was suggested by participants as a way to engage interested individuals in preparedness and response. OSPR staff recommended 4 hour HAZWOPER training which can be done just in time to respond to an event. This type of training is in line with the non-wildlife volunteer plan. OSPR staff has determined that the benefit of HAZWOPER training beyond this level and annual refresher training to maintain certification for unaffiliated individuals has been low. OSPR staff also pointed out that there is a need for more NGO/non-profit engagement and training opportunities were proposed. These can be found in the outcomes section below.

Local organizations were also encouraged to become more informed about oil spill response by seeking information on the OSPR website and participating in the bi-monthly Monterey Bay Area Contingency Planning meetings.

#### Outcomes:

Participants listed the following next steps that could increase communication, integration, and participation of local organizations in oil spill preparedness and response.

#### Training opportunities:

1. An OSPR overview which will be conducted in February/March 2012 – some organizations from the workshop may participate but space is limited.
2. Environmental Response to Oil Spills – NOAA training March 2012 – NGO participation needed

3. OSPR Training day for Pre-Impact Beach Cleanup and Field Observer (Specific Jobs from NWVP) – volunteers from local organizations may participate and can be coordinated with local beach cleanup days and built into these events. Field Observer position could be utilized for wildlife reconnaissance.

*Note: The Otter Project will follow up with OSPR on these opportunities, disseminate training information, and coordinate field trainings.*

4. [FEMA Independent Study Program \(ISP\)](#) - FEMA's Independent Study Program offers courses that support the nine mission areas identified by the National Preparedness Goal. The Emergency Management Institute (EMI) offers self-paced courses designed for people who have emergency management responsibilities and the general public. All are offered free-of-charge to those who qualify for enrollment. *(Courses taken (IS 100, 200, 700 & 800) support Safety Training required for positions in the NWVP)*
5. Cross- training enrichment – organizations with volunteers coordinating training days with local environmental groups to educate their volunteers on what these other groups and their programs do in support of the marine environment.

Organizational Participation:

6. Bi-monthly Area Contingency Planning (ACP) Meetings – interested organizations were strongly encouraged by OSPR staff to attend these meetings. OSPR staff is beginning to conduct a review of the Monterey Bay Area Contingency Plan and local knowledge can add value to the ACP and increase organizational participation.
7. Register organization and volunteers for oil spill response: Member contact information, skills, training, and availability.
  - a. [Monterey County – Volunteer Center of United Way](#)
  - b. [Santa Cruz County - Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz](#)

For oil spill volunteer response, OSPR will request volunteer assistance through the Emergency Volunteer Centers (EVC) during an event. Organizations that preregister will be tagged for oil spill response and mobilized when needed.

## Communications:

8. Quick reference guide – An oil spill specific document provided to all local organizations with key Monterey Bay area contacts (personnel and organizations) for oil spills and oiled wildlife, and explaining what the initial response by their volunteers should be in the event there is a spill. The format can be a one pager, possibly with a flowchart, a rack card, and pocket card (ex. Seafood Watch).
9. Oil Spill Event Messaging list – To increase communication efforts during an event, local organizations should sign up on OSPR's messaging list to receive communications from OSPR's oil spill event volunteer coordinator, Cindy Murphy.

## Conclusion:

The information presented by the U.S. Coast Guard and OSPR staff during the workshop was of great benefit to many of the attendees. The presentations provided a much clearer picture of the overall operations, organizational cooperation and coordination, and the challenges associated with responding to an oil spill event. Response to an event is closely coordinated by the U.S. Coast Guard and OSPR utilizing the FEMA [Incident Command System](#).

Messaging is one of the critical components of oil spill response that can determine public perception of how agencies and organizations are responding to the event. Keeping the public informed in an effective way can reduce unnecessary intervention by individuals that can cause more harm than benefit. This is where local organizations and their members can play a crucial role and most effectively assist the authorized responding agencies and organizations. Inclusion of the public through volunteer roles has become a recent component of response that can be utilized as necessary.

At the conclusion of the workshop, many options were proposed as to how organizations in the Monterey Bay Area can increase preparedness, communication/messaging and become more integrated into and assist with oil spill response.

The Otter Project would like to thank Cindy Murphy, Josh Curtis, and Laird Henkel of the California Department of Fish and Game Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response for their assistance with formalizing the workshop, providing presentations, and making themselves available to discuss this very important issue. We would also like to thank LT. John Livingston of the U.S. Coast Guard for his attendance and presentation.

For more information on Oil Spill Preparedness and Response, please see the list of resources below.

Oil Spill Response Resources:

To Report a Spill call: 800-852-7550 or 800-OILS-911

[California Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Response and Prevention](#)

[DFG • OSPR Cal Spill Watch](#)

[OSPR Volunteer Information](#)

OSPR Volunteer Hotline: 1-800-228-4544

[Oiled Wildlife Care Network](#)

OWCN Response Hotline: 1-877-UCD-OWCN (823-6926)

[Monterey Bay Area Contingency Plan](#)

[Non-Wildlife Volunteer Plan](#)

[Wildlife Response Plan](#)