Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: FWC’s Response – with a focus on wildlife

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Background

- April 20 -- Explosion aboard Deepwater Horizon Oil Rig off Louisiana
- Largest off-shore oil spill in US history
- Released 35-65K barrels/day before being capped on 15 July
- 1.84 million gallons of dispersant used (58% surface; 42% at depth)
Background

- Oil-water mix recovered: 0.347 million gallons
- >5 tons of oiled material recovered from Florida’s beaches
- Lead agencies for response: BP, US Coast Guard, Minerals Management Service
Organization

- Sector Mobile
  - Escambia through Jefferson Counties
- Florida Peninsula Command Post
  - Sectors St. Petersburg, Key West, Miami, Jacksonville
- Florida EOC
Background

- The area of the oil spill includes 8,332 wildlife species:
  - >1,200 fish
  - >200 birds
  - 1,400 mollusks,
  - 1,500 crustaceans
  - 4 sea turtles
  - 29 marine mammals
FWC Involvement

- Reconnaissance
- GIS support
- Scientific support
- NRDA sampling
- Wildlife response
Reconnaissance

- Actionable information allows emergency management officials to make informed, timely decisions regarding response, to better assist impacted areas with response, mitigation and recovery

- Air, ground and sea
FWC Assets

- 3 Helicopters
- 1 Fixed wing
- 54 Mid-range vessels
- 2 Off-shore vessels
- 7 ATVs
- 249 Personnel
FWC – GIS Support

- Flying and mapping oil in near real time
- Centralized data source for wildlife through FWRI
- SERT Gator
  - [http://map.floridadisaster.org/GATOR/index.html](http://map.floridadisaster.org/GATOR/index.html)
FWC – Scientific Support

- Dave Palandro, Harry Norris, and George Henderson are serving as FWC scientific support coordinators at Unified Command Mobile and Florida Peninsula Command Post.

- FWC and EOC
Plans for wildlife response

- Sector Mobile and Peninsula command
  - Wildlife management plans
- Peninsula Command
  - Wildlife operations plan
- Mobile
  - Sea turtle nest excavation plan
  - Guidance for night crews
  - Oiled wildlife response plan
FWC – NRDA

- Natural Resource Damage Assessment
- Assessment of pre- and post-impact.
  - Includes injury assessment which can be ecological or economic
  - Last phase is remediation – making things whole
- Not just science
  - Science to support litigation – NOAA Protocols
  - Chain of custody procedures for samples
FWC – NRDA

- Technical Working Groups
  - Staff are actively involved in many TWGs
  - Shorebird, marsh bird, diamondback terrapin, waterfowl, shoreline, seagrass, marine mammal, mammal, crocodile, fish, corals, etc.

- Steering committee
  - Gil McRae, Tim Breault, Bud Vielhauer
FWC – Wildlife Response

- FWC is providing guidance
- Tri-state bird rescue and research has been contracted for de-oiling birds
  - Rehab center in Pensacola
  - Stabilization center in PC
- BP is contracting paraprofessionals to team with DOI staff to respond to oiled wildlife.
  - Contracted entities include USDA Wildlife Services, Sumter DART, paraprofessionals, Sea World, University of Florida.
  - No volunteers
FWC – Wildlife Response

- Assisting in developing and reviewing wildlife rehab/response protocols
  - Addressing risks of translocation
    - disease/parasite introduction
    - hybridization (e.g. mottled ducks)
    - Other impacts on resident birds

- Release locations
  - Preventing re-oiling
  - Suitable habitat and resources
FWC – Wildlife Response

- Continue to monitor for non-oil causes of mortality in birds
  - Inability to obtain carcasses due to evidence rules
    - May be easing
  - Working with Tristate and USFWS on non-oil health issues
FWC – Wildlife Response

- Monitoring Perdido Key Beach mouse, shorebirds, marsh birds and other spp.
- Moving turtle eggs from affected nesting areas
Oiled Wildlife – Birds

As of 26 August:

- 246 recovered alive
  - (155 have died, 22 released, 69 in rehab)
- 220 recovered dead
- Total live and dead recovered is 446
- Primarily the bird species are northern gannets, common loons and pied-billed grebes
FWC – Wildlife response

- Oiled wildlife - Marine turtles / marine mammals: FWC is responding in cooperation with Oiled Wildlife Care Network (UC-Davis).
  - Florida’s totals of visibly oiled sea turtles now stand at:
    - 140 recovered (2 dead, 1 released, 80 in rehab)
    - One visibly oiled dolphin rescued during the event.
- Necropsies of turtles and marine mammals
Further Information Regarding FWC’s Involvement

- http://myfwc.com/OilSpill/