

INTERIM PREASSESSMENT REPORT
M/V NEW CARISSA OIL SPILL
COOS BAY AND WALDPORT, OREGON

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

State of Oregon
Department of Environmental Quality
Department of Fish and Wildlife

Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians
Coquille Tribe of Oregon
Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, Oregon

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17 March 2000

Preface

On 4 February 1999, the *M/V New Carissa*, a bulk cargo ship in ballast, went aground 5 kilometers north of the entrance to Coos Bay, Oregon. Subsequently, the vessel began leaking oil, an *in situ* burn was conducted, the vessel split in two, and additional oil was released. The bow section was refloated and towed offshore, only to break its tow and re-ground 110 km to the north at Waldport, Oregon, where some additional oil was released. The bow section was again refloated, towed to sea, and sunk. The stern section remains stranded near the entrance to Coos Bay.

The total amount of oil released cannot be determined accurately. The Unified Command estimate ranged from 25,000 gallons to 70,000 gallons. Natural resource trustee evaluations of SCAT reports estimating the volumes of oil stranded on the beaches, as well as examinations of modeling of water column concentrations, raise a possibility that somewhat greater amounts of oil may have been released.

There were many natural resources of concern in the area affected by the spills, including birds, marine mammals, fish, shellfish, outer beaches and rocky shores, and the estuaries from Coos Bay to Yaquina Bay.

Under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, the parties responsible for the release of oil are liable for costs to assess impacts and restore natural resources. Federal and State natural resource Trustees may conduct a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) to document and quantify injuries to natural resources and their services. For the *M/V New Carissa* spill, the natural resource Trustees include the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the State of Oregon, the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, the Coquille Tribe of Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, Oregon. These Trustees are working cooperatively with the Responsible Party and their contractor, Polaris Applied Sciences, Inc., to determine the impacts of the spill on natural resources, with the goal of developing and implementing a plan to restore those injured resources.

At this point in the *M/V New Carissa* oil spill, the Trustees are conducting a preassessment of the impacts of the spill. The purpose of the preassessment phase is to determine which natural resources and services are at risk or have been injured, and the extent to which response actions will eliminate the threat of on-going injury. Preassessment activities include collecting data that are essential to determining the fate and effects of the spilled oil and the potential impacts on natural resources. This interim preassessment report is a summary of the activities and information currently available on the impact of the *M/V New Carissa* oil spill on natural resources and their services. The main objective of this report is to compile all of the available data so that the Trustees can make decisions on how to proceed with injury quantification and restoration planning.

At the time of preparation of this report, there are on-going studies and analysis of data, thus some of the information presented in this report is subject to change as the results and conclusions of these studies become available.

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