

Threatened Seabird Benefits from Oil Spill Settlement



The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE) and the Makah Indian Tribe, all Trustees for the Tenyo Maru oil spill restoration, joined in announcing the obligation of \$5.2 million for the protection of 900 acres of coastal forest habitat critical to the survival of the Federally protected seabird, the Marbled Murrelet.

VIDEO: <http://www.fws.gov/video/wmv/tenyo.wmv>

The money used to purchase the property resulted from one of Washington's most devastating oil spills. On July 22, 1991, a Chinese freighter hit the Japanese fishing vessel Tenyo Maru, sinking it and its load of 400,000 gallons of oil approximately 23 miles off the northwest coast of Washington at Cape Flattery. Over 100,000 gallons of oil were spilled. The oil killed thousands of seabirds and fouled miles of pristine beaches along the Washington and Oregon coasts.

Dr. Don Johnson, Makah Tribal chairman during the time of the spill, was present to emcee the ceremony at the Neah Bay Marina, Washington. He recalled his experiences during the spill. "It was like a nightmare. We understood the movement of the oil and [that] it was a fairly significant amount of bulk #2 oil--the worst kind to be coming across our area. We were concerned about the pristine nature of the beaches."

Vince Cook, Makah Indian Tribe, Dick Logan, Washington Dept. of Ecology, Gail Siani, NOAA, Seattle, and Cindy Schexnider, FWS, Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office in Lacey, Washington served as the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) Trustee Committee. The Trustees' efforts were aimed at compensating the public for the losses that resulted from the oil spill. This was one of the first times that the Federal Oil Pollution Act, under which the NRDAR process is invoked, had been implemented.

To reach the Plan's goals, the Trustees funded the purchase of one parcel of land for management by the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. They purchased the conservation rights on two parcels of land on the Makah Indian Reservation for 200 years: one at Anderson Point and one in the Waatch Valley. They conducted Marbled Murrelet nesting surveys to increase regulatory protection on almost 3,000 acres of old growth habitat. Initial temporary funding was provided to station an emergency towing vessel to the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

They printed and distributed 6,000 educational posters to marine supply stores and ports, as well as installed 11 large panels at coastal marinas along the Oregon coast. Informative kiosks were also placed at two popular trailheads in Northwest Washington, one at Cape Flattery and the other at Shi Shi beach.

All the hard work paid off--for the Makah Tribe, the public, and the generations of people yet to come to the beautiful Northwest shores of the United States. Most of all, it will pay off for the many Pacific Northwest species of wildlife that depend on old growth forests and clean water for survival.

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