

New Carissa Oil Spill Natural Resource Trustees



U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Service



Bureau of
Land Management



U.S.
Forest Service



Oregon
Department of
Fish and Wildlife



Confederated Tribes of
Coos, Lower Umpqua and
Siuslaw Indians



Confederated Tribes of
Siletz Indians



U.S. Bureau
of Indian Affairs

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COASTAL FOREST GOES TO SILETZ TRIBE FOR MANAGEMENT TO RESTORE MARBLED MURRELET POPULATIONS LOST TO NEW CARISSA OIL SPILL

Thanks to eight years of hard work, topped off by a conservation-minded action from two private forest landowners, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians are taking title to nearly 3,900 acres of Oregon Coast Range forest. The Siletz Tribe will manage the land in perpetuity with the goal of restoring the marbled murrelet population lost to the 1999 oil spill from the cargo ship New Carissa. In a unique arrangement, limited commercial timber harvest will be allowed in areas of the property without murrelet nesting habitat, when that is consistent with restoration objectives. This will provide revenue for managing the property and paying county property taxes.

Under the federal Oil Pollution Act, and a court-approved settlement agreement, \$15.5 million from the U.S. Coast Guard's National Pollution Fund Center was used to purchase the land from the two willing sellers to replace the 262 marbled murrelets lost to the spill. Murrelet habitat on the land will be protected and increased, allowing more murrelet nesting opportunities than are currently available. The Conservation Fund, a national environmental non-profit, assisted the natural resource trustee agencies in locating the property and negotiated the purchase from Forest Capital Partners, LLC, and Plum Creek Timber Company, Inc.

"Restoration work actually started while the ship was still on the beach, but this larger action is the result of an eight-year, multi-partner effort to quantify, define and fund restoration for the lost resources," said Ed Shepard, state director for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Oregon and Washington. BLM is the lead federal trustee for the spill restoration.

"All the trustees are proud to be able to take the next step with this portion of the restoration, and pleased to have the Siletz Tribe step forward to manage this land for the benefit of marbled murrelets and other natural resources," Shepard said.

The Siletz Tribe will manage the coastal forest parcel under a legally binding conservation easement developed with the natural resource trustees. A long-range management plan will be developed and reviewed by BLM, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Other trustees for this restoration include the U.S. Forest Service and the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians.

Other seabirds, shorebirds and recreational opportunities were also lost to the oil spill resulting from the shipwreck. State, federal and tribal natural resource agencies are requesting additional funds to restore these resources. These funds will supplement the \$4 million settlement with the ship's owners and insurers for natural resource injuries.

Other restoration projects for which additional funds have been requested include:

- **Western snowy plover** – Annual maintenance is planned on the restored plover nesting area on Coos Bay's North Spit for the next 30 years. The plan also calls for a multi-agency program to recruit and train volunteers to monitor critical plover breeding areas.
- **Other Shorebirds** – More than 400 acres of salt marsh will be restored on Bandon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge benefiting nesting and migrating shorebirds. Continued funding of a popular shorebird education program also has been requested.
- **Other Seabirds** - Three distinct projects are planned as compensation for the other 2,203 seabirds lost due to the spill. The restoration team hopes to acquire land containing, or adjacent to, seabird colonies. The land would be added to the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge. A second project will reduce predation on seabird colonies along the south coast of Oregon. Predation on these colonies has increased with the introduction of non-native predators like red fox. An education project is also planned that will benefit seabirds nesting along the Oregon coast.
- **Recreation** – A number of projects have been started or are planned including Governor Patterson State Park Beach trail and parking lot resurfacing; North Spit and Horsfall area directional sign and two entry kiosks; North Spit and Horsfall area beach signs; Horsfall day-use area expansion; North Spit (interior) trail rehabilitation; Horsfall campground accessible sites; fence removal from three locations on the North Spit; signs on North Spit sand roads; Bluebill Campground restroom replacement; Horsfall Road OHV fencing; BLM North Spit fore-dune sand road upgrade.

Background

In February 1999 the New Carissa ran aground on the Oregon Coast near Coos Bay. In the following weeks, the vessel broke apart and discharged more than 70,000 gallons of tar-like fuel oil into the ocean and the surrounding environment. After a failed first attempt, most of the wrecked ship was towed to sea and intentionally sunk by the U.S. Navy. The stern remains mired in the sand, but a court settlement between the State of Oregon and the responsible parties provided the funds for its removal and work is planned to begin in 2008.

The trustees determined that the oil spill killed or injured 2,465 seabirds, including the 262 marbled murrelets (a species which is federally and state-listed as threatened). In addition, agency biologists estimate that 672 sanderlings and four to eight western snowy plovers (another threatened species) likely perished. Also 29,000 public recreation trips were lost or diminished. Copies of the restoration plan, which details the resources damaged and how they will be restored, are available for download from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office website: <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/index.asp>

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