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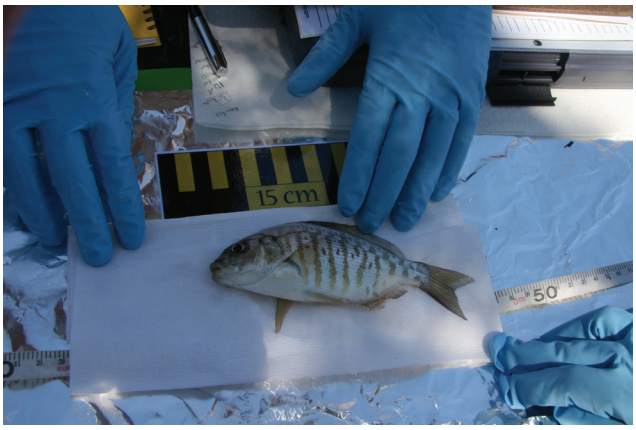
Natural Resource Trustees Begin Natural Resource Damage Assessment Process for the Refugio Beach Oil Spill



Fish analysis in the field (Gabrielle Dorr, NOAA)

About the Oil Spill

On May 19, 2015 a pipeline break at Refugio State Beach near Santa Barbara released an estimated 100,000 gallons of crude oil, prompting an immediate response effort by multiple local, state, and federal agencies.

In addition to the clean-up, representatives from state and federal natural resource trustee agencies (Trustees) are working together with Plains All American Pipeline to assess the impacts to wildlife, the coastal environment, and human uses from the oil spill.

The process of identifying impacts is known as a natural resource damage assessment (NRDA). After the data set is collected and analyzed, the Trustees will quantify the impacts to wildlife, habitat, and lost use of those resources and then develop an appropriate restoration plan. The Trustees will ultimately make a claim for funds from Plains to implement the restoration projects, which will be designed to both restore and compensate for the injured resources and lost human activities. The goal of this process is to compensate for the losses of natural resources and their services caused by the oil spill.

Getting to Restoration via a **Natural Resources Damage Assessment**

Outreach Working Group Contacts

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Oiled California Brown Pelicans. (Deborah Jacques, Pacific Eco Logic)

Refugio Beach Oil Spill: Get the latest information

Learn More:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
www.wildlife.ca.gov/OSPR/NRDA/refugio

U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service
www.fws.gov/contaminants/issues/restoration.cfm

National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
www.darrp.noaa.gov/southwest/refugio/index.html

Department of Interior
www.doi.gov/restoration/index.cfm

Plains All American Pipeline
http://www.plainsline901response.com/go/doc/7266/2547486/

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Assessing Injuries to Wildlife and the Environment

The Trustees started working within hours of the spill, deploying scientists in the field to collect data that will characterize the extent of the injury and to document human use impacts. The time-sensitive data set is important to determine the natural resources that have been exposed to oil or have been impacted by clean-up activities. These teams have conducted dozens of field surveys and collected hundreds of environmental samples throughout the affected area. Trustees may also perform follow-up studies to fill data gaps in the future.

Teams of experts have been established to quantify injuries to the following resources:

- **Birds (including pelicans, western snowy plovers)**
- **Marine mammals (including sea lions, dolphins)**
- **Fish (including grunion)**
- **Rocky intertidal habitat**
- **Sandy beach habitat**
- **Subtidal habitats (including kelp beds, seagrasses)**
- **Recreation (including the campgrounds)**

Scientists collect samples of small crustaceans from sandy shoreline. (Jennifer Klaib, Padre)

Involving the Public in Restoration

In the future, the Trustees will seek input on appropriate restoration projects that will compensate for the injuries. When the Trustees receive this input and complete the process of quantifying injuries, they will develop a Draft Restoration Plan for public review and comment.