

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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TO: California Coastal Commission and Interested Parties

FROM: John Ainsworth, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report, October 2021

Huntington Beach Oil Spill

On Saturday, October 2, 2021, an oil sheen was reported offshore of Huntington Beach. The sheen was linked to a release of crude oil from a 16' crude oil pipeline that connects Platform Elly to the shoreline. A Unified Command comprised of representatives of the United States Coast Guard (USCG), California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Office of Spill Prevention and Response (CDFW-OSPR), and BETA Offshore (believed to be the Responsible Party) was formed and has led all response efforts to date. The Unified Command estimates that up to 126,000 gallons of crude oil has been released. The cause of the spill is still being investigated.

Responders are on scene conducting skimming operations, deploying site protection strategies, implementing containment and recovery efforts, and performing shoreline cleanup. Dispersants have not and are not likely to be used in response to this spill. As of this writing (10/7/21), resources on-scene include: 511 response personnel, 11 spill response vessels, and 5 aircraft. Containment boom has been deployed (10,200 ft.) to protect environmentally sensitive sites, in addition to 2660 ft. of boom array for oil collection, with an additional 6,740 ft. staged for deployment if necessary. As of October 6, 2021, 5,544 gallons of product have been recovered **(see Attachment 1 for additional details)**.

The protection of identified environmentally sensitive sites is a high priority. Currently, protection strategies, including boom and sand berms, have been deployed at Bolsa Chica Restored Wetlands, Talbert Marsh, Anaheim Bay, Newport Slough Wetland, Santa Ana River, Lower Newport Bay, Aliso Creek, and the Santa Margarita River. Boom is staged for deployment, if necessary, at Inner Bolsa Chica and Upper Newport Bay, and boom was also deployed at Dana Point Harbor to close the harbor.

As of October 6, 19 live birds five dead birds have been (brown pelican, ruddy duck, American coot, sanderling, eared grebe, Western gulls, Western grebes, snowy plovers). Of the live birds collected, one bird died and five were cleaned. Five snowy plovers are in care, which is a federally listed threatened species. Impacted wildlife numbers are updated once daily in the evening and so these numbers are constantly changing.

Beaches and harbors have been closed. As of Wednesday, October 6, Newport Harbor and Dana Point Harbor remain closed. A shoreline and water closure has been implemented at Newport Beach, Huntington Beach, Bolsa Chica State Beach, Huntington State Beach, Crystal Cove State Park, Dana Point Headlands, Dana Strands Beach, and Salt Creek Beach. All the beaches within Laguna Beach City limits also remain closed.

A fisheries closure was also issued, prohibiting the catch and consumption of finfish and shellfish caught in offshore areas around the spill. The Department of Fish and Wildlife is now advising that fishers avoid fishing in areas where there is visible sheen on the water.

Commission Staff Involvement

The Coastal Commission's Oil Spill Program Coordinator, Jonathan Bishop, has been involved since the early stages of this response. This is a position funded by CDFW-OSPR through an Interagency Grant Agreement between the two agencies. The Coordinator's primary job is on the planning side, participating in regional area spill contingency plan meetings and harbor safety committee meetings to make sure that Coastal Act and LCP policy issues and requirements are addressed in the prevention and response planning for oil spills. The Coordinator participates in spill drills and exercises and assesses the spill risks and the adequacy of spill prevention measures and spill response preparedness for individual projects that come before the Coastal Commission that could result in a spill.

During an active oil spill, the Coordinator has several roles. The Coordinator consults with other involved agencies to help determine the least environmentally damaging spill response and clean-up measures and prepares emergency authorizations for spill response activities. The Coordinator also lends assistance to other agencies, facilitates information exchange, and responds to requests or concerns from stakeholder groups.

In this incident, Mr. Bishop coordinated early with the Unified Command and the Orange County Public Works Department on the construction of protective sand berms at the mouth of the Santa Ana River and Talbert Marsh. On October 7, the Executive Director of the Commission issued a 30611 emergency waiver to the OCPW Dept for construction of the berms. These berms are temporary and will be removed once the threat of contamination is gone, and the beach areas restored to their initial elevations and contours. In addition, Mr. Bishop was invited by CDFW-OSPR to participate in the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process. This process is conducted concurrently with the response to assess injuries to natural resources that were caused by the oil spill, identify and implement projects to restore habitats and natural resources affected by the spill, and compensate for interim losses of natural resources and their services from the date of the incident until recovery. This includes impacts to human resources, such as public access and recreation opportunities along the coast, that are especially important to the Coastal Commission. This will be a multi-year process.

Congressional Briefing

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently invited Coastal Commission and Caltrans staff to provide a presentation on our unique coastal management and transportation partnership in a briefing to the United States Congress. On September 9, Tami Grove, the Commission's Statewide Transportation Program Manager, and Jeremy Ketchum, Caltrans' Assistant Division Chief of Environmental Analysis/Ex-Officio Coastal Commissioner, made a joint presentation in a NOAA-

led Congressional Briefing entitled *Protecting coastal roads from sea level rise and storm surge flooding with the Federal Highway Administration*. Along with a coastal engineering expert from the University of South Alabama, NOAA and FHWA presenters highlighted their work to better address transportation infrastructure climate change vulnerabilities, including a focus on opportunities for effective nature-based approaches that also offer ecological benefits.

Ms. Grove and Mr. Ketchum highlighted several of California's success stories for addressing sea level rise through our interagency collaborations as well as key insights that we have learned from our experience. The five key insights included in the presentation for addressing sea level rise concerns for transportation were: (1) a corridor approach is essential, (2) adaptation efforts need to avoid the "coastal squeeze" of resources, (3) options in rural versus urban areas will differ, (4) phased approaches to resiliency over time are necessary, and (5) careful consideration should be given to incorporating nature-based strategies where they can be effective and beneficial to natural, recreation and scenic resources.

They also commented on the enormity of the challenges that we and other coastal states around the country face because of climate change impacts and need for funding and collaboration at the local, state and federal level. The slide deck and narrative of their joint presentation can be accessed at the following links:

[Caltrans/Coastal Commission Joint Presentation \(PDF\)](#)

[Caltrans/Coastal Commission Joint Presentation Narrative \(PDF\)](#)

More information about the federal co-hosts of this event can be found at:

NOAA's [National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science Effects of Sea Level Rise Program](#), NOAA's [Office for Coastal Management](#), and the [Federal Highway Administration](#).

Cutting Green Tape Exchange

On September 29, the Commission's Executive Director and Statewide Planning Manager attended the California Natural Resources Agency's Fall 2021 Cutting Green Tape Exchange. The goal of this virtual meeting was to highlight successes and continue collaboration related to the Cutting Green Tape initiative, which is focused on creating more efficient and effective permitting and regulatory systems to speed up much needed environmental restoration projects. Commission staff was invited to give a presentation on the success of the Public Works Plans for Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience that were authorized by the Commission to streamline restoration projects in Santa Cruz and San Mateo Counties this past July.

Sea Level Rise Awareness Campaign: "The Ocean Is Moving In."

On September 28, the Ocean Protection Council, in partnership with other state agencies including the Coastal Commission, launched a Sea Level Rise Awareness Campaign called *"The Ocean Is Moving In."* It is the first statewide campaign in the continental U.S. to raise awareness about the urgent threat that sea level rise poses to coastal and inland communities. It features light-hearted videos ([the video](#)) and posters of various sea creatures taking up residence in people's homes with the goal of inspiring people to visit the state's new sea level rise website, www.sealevelrise.ca.org, where they can learn more about sea level rise and how to take action. A media kit has been distributed among state agencies including the Coastal Commission so that they can share the videos, the website, and other social media content on their various channels to help raise awareness, which Coastal Commission staff have been doing over the last few weeks.

Del Mar Bluffs/Rail Corridor Site Visit

On September 23, the Commission's Executive Director and staff conducted a site visit to the Del Mar bluffs with SANDAG and NCTD staff to discuss the proposed Del Mar Bluffs 5 Stabilization Project, which includes upper and lower bluff stabilization and drainage improvements as an interim measure to protect the existing rail corridor until it can be relocated, which is planned to occur by 2050.

Public Education

California Coastal Cleanup Day Results

California Coastal Cleanup Day came back strong after last year's hiatus. On September 18th, Volunteers gathered at 469 cleanup sites, in 55 of California's 58 counties. With data still coming in, our current tally records 22,889 volunteers who picked up 181,622 pounds of trash and recyclables. This year's effort also invited volunteers to participate throughout the month by doing self-guided cleanups, as part of the neighborhood cleanup program started in 2020. And we encourage everyone to continue showing up to clean our parks, creeks, and beaches before the winter rains (hopefully!) arrive and wash trash out to the ocean. Public Education staff will provide a more complete update on the cleanup effort at the November Commission meeting.

Whale Tail Grants

As part of outreach for the upcoming round of competitive Whale Tail Grants, Public Education staff are holding a webinar on October 6th to walk potential applicants through the application process. More than 270 people have registered for the webinar. Grant proposals are due on November 5th.

California Association of Science Educators Statewide Conference

On October 9th and 10th Public Education staff will present two workshops at the annual conference of the California Association of Science Educators. The workshop titles are Teaching Environmental Justice and Learning about Sea Level Rise Through the King Tides Project.

Emergency Permits

The following are a list of the emergency permits that are being reported to the Commission under the District Directors reports this month.

Orange County

- G-5-21-0037: Temporary placement of 99 sand cubes on a beachfront parcel to protect a single-family residence from wave run-up and erosion at 35127 Beach Road, Dana Point, Orange County.
- G-5-21-0039: Expansion of a 700 ft. long portion of an existing rock revetment to stabilize a landslide that is being undermined by wave action and has damaged the railroad just west of the Cyprus Shores residential development, City of San Clemente, Orange County.

North Central Coast District

- G-2-21-0030: Replacement of a 300 feet portion of an existing gabion retaining wall system and removal and relocation of landslide material at the southern and seaward sections of Mussel Rock Landfill, 120 Westline Drive, Daly City, San Mateo County

Central Coast District

- G-3-21-0035: Construction of a temporary 84-foot-long shotcrete cut off wall to stabilize a coastal bluff to protect a residential development at 121 Indio Drive, Pismo Beach, San Luis Obispo County.
- G-3-21-0040: Emergency repairs for two culverts located on Highway 1 postmile 62.3 & 62.5, in northern San Luis Obispo County near Piedras Blancas.

Attachment A

Huntington Beach Oil Spill FAQ

For daily updates: <https://socalspillresponse.com/>

Media contact: Call or text (562) 568-5590 or inquiries@socalspillresponse.com

Who is part of Unified Command?

The Unified Command is a joint group coordinating and directing the local, state, and federal government response to the spill. It includes the U.S. Coastguard and California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Office of Spill Prevention and Response. Supporting agencies include the cities of Long Beach, Newport Beach, Huntington Beach, and the Orange County Sheriff's Department.

Who are some of the other agencies involved in the current effort and what are their roles?

- U.S. Coastguard --
- Department of Fish and Wildlife --
- State Lands Commission --
- State Parks --
- California Coastal Commission -- Coordinates with Unified Command on when emergency permits may be necessary for activities such as offshore repairs or heavy equipment use onshore.

What is and who is part of the Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA)?

The NRDA, which is underway, will analyze and quantify the injuries and death to wildlife and estimate the cost of restoration. The trustees for the NRDA are the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Office of Spill Prevention and Response and the Department of Parks and Recreation. Other agencies involved include the Coastal Commission.

Are platform Elly and the pipeline in state or federal waters?

Platform Elly was installed in 1980, is located 8.6 miles offshore and has a water depth of 255 feet. The platform is in federal waters. The pipeline travels landward from federal waters, through state waters, and lands on shore in Long Beach at Pier H adjacent to the Queen Mary.

Which agencies are involved in overseeing the platform and the pipeline?

The Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration is the lead federal agency for pipeline safety and is the lead on investigations. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) holds the lease and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental

Enforcement (BSEE) monitors and inspects the platform and the portion of the pipeline in federal waters; the California State Lands Commission holds the lease and monitors and inspects the portion of the pipeline in state waters (from three nautical miles offshore to land). The California Coastal Commission permitted the portion of the pipeline in state waters and has authorized repair and maintenance activities on the pipeline.

How many platforms and leases are there in state waters?

There are four platforms and 11 leases in offshore state waters. They are platforms Esther offshore of Seal Beach, Eva, and Emmy offshore of Huntington Beach, and Holly offshore of Santa Barbara, which is being decommissioned. There are 23 platforms in federal waters.

Is there a map and basic information table (name, installation year, operator, etc.) for all the state and federal platforms and offshore pipelines?

<https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/documents/newsroom/POCSR-Map.pdf>

What does Platform Elly do?

Elly processes the crude oil from two nearby platforms Ellen and Eureka. Ellen, which is adjacent to and connected to Elly by bridge, was installed in 1980 and has a water depth of 265 feet. Eureka is slightly farther away (9.0 miles from shore), was installed in 1984, and has a depth of 700 feet. Oil from Eureka is piped to Elly and Ellen via a 10-inch pipeline and is then routed to Beta's onshore pumping station in San Pedro through the 16-inch diameter San Pedro Bay Pipeline.

Who operates the platforms?

Elly, Ellen, and Eureka are all operated by Beta Operating Co, based in Long Beach. Beta also owns and operates the pipeline that Eureka uses to send oil to Elly and Ellen. Beta is a subsidiary of Amplify Energy, which is based in Houston.

How large and when was the last oil spill in California?

The last major oil spill in California was the 2015 Refugio spill in Santa Barbara, which was estimated at 123,000 gallons. For reference, the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill was estimated to be 3,000,000 gallons.

What kind of protected marine wildlife and habitats are in the spill area?

The spill has put birds, fish, and other marine life at risk, and has threatened a huge swath of coast with a number of protected wetlands and ecological reserves. The waters surrounding the spill site are designated as a biologically important area for blue

whales, which have the highest numbers and densities feeding in the area from June through October, according to the National Marine Fisheries Service. Gray whales migrate through the area going southbound from October through March. More information and maps at: [Biologically Important Area Map \(noaa.gov\)](#) In addition, 14 state designated marine protected areas are within 27 miles of the spill site. More information on names and locations here: [MarineBIOS \(ca.gov\)](#)

[Other:](#)

Mapping resource for nautical charts and location of all pipelines, platforms, and designated anchorages in San Pedro Bay area: [Marine Cadastre National Viewer](#)