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Texas City "Y" Response Area Command



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Update 8/Photos: Matagorda, Mustang and North Padre Islands



Dr. J. Jill Heatley (left), a clinical associate professor of zoological medicine at Texas A and M University, and a consultant the Wildlife Center of Texas, and Sharon Schmalz, executive director of the Wildlife Center of Texas, perform an examination of an oiled juvenile loon at the wildlife rehabilitation center established in Port O'Connor, Texas, April 1, 2014.

Kirby Inland Marine, United States Coast Guard, and Texas General Land Office utilized wildlife expertise from Texas Parks and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife continue their vigilance in ensuring the protection of bird and marine life in areas that may be impacted by the oil spilled in a March 22 incident in the Houston Ship Channel.

U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class George Degener.



Sharon Schmalz, executive director of the Wildlife Center of Texas, places an oiled juvenile loon into a protective crate after an examination at the wildlife rehabilitation center in Port O'Connor, Texas, April 1, 2014.

Incident Command Post teams have maintained a continuous reconnaissance of shoreline and ocean from the Colorado River to the Rio Grande River in Brownsville, TX, which covers approximately 225 miles of south Texas shoreline.

U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class George Degener.



Task force members remove oil-contaminated sand from the beach on Matagorda Island, Texas, March 30, 2014.

Cleanup operations are being directed by a unified command comprised of personnel from the Texas General Land Office, U.S. Coast Guard and Kirby Inland marine.

U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class George Degener.



Two crewmembers from a task force perform clean-up operations on Mustang Island Beach April 1, 2014.

Environmental experts from Texas Parks & Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted shoreline assessments on Monday to help guide plans for removing oil and impact from the Colorado River to Rio Grande.

U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Carlos Vega.



Task force members remove oil-contaminated sand from the beach on the North Padre Island National Seashore, Texas, April 1, 2014.

Cleanup operations are being directed by a unified command comprised of personnel from the Texas General Land Office, U.S. Coast Guard and Kirby Inland marine.

Photo courtesy of the Unified Command.

PORT O'CONNOR, Texas — Clean-up efforts continued along South Matagorda Island, Mustang Island and North Padre Island, as nearly 300 response contractors worked to recover oil spilled from a damaged barge in the Houston Ship Channel on March 22.

High tides along the south Texas coast limited work to specific stretches of beaches but failed to fully hamper aggressive efforts to collect oiled man-made and natural debris. Through sunset on Monday, work teams had collected 610 bags of collected debris along Matagorda Island, while three task forces working along Mustang Island had bagged 483 bags of oiled material. Figures for amounts of debris collected on Tuesday were not yet available.

Incident Command Post teams have maintained a continuous reconnaissance of shoreline and ocean from the Colorado River to the Rio Grande River in Brownsville, TX, which covers approximately 225 miles of south Texas shoreline.

Tar balls along parts of the Padre Island National Seashore forced park officials to temporarily close the park to vehicle traffic but not to pedestrians as crews continued to undertake clean-up efforts there. Crews from the Texas General Land Office and the United States Coast Guard are actively looking for far ball impact along the South Padre Island shoreline.

All boom previously positioned has now been retrieved.

"Teams in the field are doing an outstanding job of recovering small pools of oil and tar balls along the shoreline," said Jimmy Martinez of the Texas General Land Office, whose agency is among approximately 30 involved in spill management and wildlife protection efforts. "While the working conditions are often difficult, progress continues to be made on nearly every front."

To keep residents informed of the latest developments, Unified Command staff has announced plans to attend a community question and answer session to take place on Thursday, April 3, at the Port O'Connor Elementary School. The school is located at 508 Monroe Ave, Port O'Connor, TX 77982. The session will begin at 6:30 p.m. and allow attendees access to officials from a variety of federal, state and local agencies.

Protecting marine life and birds continues to be a high priority for the Unified Command, with the Texas General Land Office, Texas Parks and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife taking a lead in ensuring the protection of bird and marine life in areas that may be impacted by the oil spilled in a March 22 incident in the Houston Ship Channel.

As of the end of the day on Monday, 15 deceased birds had been brought to a locally staged wildlife center. These included a mix of loons, herons, terns, shorebirds and others. There are no reports of harmful impacts on Whooping Cranes in the area. One deceased fresh water turtle was brought to the center over the weekend. Medical analysis will make an ultimate determination regarding the causes of death. Persons who observe any impacted wildlife should not attempt to capture or handle them but are urged to call 888-384-2000.

County and city officials and agencies are receiving daily briefings from the Unified Command, including representatives of the United States Coast Guard, Texas General Land Office, Calhoun County, and Kirby Inland Marine.

Residents, tourists and others who may observe tar balls are urged to refrain from attempting their own clean-up activities and are asked to call 361-939-6349 to report the exact locations of any sightings. Persons who may be physically impacted by the oil should take quick action to wash the affected area with soap and warm water. The public is discouraged from accessing Matagorda Island until the Unified Command announces that response operations are complete.

Air monitoring continues to confirm no risk to the public from any of the affected areas.

A claims line has been established for persons who may have questions regarding personal impacts from the incident. The number is 855-276-1275. **Please note that a previously published number is no longer operational.**

For more information, contact the Matagorda Bay joint information center at 214-225-8007, or visit www.texascityYresponse.com.

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