



# Oil Spill Resource Guide

The Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds have suffered numerous oil spills in the past several decades. Our community knows all too well that as long as oil is produced, transported, and consumed in our region, oil spills will continue to happen. Santa Barbara Channelkeeper works to protect the Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds from oil spills by playing an active role in oil spill response planning, advocating for stronger regulations to improve oil spill planning and response, and monitoring our ocean, beaches, and inland waterways to identify potential spills, document impacts, and inform the response to future spills.

After the Refugio Oil Spill in May 2015, many people in our community were hungry for information and eager to get involved and help with the clean-up, but didn't know where to start or how to help without getting in the way of the official response. Thanks to funding from the Fund for Santa Barbara, the J.S. Bower Foundation, Patagonia and the Crawford Idema Family Foundation, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper developed this resource guide to provide useful information and resources to help concerned citizens understand the threats posed by oil spills, the mechanics of oil spill response, what to do (and not do) to get involved, and more.

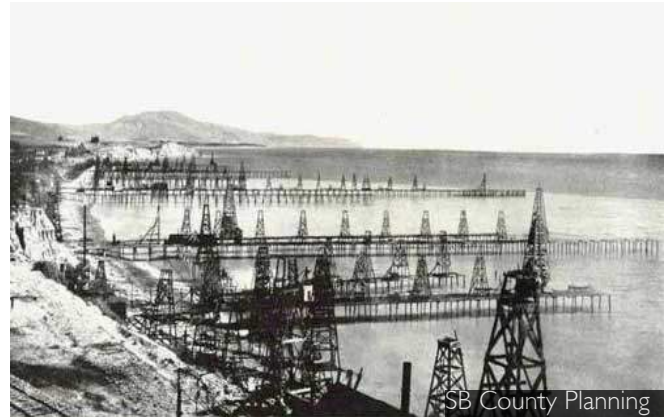
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In the event of a future spill, Channelkeeper will update the online version of this guide (available at [www.sbck.org/oilspill](http://www.sbck.org/oilspill)) with relevant and timely information and resources. For any questions regarding the information presented herein, please [email us](#) or call Channelkeeper at (805) 563-3377.

# History of Oil Spills in Santa Barbara

The Santa Barbara Channel is rich in petroleum, which has been mined here for over 100 years. The Channel was home to the first offshore oil well in Summerland in 1896. The first platform, Hazel, was erected in the Channel in 1958 two miles offshore of Summerland in 100 feet of water. Platform A was erected in September 1968, and on January 28, 1969, experienced an uncontrolled blowout which lasted for eight days and spilled 100,000 barrels of crude oil over the course of several months, impacting over forty miles of coastline. This catastrophe was the catalyst for the emergence of an active environmental movement in the Santa Barbara area and what many cite as the birth of the modern environmental movement in the United States.



**1896**

First offshore oil well installed in the Channel

**1958**

Platform Hazel erected

**1968**

Platform A erected

**1969**

Platform A blowout causes catastrophic oil spill

**2015**

Refugio oil spill

## 60 Major Oil Spills in 28 Years

Despite increased regulation and oversight, [60 major oil spills occurred in California](#) from 1986 to 2014. Another tragic oil spill blackened our shores when the Plains All American Pipeline ruptured on May 19, 2015, spilling over 140,000 gallons of heavy crude oil onto the pristine Gaviota Coast, just west of Refugio State Beach, including at least 21,000 gallons into the Santa Barbara Channel. See the Refugio Oil Spill section on page 10 for more information.

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper works to protect our coast from oil spills by advocating for stronger regulations, working with government agencies to improve oil spill prevention and response, reviewing discharge permits and monitoring reports for existing facilities, and opposing proposals that would expand oil drilling in the Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds and present unmitigable risks to the environment.



# Impact of Oil Spills

Even in the absence of an oil spill, ongoing operations from oil exploration and production present serious risks to water quality and the environment, while also contributing to climate change. Threats to water quality from oil drilling include releases of oil, produced water, drilling muds, and wastewater from oil platforms, discharges of ballast water, oily bilge water and wastewater from vessels that service the platforms, and deposition of air pollutants from the platforms and support vessels. Produced water, although treated, can contain high concentrations of salts, metals, hydrocarbon and organic compounds, and sulfur that can harm marine life. Drilling fluids and cuttings, which are characterized by the US Environmental Protection Agency as the major sources of pollutants discharged from exploratory and development drilling operations, can smother larvae and can reduce the growth of scallops and lobsters and impair their ability to function. In addition, the risk of a major oil spill is ever-present.

Oil spills can cause catastrophic damage to the environment and our economy. Wildlife can face short-term and long-term impacts ranging from behavior modification, limited food availability, and hypothermia to organ damage, reduced reproduction, neurological deficits, and death. In addition, habitats affected by oil spills can take decades to recover. Impacts to the fishing industry can be severe, as short-term closures can limit access to fishing grounds and impacts from the spill make their way through the food web. Regions such as Santa Barbara County whose economies rely on tourism and recreation are particularly vulnerable as beach closures, long-term environmental damage, and images of blackened shorelines reduce tourism rates.

## Report Oil Spills and Oiled Wildlife

To report a potential oil spill please contact The National Response Hotline at 800-424-8802. After your call to this official hotline, please [email us](#) or call (805) 563-3377.

To report oiled or sick wildlife during a spill, please contact the [Oiled Wildlife Care Network \(OWCN\)](#) at (877) UCD-OWCN.

To report injured or sick wildlife that is not oiled, please contact the Channel Islands Marine and Wildlife Institute (CIMWI) at (805) 567-1505 for any marine mammals (seals, sea lions, dolphins, otters, etc.) or the Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network (SBWCN) at (805) 681-1080 for all other animals.

Additional information on impacts of oil spills:

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - [“How Oil Harms Animals and Plants in Marine Environments”](#)  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife - [“Impacts to Wildlife Fact Sheet”](#) and other [Wildlife Fact Sheets](#)



When reporting, be prepared to provide the following basic information:

- Name and telephone number of caller
- Location of the spill
- Substance spilled such as oil, gas, diesel, etc.
- Estimated size of the spill
- Waterway or storm drain impacted
- Date and time of the spill
- If oiled or threatened wildlife are present
- Information or observations on the potential source or cause of the spill
- Any suspicious activity observed at the spill site

# Safety

Exposure to oil and associated fumes can be extremely dangerous to your [health](#), with effects ranging from eye and skin irritation to breathing problems to serious life-threatening health conditions. Specialized training and equipment are necessary to safely and appropriately respond to an oil spill. While it is painful to watch our shores and wildlife become blackened with oil during a spill, it is imperative that people remain out of the affected area and allow official response agency personnel to access the area and respond. Handling wildlife can be dangerous to both you and the animal; oiled wildlife requires special care to maximize survival and recovery potential. If you see oiled wildlife, please call the Oiled Wildlife Care Network at (877) UCD-OWCN. Self-deployment to oiled beaches is extremely dangerous to your health and safety and may inhibit official response efforts.



If you do not see spill response personnel in an impacted area, please [email us](#) or call Channelkeeper at (805) 563-3377. Channelkeeper will make sure your report gets heard and is responded to by the spill response agencies. If you would like to volunteer, please see the Volunteer section on pages 3-5 for more information.



# Volunteer

The South Coast is an environmentally conscious community and many are eager to volunteer during a disaster to help protect our coast. However, responding to an oil spill [can be dangerous](#) and it is critical that volunteers are properly trained in spill response. To be eligible to volunteer in the event of a spill, it is recommended that interested volunteers receive training BEFORE an event occurs. Individuals receiving official training offered by the organizations on the following pages are considered “Affiliated” or “Pre-Trained” volunteers and are generally the first, and often only, volunteers to be activated during a spill.

# Become a Pre-Trained Volunteer

**Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)** – This multi-series training program educates community members about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace when professional responders are not immediately available to help. In the event of an oil spill, CERT volunteers often assist by distributing information and helping with a variety of tasks at the Emergency Operations Center.

**Wildlife Rescue Volunteering** – The following organizations are members of California's Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN). Volunteering with them and participating in various training opportunities will classify you as "Pre-Trained," and you may be called upon in the event of an oil spill. During oil spills, Pre-Trained volunteers are vitally important to wildlife rescue as they are already skilled in wildlife care.

- **Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network (SBWCN)**

The SBWCN's mission is to rescue, rehabilitate and return to the wild sick, injured, orphaned, or oil-impaired wild birds and small mammals native to Santa Barbara County and to educate the public about living in harmony with wildlife. Volunteers are the foundation of SBWCN. Whatever way that you choose to participate, your contribution of time makes a big difference and gives wildlife a second chance.

- **Channel Islands Marine and Wildlife Institute (CIMWI)**

CIMWI is dedicated to positively impacting conservation through marine mammal rescue, rehabilitation, research and education to promote ocean and human health. Volunteer opportunities include animal assessment and field data collection, rescue efforts and animal transport, rehabilitation shifts, education program development, facilities maintenance, hotline response, and administrative tasks. Volunteering with CIMWI offers individuals a unique opportunity to aid animals in need as well as positively impact our marine environment. CIMWI provides education and hands-on training. Volunteers must be 18 years old and able to volunteer a minimum of one full day each week.



**California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)** – CDFW Natural Resource Volunteers support oil spill response efforts and help protect California's fish and wildlife resources. The volunteer selection process will be based on successful completion of an application, interview and background check. Selected candidates will be required to attend and complete an 80-hour training course.



Jae C Hong/AP

# Other Useful Pre-Training Opportunities

The organizations listed on the previous page will likely ask that you receive Incident Command System and HAZWOPER training. While these trainings will prove useful (and may be required) for volunteering during a spill, completion does not guarantee you will be utilized as a volunteer in the event of a spill. Regular participation with an affiliated organization (see above) is recommended if you wish to volunteer.

- [Incident Command System \(ICS\)](#) – ICS facilitates a multi-agency response in the event of a spill, with explicit roles and responsibilities assigned through a chain of command. Understanding how this system functions is critical to being a successful volunteer. ICS courses 100 and 200 are generally recommended as an introduction. [Free ICS training](#) is available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- [Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response \(HAZWOPER\)](#) – The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) developed the HAZWOPER program to protect workers at hazardous sites. Various levels of training are available through numerous platforms. It is recommended you work with an affiliated response organization to determine an approved training.



## “Spontaneous” Volunteering

Individuals that may want to volunteer during an oil spill should become “Pre-Trained” volunteers (see above). Volunteers without prior training are rarely utilized due to health and safety concerns. Again, exposure to oil and related fumes can be extremely dangerous. Specialized equipment and training is necessary to ensure your own safety, as well as the safety of impacted wildlife. Please, DO NOT self-deploy.



During an oil spill, our [Oil Spill Resource Guide webpage](#) will be updated with information specific to volunteering for the current spill response. Below is more information on general “spontaneous” volunteering.

**CDFW’s Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR)**  
“Spontaneous” volunteers are unpaid employees of OSPR and CDFW. You’ll sign up with OSPR and attend their required training. If appropriate for a particular response, OSPR then provides volunteers to work with the Oiled Wildlife Care Network and various other organizations involved in spill response. There are many different opportunities for spontaneous volunteers during spill response; not all opportunities involve working directly with wildlife. You may call the OSPR Volunteer Hotline at 800-228-4544.

# Getting Information During a Spill

During a significant spill, a designated website will likely be established by Unified Command, the group of agencies in charge of responding to the spill. Initial information will be available on CDFW's Office of Spill Prevention and Response website until a spill-specific website is established.

Channelkeeper will also update our oil spill homepage (available at [www.sbck.org/oilspill](http://www.sbck.org/oilspill)) with pertinent information regarding any current spills.

## Oil Spill Response Plans

Channelkeeper is an active participant in oil spill response planning for our region. Our staff has worked with the US Coast Guard, California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR), and local emergency response agencies to improve oil spill prevention and response by reviewing and helping to strengthen local and regional Oil Spill Contingency Plans. The primary plan that governs spills which impact marine resources in the Santa Barbara Channel/South Coast region is the Los Angeles/Long Beach Area Contingency Plan. Each county also has its own Oil Spill Contingency Plan and individual operators are mandated to submit their own Spill Response Plans to OSPR for approval. All plans generally identify sensitive resources that may be at risk, strategies for protecting those resources, how agencies will coordinate a unified response, clean-up assessment protocols, and relevant regulations and policies. Updates to our local plans are currently being made to incorporate lessons learned from the Refugio Oil Spill.

### Santa Barbara County Oil Spill Contingency Plan

Santa Barbara County's Oil Spill Contingency Plan is updated on a regular basis; the current plan is available through the [Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management website](#).

### Los Angeles/Long Beach Area Contingency Plan

The coast of Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, including the Channel Islands, falls within the purview of the Los Angeles/Long Beach Area Committee. The LA/LB Area Committee meets quarterly, is open to the public, and is responsible for improving and implementing the region's Area Contingency Plan (ACP). The LA/LB ACP establishes strategies for federal, state, and local agencies to implement in the event of an oil spill that affects the marine environment from San Luis Obispo to Orange County. This plan is also updated on a regular basis, and the current plan is available through CDFW's [Office of Spill Prevention and Response website](#). Channelkeeper is an active member of the Area Committee and advocates for improved oil spill prevention and response strategies, as well as increased public communication and transparency. For more information on the LA/LB Area Committee, visit OSPR's ["Public Meetings" website](#).

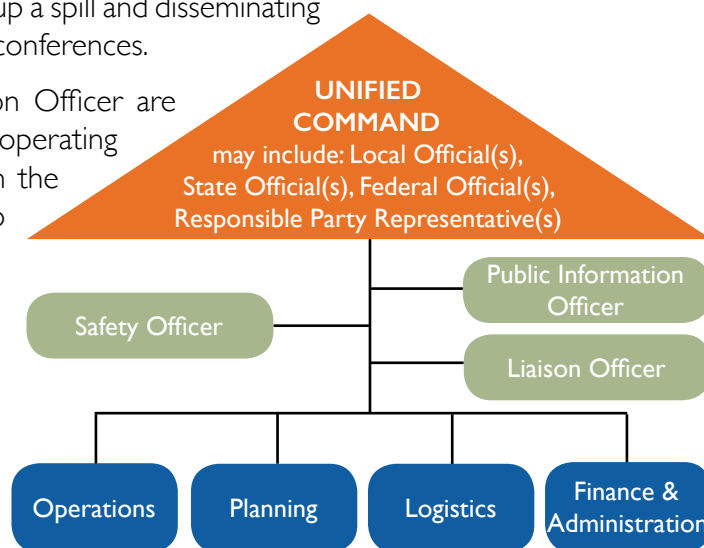


# Unified Command

During a significant oil spill, a Unified Command (UC) will be established to coordinate response efforts across several agencies. Generally, the UC is comprised of representatives from the federal government (US Coast Guard or Environmental Protection Agency), state government (CDFW), and the company responsible for the spill (the Responsible Party). In Santa Barbara County, the County is also allocated a representative seat in the UC. The UC coordinates all efforts related to responding to and cleaning up a spill and disseminating information to the public through press releases and press conferences.

Within the UC, the Liaison Officer and Public Information Officer are responsible for reaching out to and informing stakeholders, cooperating agencies, and the public. Channelkeeper will work through the Liaison to transmit information from the community to Incident Command as well as provide the community with the latest information from the response agencies.

For more information on Unified Command, FEMA offers free Incident Command System (ICS) trainings. These trainings provide an overview of how the UC functions as well as the roles and responsibilities of various positions under the UC. [ICS 100 and 200](#) are recommended for a basic introduction.



## Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Process

The public is entitled to compensation for economic, recreational, and environmental damage caused by an oil spill through the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process. Designated State and Federal agencies act as trustees for public resources and are responsible for documenting the injury from the spill (including losses to public recreation, wildlife, and water/environmental quality) and pursuing restoration to compensate for those injuries. The injury assessment and compensatory restoration planning are often conducted as a cooperative process between the trustee agencies, the responsible party, members of the public and non-governmental organizations. Depending on the severity of the spill, the NRDA process can take many years. Members of the public can participate in the NRDA process in various ways, including:

- Providing information that will help identify and document injury to specific public resources such as wildlife, recreation, and environment
- Submitting ideas for restoration projects
- Commenting on the Restoration Plan
- Commenting on the Environmental Impact Report

Channelkeeper contributes to the NRDA process by providing baseline monitoring data to inform impact determinations, contributing appropriate restoration proposals, keeping the community informed, and ensuring selected projects adequately compensate our community.

The Refugio NRDA and Restoration Plan are expected to be released in early 2019. Visit <http://www.sbck.org/refugio> for information on how to participate in the public process.

More detailed information on the NRDA process is available through the Office of Spill Prevention and Response's [NRDA Fact Sheet](#).

# Laws and Enforcement

## Federal

[The Oil Pollution Act \(OPA\) of 1990](#) streamlined and strengthened the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ability to prevent and respond to catastrophic oil spills. A trust fund financed by a tax on oil is available to clean up spills when the responsible party is incapable or unwilling to do so. The OPA requires oil storage facilities and vessels to submit plans detailing how they will respond to large discharges. The OPA also requires the development of Area Contingency Plans to prepare and plan for oil spill response on a regional scale. Under the OPA, offshore platforms located more than three miles from shore are regulated by the federal [Bureau of Ocean Energy Management \(BOEM\)](#). To learn more about the OPA and what it requires, visit the EPA's [OPA website](#).



Other federal laws including the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and Marine Mammal Protection Act offer additional protections and implications for enforcement in the event of a spill.

## State

California's Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act (1990) covers all aspects of marine oil spill prevention and response in California. It established the [Office of Spill Prevention and Response \(OSPR\)](#) and gave the agency very broad powers to provide best achievable protection of California's natural resources by preventing, preparing for, and responding to oil spills and enhancing affected resources.



In 2014, Governor Brown expanded the OSPR program to cover all statewide surface waters at risk of oil spills from any source, including pipelines and shipments of oil transported by railroads. This expansion provided critical administrative funding for industry preparedness, spill response, and continued coordination with local, state and federal government agencies as well as industry and non-governmental organizations.

Local legislators have also been successful in leading the enactment of several state laws to protect California from future offshore oil development and to improve oil spill prevention and response.

Visit the [online version of this guide](#) for more details and to take action to support current legislation.

# Laws and Enforcement (continued)

## Pipeline Oversight

In California, pipelines that transport oil across state lines are regulated by the federal [Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration \(PHMSA\)](#), while intrastate pipelines are regulated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's [Office of the State Fire Marshall \(OSFM\)](#). The majority of pipelines within Santa Barbara and Ventura counties are considered intrastate pipelines and are therefore regulated by OSFM.



Bruce Reitherman

In 1981, the California Legislature established the Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Safety Act with the intent that the OSFM exercises exclusive safety, regulatory and enforcement authority over intrastate hazardous liquid pipelines. The OSFM currently regulates the safety of approximately 6,500 miles of intrastate hazardous liquid transportation pipelines. OSFM's Pipeline Safety Division inspects pipelines to ensure compliance with federal and state pipeline safety laws and regulations. The Division is also responsible for the investigation of pipeline ruptures, fires, or accidents for cause and determination of probable violations.

## Enforcement

In the event of a spill, there are typically two tracks for enforcement. First, civil and criminal lawsuits may be filed based on failure to comply with various regulations and reporting procedures, negligence, and impacts of the spill on groups like fishermen, tourism operators, and landowners. Second, an official investigation will be launched by public trustee agencies (generally federal and state agencies like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and CA Department of Fish and Wildlife). The trustee agencies will develop a [Natural Resource Damage Assessment](#) that outlines the environmental, economic, and recreational impacts from the spill, how that damage can be restored, and how much the Responsible Party will be required to pay in compensation (in addition to damages allocated from civil and criminal lawsuits). The public is invited to participate in the NRDA process through public comment and submission of ideas for restoration projects. To participate in the Refugio Oil Spill NRDA process, visit [NOAA's Refugio NRDA website](#).



# Refugio Oil Spill - Current Status

On May 19, 2015, Line 901, a pipeline owned and operated by Plains All American Pipeline, ruptured near Refugio State Beach. Over 140,000 gallons of crude oil were spilled, much of which ran down a storm drain and into a ravine under Highway 101, entering the ocean. Hundreds of birds, marine mammals, and marine invertebrates were found dead or oiled, fisheries, beaches and public parks were closed, and sensitive coastal habitats were impacted.



The official response to the spill concluded on May 19, 2017. Channelkeeper successfully advocated for the adoption of several regulations to improve oil spill prevention and response and provide increased oversight over pipelines and oil operations, and we remain involved in efforts to improve local and regional oil spill contingency plans and ensure better flow of information to the public.



The Natural Resource Damage Assessment for the Refugio Oil Spill is expected to be released in early 2019. This document will outline the environmental, economic, and recreational impacts from the spill, how that damage can be restored, and how much Plains All American will be required to pay in compensation (in addition to damages allocated from civil and criminal lawsuits). The public is encouraged to provide restoration project ideas and to comment on the Restoration Plan and Programmatic Environmental Assessment. Visit [www.sbck.org/refugio](http://www.sbck.org/refugio) to stay updated on deadlines and resources for public comment once the draft documents are released.





Anita Ritenour



Santa Barbara Channelkeeper is a grassroots non-profit organization whose mission is to protect and restore the Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds through science-based advocacy, education, field work and enforcement.

We work on the water and in the communities along the Santa Barbara Channel to monitor water quality, restore aquatic ecosystems, advocate for clean water, enforce environmental laws, and educate and engage citizens in implementing solutions to reduce water pollution and aquatic habitat degradation.

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A web-based version of this document is available at [www.sbck.org/oilspill](http://www.sbck.org/oilspill)



This document designed by [Amanda Kelley](#)