

APPENDIX F

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS FOR SHORELINE CLEANUP AT ASHMORE REEF

SITUATION

Forecast modelling indicates that oiling may occur on Ashmore Reef/Islands. Modelling indicates that Cartier Island is unlikely to be effected. Beyond forty-eight hours there are significant margins of error in the modelling predictions. First signs of impact were expected to be noticeable from 28 August 2009 however to date, no impact has been reported by on site observers.

Surveillance indicates that oil movement is still to the North-east. No oil has been sighted in the direction of Ashmore Reef. However based on modelling predictions a level of preparedness will be maintained.

It is expected that impacts would be in the form of tarballs in low quantities but with repeated impacts (at low intensity) over a period of days to weeks. Tarballs have low toxicity and would strand along the high tide mark on the islands.

ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION

The rig is about 57 and 80 nautical miles from Cartier Island Marine Reserve and Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve respectively. Cartier contains one unvegetated sand cay and a mature reef flat with two shallow pools immediately to the north-east of the cay. Ashmore contains two extensive lagoons, mobile channelled carbonate sand flats, shifting sand cays, an extensive reef flat and three vegetated islands, East, Middle and West Islands. The two lagoons have four northern entrances and extensive coral growth. The beaches around each of the three islands at Ashmore are coral rubble. Particle size is generally gravel to pebble in size.

Ashmore and Cartier reserves are important staging points for migratory shorebirds and support large breeding populations of seabirds. Seabirds nest at the reserves throughout the year with some species currently nesting. Individuals from these species dive to shallow depths, foraging throughout the region. Flocks of migratory shorebirds gather at Ashmore and Cartier between October and November.

Significant populations of three marine turtle species feed in the region year round. Ashmore provides critical nesting habitat for the Green turtles whose nesting activity occurs throughout the year peaking around January. Ashmore is also well known for its diversity of seasnakes, however numbers of observations have declined significantly over recent years.

ASSETS

**Note these reflect current and planned assets as provided by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service at Ashmore Reef only. There are no current assets available at Cartier Island. Should the spill reach Cartier, additional arrangements will need to be made.*

Current Assignment – Ashmore Reef lagoon

Australian Customs Vessel
6 crew available (depending on operational priorities) for clean-up operations
Basic clean-up equipment available

CLEAN-UP STRATEGY

Planning assumptions:

- a) ACV will be equipped for basic shoreline clean-up operations.
 - b) Should additional cleanup resources be required during this period, DEWHA and AMSA will liaise with PTTEP to ensure resources (personnel and equipment) are directed to Ashmore and/or Cartier as soon as possible.
1. Daily survey of beaches on all Ashmore Islands to determine if oiling has occurred in previous 24 hour period.
 2. If oiling is identified, report to DEWHA via email to Chantal Simakoff-Ellims (Chantal.simakoff-ellims@environment.gov.au) and to the DEWHA Duty Phone (0419 293 465). Report should include information listed at Attachment A plus photos.
 3. DEWHA and AMSA Incident Controller to discuss oiling, and provide advice to Customs officer on how/when clean up should commence.
 4. Recovery of oiling if situation warrants. Recovery will be via:
 - a. Use of rakes to shift oil into rows.
 - b. Use of shovels to lift recovered oil into sand bags.
 - c. Care should be taken to minimise sediment removal. If percentage recovered oil to sediment is less than 50% advice should be obtained from AMSA and DEWHA before proceeding further.
 5. Recovered oil is to be stored on ACV for return to mainland. AMSA and DEWHA to coordinate disposal on arrival.
 6. Care should be taken to minimise transferral of oil from scene to vessels via Boots and Clothing. Officers should utilise the personal protective equipment provided by AMSA.

OILED WILDLIFE

If oiled wildlife are found, the following procedures should be followed:

1. Note the location the animal was found and the general condition of the animal – how much oil is on it, if movement appears laboured etc.
2. Identify the animal to species if possible
3. Note how many other individuals of the same species are in the vicinity (flying, swimming, nesting etc).
4. Contact the DEWHA duty phone for advice on how to handle (0419 293 465) – note that wildlife can be dangerous, particularly if distressed, so no attempt to capture the animal should be made until advised.
5. DEWHA to liaise with experts and AMSA to provide advice as soon as possible to the onsite officers.

Specific instructions for Oiled birds

1. If birds can be caught, put in a box big enough to allow bird to fully rotate (but not necessarily stretch wings) – put 20mm diameter (maximum) holes around the box to allow airflow.
2. Box mustn't go in air conditioning – place on rear deck out of the weather.
3. If birds feet feel cold, place warm water in sealed bottle in the box (to act like a water bottle).
4. Contact DEWHA as soon as possible.

OILED WILDLIFE RESPONSE

Primary care, triage and rehabilitation for oiled wildlife will be required. This process involves capturing the animal, providing basic onsite care, stabilisation and triage. Animals with a high triage priority will require air transfer to the Broome (location to be confirmed) for complete washing and rehabilitation before release.

The following steps should only be followed by, or under the supervision, of a trained wildlife response expert:

Basic on site care

Requires AMSA oiled wildlife response kits.

1. Quick wash – to remove the worst of the oil contamination and prevent further skin/feather damage.
2. Treat infections or physical injuries.
3. Provide temperature control, hydration and nutritional requirements.

Triage Assessment

Requires AMSA oiled wildlife response kits and supplementary materials from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority response kits.

Animals will be assessed after which the decision to: euthanize (based on the animal's likelihood of survival and where response efforts are best placed); transport to the mainland; or release the animal will be made.

Transport to mainland

Animals assessed as high triage priority will require transportation via air (helicopter or sea plane) to the mainland to minimise the loss of animals during transport.

Mainland response centre

If needed, a response centre will be established and made operational to allow for complete washing and rehabilitation prior to the animal's release. Full details are to be confirmed and discussions are underway with WA Department of Environment and Conservation.

Concept of Operations agreed:

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Water, Heritage and the Arts.**

Concept of Operations approved:

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