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## **FLORIDA ANNOUNCES IMPROVED OILED BIRD RECOVERY PLAN**

*~New response plan ensures quick recovery of oiled birds~*

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) together with federal partners today announced the creation of an oiled bird recovery plan for rapid response to distressed birds. The recovery plan was created and approved by the Incident Command Sector Mobile, with assistance from impacted states, to ensure oiled birds are recovered within 60 minutes of their initial report. Under the plan, a Florida Panhandle Group will be established in Panama City to coordinate the rapid recovery and rescue of injured wildlife on Florida's shores.

"It is critical that trained personnel respond rapidly to reports of wildlife in distress due to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill," said FWC Executive Director Nick Wiley. "We are hopeful that this new plan created in coordination with our federal partners will better protect Florida's precious wildlife."

The Florida Panhandle Group will consist of three task forces, covering two to three counties each throughout Northwest Florida. The Group is made up of 150 field personnel including biologists, wildlife rehabilitators and Vessels of Opportunity captains. When an oiled bird is reported to the Oiled Wildlife Hotline, the corresponding task force in that region will be notified and the nearest trained wildlife experts will quickly respond.

FWC, in coordination with the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), would also like to remind Floridians and visitors to report any sightings of wildlife oiled or injured as a result of Deepwater Horizon oil spill by calling the Oiled Wildlife Hotline number at 1-866-557-1401. The hotline operator will contact the nearest response team and dispatch it to attempt to rescue the animal.

People naturally want to help injured animals. However, untrained rescuers may cause more harm than good. The public should not touch, approach or try to rescue the animal. Handling oiled wildlife may pose a serious health and safety risk to both would-be rescuers and the animal they are trying to rescue. The chemicals in oil are toxic and only trained personnel with appropriate protective gear and equipment should handle and treat oiled animals.

Such rescues require hazardous-material training, permits and animal-handling skills to ensure human safety and the best interests of the animal. The Oiled Wildlife Hotline number is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For more information, please visit [http://myfwc.com/OilSpill/OilSpill\\_FAQs.htm](http://myfwc.com/OilSpill/OilSpill_FAQs.htm) or [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/deepwater\\_horizon/Public\\_Flyer\\_Marine\\_Wildlife\\_Response\\_Action\\_Plan.pdf](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/deepwater_horizon/Public_Flyer_Marine_Wildlife_Response_Action_Plan.pdf)

For the latest information regarding Florida's response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, visit [www.deepwaterhorizonflorida.com](http://www.deepwaterhorizonflorida.com) or follow [www.Twitter.com/FLDEPaltert](http://www.Twitter.com/FLDEPaltert).

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