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Florida's Coastal Wetland Cleanup and Restoration Process

Florida's Coastal Wetlands

Although Florida's coasts are best known for their beaches, there are many other important habitats along the coast and immediately offshore. Along Florida's shores, some 407,000 acres of salt marshes and 675,000 acres of mangrove forests provide important nursery habitats to numerous species important to healthy coastal ecosystems and the economy of Florida. These habitats could be affected by components of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

If Oil Enters Coastal Wetlands

While it is not certain that oil will affect Florida's coastline, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), has been working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), BP, and other states to develop and implement a response plan for cleanup. This response plan is designed to respond to the unique level of oiling and characteristics of any affected wetlands. NOAA developed the Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique (SCAT) with those concepts in mind. There are eight steps in the SCAT process:

1. Conduct reconnaissance survey
2. Segment the shoreline
3. Assign teams and conduct shoreline surveys
4. Develop cleanup guidelines and endpoints
5. Submit reports and sketches to Planning Section
6. Monitor effectiveness of cleanup
7. Post cleanup inspections
8. Do final evaluation of cleanup activities



Assessing Impacts to Florida's Coastal Wetlands

DEP is also working with the partners to implement the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Process. The NRDA process will conduct studies to identify the extent of resource injuries. The three steps in the NRDA process are:

1. **Preliminary assessment:** This work includes collecting time-sensitive data (i.e. mapping the extent and degree of oiling) and reviewing scientific literature about the released substance and its impact on resources to determine the extent and severity of injury.
2. **Studies to identify the extent of resource injuries:** Partners quantify injuries and identify possible restoration projects. Economic and scientific studies assess the injuries to natural resources and the loss of services. These studies are also used to develop a restoration plan that outlines alternative approaches to speed the recovery of injured resources and compensate for their loss or impairment from the time of injury to recovery.
3. **Implementing restoration:** The final step is to implement restoration and monitor its effectiveness. Partners work with the public to select and implement restoration projects. The responsible party pays the costs of assessment and restoration and is often a key participant in implementing the restoration.

Reporting of Oil-Affected Coastal Wetlands

Coastal wetlands affected by oil should be reported by calling the State Warning Point at 1-877-2-SAVE-FL (1-877-272-8335) or by dialing #DEP from a cell phone. Please provide the location (using GPS coordinates if possible) and description of the type of oil contamination.

Restoration of Damaged Coastal Wetlands

Due to the nature of this release, there is a potential for a long-term release to shoreline habitats over a broad spatial area extending throughout the Gulf coast. DEP will continue to work with NOAA, other affected states, and the responsible party to monitor, assess, and take steps to restore the affected coastal wetland sites.