AN INTERNATIONAL RAPID RESPONSE NETWORK FOR MARINE RESCUE AND REHABILITATION

A Feasibility Study
An International Rapid Response Network for Marine Rescue and Rehabilitation

A Feasibility study

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## FINANCIAL STRUCTURE

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This study

This report presents a feasibility study considering the development of a global rapid response network for emergency relief to marine wildlife in acute danger of a disaster at sea. Argo Consultancy and Scomber Consultancy have been commissioned by Sea Alarm Foundation to study the feasibility of such an approach.

Sea Alarm Foundation

The Foundation Emergency Fund for Marine Mammals Sea Alarm (hereafter called Sea Alarm Foundation) was founded December 1999, in The Netherlands. Its objective is to offer assistance in the broadest sense to marine mammals and other marine wildlife that is in acute distress of a disaster.

Envisaged objective Foundation Sea Alarm

Sea Alarm Foundation envisages an international response facility, called Sea Alarm. The response facility should be able to offer first aid to threatened marine wildlife anywhere in the world within 24 hours. The response facility should exist of a network of expertise, a network of rescue materials that can be mobilised within 24 hours and a monetary facility from which the costs of an operation can be financed. Sea Alarm Foundation aims at an infrastructure that could lift the quality standards of the rapid response to threatened marine wildlife in case of an emergency to a consistent high level.

Terms of Reference for this study

This study should provide:

- An assessment of the present existing capacity for marine wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in acute distress world-wide
- A description of Sea Alarm’s niche within the envisaged field of work in terms of knowledge, expertise and facilities
- A description of the added values of Sea Alarm’s envisaged services to the already existing global facilities
- An overview of funding mechanisms that could be applied to finance Sea Alarm’s global activities, with reference to existing funding institutions and with special reference to their procedures and requirements and possibilities to refunding in the future
The approach followed

Key persons and organisations relevant for emergency rescue plans of marine wildlife were approached about the Sea Alarm initiative and commented on the concept and on the extent to which Sea Alarm could contribute to the existing instruments and networks in the world of marine wildlife rescue and rehabilitation. The suggestions have been used in this report to further develop concepts and ideas for Sea Alarm.
Overview of integrated information

Existing rescue and rehabilitation services

Rescue and rehabilitation centres

Marine animal rescue and rehabilitation centres are specialised in whales, dolphins, seals, birds, or a combination of these groups. Their profiles range from individuals, working locally and on an *ad hoc* basis, to professional organisations, working nationally as well as internationally with educated staff and well-advanced materials. Marine animal rescue and rehabilitation centres exist all over the world, with a strong geographical distribution bias towards the industrialised western countries.

Existing networks

Marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation centres provide services to the local marine environment. They sometimes have a broader, even international, scope and act within an active national or regional network in order to geographically cover the whole or a part of a defined coast. Networks often co-operate closely with national and local agencies like coastguards, life guards, port authorities and national authorities. They communicate actively with the general public. They aim to be sufficiently well known and, in case of strandings or an emergency, they are given notice by means of a registered hot line. An example of a currently functioning network at a regional scale is the Oiled Wildlife Care Network in California. Well developed networks for live strandings of whales and dolphins exist in New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America.

There is also a number of internationally operating organisations with an interest for the well-being of marine animals. Examples are International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Whales and Dolphins Conservation Society (WDCS), the Humane Society and the British Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty against Animals (RSPCA). They are often recognised as appropriate networks for rescue activities. The RSPCA is formally recognised by the UK government as the organisation with expertise for assistance to oiled animals in case of oil spills. These organisations set up and fund rescue operations for marine animals in case of an emergency also in countries where they are not based, but so far this has occurred only on an *ad hoc* basis. Involved individuals generally acknowledge that rescue
operations would profit from global co-operation and co-ordination which does not yet exist. Sea Alarm intends to provide for this lacuna. In addition, Sea Alarm is particularly founded to arrange rapid first aid assistance, something which is often non-existent.

**Geographical coverage**

There are only a few countries and regions where rescue networks can cover a more or less full geographic range. Examples are some states in the USA, and nations around the North Sea and Scandinavian and UK waters. In the Southern Hemisphere, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa all have networks with a reasonable, though not complete geographical coverage. In other parts of the world, rescue operations are either highly opportunistic or non-existent.

**Range of responses**

Responses are normally given at the national and sub-national levels. A number of organisations assist internationally, including IFAW and RSPCA. IFAW aims at international standardisation and a level of preparedness, but this is an approach that has just started to be developed.

**Forms of preparedness**

A large number of daily ship movements involves oil tankers that pass a great many coastal locations where an oil spill would cause a considerable ecological disaster. Preparedness for unexpected events is normally inversely proportional to the assessed risk that unusual things happen. The frequency at which oil spills globally occur causing ecological disasters is so low that it is not possible in practice for each local coastal community to set up its own oil spill contingency plan.

Professional rescue and rehabilitation centres have substantial capacity for the care of sick and injured wildlife. Some larger centres are able to offer rescue and rehabilitation assistance outside their own territory or to a foreign operation. However, in the case of a major oil spill (Torrey Canyon, Sea Empress, Exxon Valdez, Erika) the scale at which the disaster develops in terms of stranded oiled wildlife (birds, mammals) can be quickly beyond the scale that can be handled by a single centre or even all national centres together. In such a case, assistance has to come from outside, and an international operation must be organised.

It may be possible to develop prepared logistics and a network for rescue and rehabilitation operations for marine wildlife in case of a disaster at an international, co-ordinated level. The only existing preparedness programs for marine wildlife disasters are restricted to the national level and found in California (oil spills), New Zealand and Australia (for marine mammals).
What happens after a larger oil spill?

At present, under the circumstances following an unexpected oil spill, both professional rescue and rehabilitation centres and non-professional individuals get spontaneously involved in the rescue of oiled marine wildlife. Different events are bound to happen at the same time in the early days of the spill:
- Oil may spread out over hundreds of kilometres coastline, preventing that the wildlife care response can be organised at one single location
- Thousands of oiled animals are collected by volunteers and brought in at collection points
- Emergency centres are organised by undertaking volunteers, which are not necessarily professional experienced people, improvising and many times re-inventing wheels. Considerable costs may be made in order to build up the necessary facilities without a guarantee of refunding by national or international schemes
- Television coverage attracting hundreds or thousand volunteers to the coast, who arrive in the middle of a mess where no one is yet in charge to put them to work in an organised manner.
- Ill-prepared local authorities making unco-ordinated decisions, or not making decisions at all
- Rivalry can arise between local organisations or between international organisations arriving at the spot

Many of these conditions are counter-productive to a high standard rescue operation, which all parties would undoubtedly adhere to.

Chaos can be significantly reduced if things can quickly become organised at the appropriate scale (regional, national or international), and if all involved individuals and organisations accept this and do cooperate. Appreciation to co-operate effectively must be achieved in advance of an oil spill (as a form of preparedness), and not in the panic of disaster.

Oil Spills, Compensation and Wildlife

Oil spills occur throughout the year, all over the world. Their severity ranges from a small local harbour spill to a spill that damages a coastline of several hundreds of kilometres. The concern is mostly directed at the individual level, animals suffer from oil coverage usually resulting in a slow death Oil spills that threaten populations of marine wildlife (birds, marine mammals, other species like turtles) are relatively rare. The number of larger oil spills (over 700 tonnes) has decreased over the years, and stricter safety measures are generally credited for that.

The occurrence of some large oil spill incidents, starting with the Torrey Canyon in 1967, has resulted in international regulations, conventions and compensation schemes. They include:
- the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL 73/78),
- the 1990 International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation (OPRC),
- the Civil Liability Convention (CLC), and
- the Fund Convention (FC).
Under the 1992 Civil Liability Convention, the ship owner (normally his P&I Club) pays for the damage caused by the pollution. The owner is normally entitled to limit his liability to an amount determined by the size of the ship. The 1992 Fund Convention exist to pay (under specified circumstances) compensation when those suffering oil pollution damage do not obtain full compensation under the 1992 CLC. All oil importing companies and bodies contribute to the Fund.

Not all states have ratified these conventions. If an oil spill happens in such a state, compensation is regulated by means of national law. Among the states that are not party to CLC or Fund are the United States. The US Oil Pollution Act (OPA) goes further than the existing international conventions in the extent to which the polluter can be charged for damage. The USA system places the obligation to remove spilt oil or other pollutants primarily on the owner of the ship. In the case of environmental damage (including affected wildlife), claims may go far beyond the financial limits of the CLC and FC.

Position of Wildlife

Except in the United States, nowhere can damage to wildlife be claimed directly as a matter of liability. Under the CLC and Fund Convention, submitted claims must address evident economical loss, and the claim must be “reasonable”. If an organisation or individual submits a claim for the costs of rescue and rehabilitation wildlife, this would be at the extreme end of what would be considered economic loss. The criteria to justify its “reasonability” would include:

- Is it technically justified what has been done
- What was the survivability of the animals
- Are there reasons of public relations
- Who has done the work
- Who is claiming
- Why has it been done
- Are the costs reasonable

Judgement about whether a case satisfies these criteria is negotiated between the P&I Club (the insurance company of a tanker owner) and the party that has submitted the claim.

Wildlife rescue and contingency planning

The main objectives of the 1990 OPRC are to encourage states to develop and maintain an adequate capability to deal with oil pollution emergencies, and to facilitate international co-operation and mutual assistance in preparing for and responding to major oil pollution incidents. Standard elements of national oil spill response systems are set out in this convention.

Few national contingency plans include the rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife. The United States is the best known example where oiled wildlife care is part of the national response. Californian law even stipulates an operational oiled wildlife response network, which has resulted in the Oiled Wildlife Care Network (OWCN).
In most countries, wildlife care response is not part of the national contingency planning. Although professional institutes may be recognised at a national level for their ability to coordinate wildlife rescue activities in case of a disaster (for example, the RSPCA is recognised by the UK Government as the expert organisation), the lack of legislative enforcement cannot refrain other groups or individuals from starting their own initiatives or refusing co-operation.

Developments in environmental thinking, protection and subsequent legislation, do continuously challenge all parties involved, including politicians, governments, NGO's and industry. Especially larger spills, that rouse public indignation because of spoilt coastlines and the loss of wildlife, speed up the process towards tighter preventive measures and international regulations, according to the principle “the polluter pays”. In this respect, there is an obvious necessity to establish the (exchange of) knowledge on oil spill preparedness, wildlife protection, rescue and rehabilitation at a co-ordinated and impartial international level.

Wildlife rescue and legislation

Not many countries have legislation which requires an effective national structure for wildlife in general or under the special circumstances of a disaster. In California, the 1990 Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act requires rescue and rehabilitation stations for sea birds, sea otters, and other marine mammals. Three subsequent amendments to the original law reaffirmed this legislative mandate for addressing the problems of oiled wildlife care (Mazet et al. 1999). Similarly, in New Zealand both the 1978 Marine Mammals Protection Act and the 1953 Wildlife Act are the basis for the existing contingency plans for marine mammals, sea turtles and snakes. In both examples, it is the explicit legal responsibility of an identified organisation to set up (cost effective) structures and preparedness programs to deal with wildlife rescue in case of an emergency. In the situation of an oil spill or another emergency, the effective hierarchy is settled and enforced by law. There is also a national budget to finance preparedness programs and to carry out the rescue work. In the case of California, there is a construction in which the oil industry contributes to the fund from which the OWCN is financed.

In a country in which legislation does not include wildlife rescue, such arrangements are not a priori clear by law, and one of the following cases may be at stake:

1. The national authorities have formally charged a national organisation with the responsibility to take care of wildlife rescue in case of an emergency (for instance by means of a national oil contingency plan). But this does not exclude the possibility that other organisations also become active in the case of an emergency, invite foreign assistance from their own network and act non-cooperatively.

2. Wildlife rescue is also not included in the national contingency plan. Nothing is arranged for and anyone could spontaneously become active.

There is no international law forcing national authorities to include wildlife rescue into national law nor to provide for wildlife rescue in contingency planning.

One can conclude that, without an appropriate national (or international) legislative instrument, the importance of wildlife rescue is not sufficiently recognised. It can be observed that in the countries that do have appropriate legislation, the situation leads to cost-
efficient approaches, and a strive for the development and application of “best available techniques”. In other countries, the quality and financial burden of wildlife rescue is depending on voluntary, and often private arrangements. Cost-efficiency, especially when it comes to an emergency activity, depends on many local circumstances. It also often depends on the availability of (foreign) experts at an early stage.

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**Get people and materials on the location of the spill**

Under the 1990 OPCR, contracting parties agree to take the necessary legal or administrative measures to facilitate an easy international transport of personnel, cargoes, materials and equipment required to deal with an oil pollution incident. This includes the use of ships, aircraft and other modes of transport engaged in transporting them or otherwise responding to the incident. In practise, difficulties may be encountered when wildlife rescue and rehabilitation materials and personnel are have to pass the customs, depending on:

- the state being party to the convention or not
- the state acknowledging the rescue and rehabilitation work within the framework of an oil pollution incident
- whether or not foreign assistance has been officially invited, and custom officers have been notified on this
Conclusions and recommendations

Assessment of feasibility

The idea of Sea Alarm to develop an international framework for co-operated and high level response to oil spill victims was generally welcomed because of:

- need for identification and application of best available techniques
- need for professionalism and effectiveness
- need for evaluation/objective data
- need for preparedness
- a common interest in cost efficiency
- need for stand-by expertise
- need for fair financial compensation of wildlife rescue

The following elements were commonly mentioned:

- Offer an international platform to exchange and provide valuable information on effective crisis management at the appropriate scale
- Offer an international platform at which local experiences can be systematically evaluated and be used to reach a higher level of preparedness elsewhere.
- Offer a reliable and respected source of information on oiled wildlife statistics
- Use locally recognised expertise
- Offer technical advise to local authorities that are responsible for the execution of a contingency plan
- Offer expertise to local organisations at an adequate, professional level, including protocols based on the best available techniques
- Stimulate co-operation between different groups and stakeholders
- Offer a network that can quickly mobilise the necessary materials, medicines and additional expertise
- Work towards a fund to cover the immediate costs of the rescue operations

There is a general feeling that the development of the initiative should be well planned over time, considering:

- the diffuse networks of existing oiled wildlife care organisations with different cultural backgrounds and which operate at different levels of standardisation
- varied levels of national contingency planning
- culturally different views of wildlife rescue in general and rescue approaches (often locally developed techniques) in particular
- a fragmented oil exporting industry
sovereignty aspects in case of an emergency situation

There is an interest in principle amongst all interviewed parties in an international framework of co-operation for wildlife victims of oil spills, and to give it a follow-up. Comments from different angles, have made clear that building an international network and rapid response facilities must seek for the broadest participation and communication from the start.

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**Strategic considerations**

**Communication/participation**

An international network cannot be built unilaterally by one party. From the beginning it is important to communicate openly and to seek for contributions from as many groups as possible, including grass root level. It is advised that experienced international organisations and industry are involved in a steering committee.

**Geographical considerations**

Although a global network is envisaged, due consideration must be given to cultural differences as it comes to wildlife rescue and rehabilitation. This field is especially developed from “western” approaches in nature conservation and protection. Therefore, it would be most appropriate to start building an international service in Europe and the USA to begin with, and to make this service available to other places in the world.

**Project approach**

The development of the global network should be seen as a sequence of many different steps which will ultimately grow into something that was initially envisaged. The most feasible would probably be to consider the whole as an iterative process, driven by common interest, but capitalised by opportunities that occur at any moment. The best approach for such a process would be to break the process down into projects at different scales in time and space, each with clear objectives and clear results.

**Political considerations**

Wildlife rescue and rehabilitation is a costly undertaking, receives a lot of public support during emergency situations, but is only exceptionally covered by legislation. This is probably due to the fact that a legal coverage would mean that there must be a budget. A budget for a high level of preparedness would be a financial burden for a small country with a relatively short coastline far away from the shipping routes. A budget for preparedness only pays off beyond a certain spatial scale, most likely at an international level, or in areas of a higher-than-normal risk. An international organisation increasing the level of preparedness at a national level is a cost-efficient solution. If practical problems can be overcome, such an international undertaking would be mutually advantageous to all parties.
involved, including nature conservation organisations, governmental organisations and industry. Also here, an iterative process would be the most feasible approach, as the development of a network at international level should go hand in hand with an increased preparedness and adaptation to these new services at national and local levels (contingency plans, legislation).

**Practical considerations**

At a practical level, it is important to reach a common understanding among all parties in consideration of approaches, protocols, training, and logistics. Probably one should avoid to aim at one approach, one protocol, one training programme and a single logistic system, if that would cost the support of grass root level organisations for the initiative. If all investments at an international level would ultimately not make any difference with the results of a chaotic, unprepared response activity, then there is not really any proven right of existence. The main aim is enable a professional, coordinated and cost effective life saving activity in a local emergency situation. Everything should be subordinate to that.

**From nothing to something**

The proposed initiative of a global network should be a neutral activity to unite the forces within nature conservation, industry and governmental organisations in order to reach a mutual benefit. The concept of magnification (think globally, act locally) is at stake here. We propose to reach a common point of departure by establishing a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by a wide range interest groups. This MoU should be formulated in a way which attracts the different stakeholders, without compromising the original objective of a framework for a co-ordinated international response to wildlife victims of oil spills at sea. such an MoU can serve as the basis of the impartiality sought after. The signatories of this MoU should agree upon a business plan which is carried out by an executive body, which could be the Sea Alarm Foundation, and which seeks contributions from all parties involved. The Internet would be an important instrument in network building: it is cheap, easy to access and effective. The initiative should lead to discussions between different parties at national and regional levels and structures that would facilitate cooperation in the event of a disaster.

**Financial structures**

Finances should be found ad hoc in the beginning, but one could strive towards a worldwide trust fund from which rescue operations can be financed, at the end of the day. A trust fund at the beginning seems not to be feasible as much depends on what is exactly envisaged and how much would be needed on a multi-annual term. A fund must be embedded in a transparent infrastructure, with clear objectives, criteria and mechanisms.
Towards a Business Plan for Sea Alarm

Set up a network of partner organisations

Sea Alarm Foundation can only achieve its objective at an international level. This means that an international co-operative network must be built and maintained, consisting of all stakeholder parties from grass root level (R&R centres and individual specialists) to existing regional networks (OWCN, Nz Zealand, Australia) and international organisations and bodies (IFAW, RSPCA), which should also include industry (ITOPF, Multinational oil companies) and government parties (UNEP, EU, IMO). If proven successful, this international co-operative network could operate as a federation Sea Alarm. The federation would aim at an allied force in which all globally existing knowledge and expertise is bundled for a co-ordinated professional preparedness, response and evaluation in case of a marine wildlife emergency at a scale that is beyond the capacity of national authorities and rescue organisations. Sea Alarm could grow into the position of an extensive, cost-effective executive body in service of the federation. Maybe ITOPF could be taken as a model for Sea Alarm federation and the executive body.

Set up a communication network

Methods include a newsletter and the construction of a well documented internet-site, interlinked with sites of partners.

Set up a process to develop mutual trust and common expertise

Co-operation is a question of trust and mutual respect and understanding. Among the best way to achieve fruitful and productive forms of co-operation between envisaged partners is to start working together on a subject that is of mutual interest to all parties. This subject has been identified as being the creation of an body that has international credibility because of its high standards, professionalism, cost-effectiveness and independence.
Develop a transparent system leading to high level standard approaches

Sea Alarm can facilitate the exchange of information among its partners. This should not only include the exchange of experience and expertise, but also the co-ordinated discussion that leads to international standards for best practise. There will be many common features in rescue plans, there are also likely to be differentiation by local components in order to obtain the maximum effect.

Develop inventories of experts and materials

Sea Alarm can stimulate and govern the construction of up-to-date databases on available experts and materials
The expert database should include professionals (vets, crisis managers, scientists, experienced free-lancers etc.) and their c.v.’s with the details on geographical area of expertise, species, populations and language.
The material database should include information on available material among the partner organisation, with reference to the speed at which this material can be transported to the nearest international airport.

Develop training and education

Generic training and education modules will exist with participating organisations and groups. The OWCN programme could be taken as a generic model. Specific elements should be contributed at regional (vulnerable species, populations and their specific treatment) or national level (national drills and exercises).

Aiming at preparedness, best available techniques and evaluation

The future existence of an active global network would be part of the international preparedness in advance of a disaster. At all stages of the response activity, protocols should be available. This is not only the best guarantee for applying the best available techniques and technology but also a good structure to improve by means of practical experience. Included in the protocols should be an accurate documentation of activities (a logbook). Such a standard method of documentation allows an evaluation of each different stage of the response operation and the whole operation itself. This would make improvements on cost-efficiency possible. By means of the documentation, also good and reliable statistics on the size of the disaster can be obtained.
Financial structure

The funding of Sea Alarm has to grow with the different stages in which the global network and its services develop. The first steps will not be costly and it should be possible to carry them out as individual projects with relatively small budgets. As soon as the organisation will have proven its credibility, larger budgets will become available.
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Annex 1: List of contacted persons

The following persons have been contacted and provided views and information. The authors would like to thank for their valuable contributions:

Frits Schlingeman (UNEP)
Hans Walenkamp (Smit Int., Chair International Salvage Union)
Ian White (ITOPF)
Richard Johnson (ITOPF)
Katarina Stanzel (ITOPF)
Lesley O’Donnell (IFAW, Europe)
Cindy Milburn (IFAW, US)
Paul Veldhuizen (Shell)
Arthur Lindley (RSPCA)
Linda Knopper (Médecins sans Frontières, Amsterdam)
Kees Camphuysen (oiled bird expert, consultant)
Sarah Scarth (IFAW, South Africa)
Mr. Ferrar (DG XI, Civil Protection)
Annex 2: Overview of key organisations

ITOPF

The International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation (ITOPF) is a non profit organisation that operates on behalf of its members (tanker owners and charterers) and associates (owners and charterers of ships other than tankers). ITOPF services to its members, associates, their oil pollution (P&I) insurers and other groups include:

- Response to marine spills
- Damage assessment and claims analysis
- Contingency planning and advisory work
- Training and education

In case of an oil spill, the assistance of ITOPF is performed at the request of one of its members or associates and their oil pollution insurers. The role of an ITOPF technical staff member at the site of a spill is always advisory, and includes one or more of the following activities:

- Advising and assisting all parties on the most appropriate clean-up response, with the aim of mitigating any damage
- Helping to secure equipment and organise the clean-up in cases where the shipowner is required to mount the response operation
- Monitoring the clean-up, in order to provide subsequent reports of events and of the technical merit of actions in relation to claims for compensation
- Investigating any damage to coastal resources such as fisheries and mariculture, and to the environment in general

ITOPF acts on behalf of P&I insurance companies that work within the framework of the IOPC Funds (international liability conventions), and also often directly on request of the IOPC Funds. Therefore it can be expected that ITOPF’s advices and expertise are closest to international standards of:

- measures that are technically justified in the particular circumstances
- coordinated response by all parties involved in a spill
- clean-up approaches that are as effective as possible, cause minimum of damage, lead to claims for compensation that are acceptable

ITOPF’s technical services have been developed from experiences with some 400 spills in over 75 countries worldwide over more than 30 years.
Therefore ITOPF should be able to provide a practical, down to earth view on the network initiative, and an assessment to which extent such an initiative would be feasible considering the current international context of oil spill planning, preparedness and response.

ITOPF has been a rich source of information on past experiences and current practices, many of which is shared on the Internet. A meeting at ITOPF’s headquarter in London (also attended by a Shell representative) revealed insight in the current approaches of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation concerning the application of liability and compensation regulations. The advantages of an international expert service on wildlife rescue and rehabilitation were acknowledged, especially in the light of:

- exchange of information
- developing reliable statistics on wildlife loss and recovery
- developing professionalism and preparedness at national levels
- developing an applying best available techniques
- cost-efficiency

Various aspects were discussed:

- how to deal with sovereignty?
- how to involve wildlife rescue professionals and amateurs nationally and internationally to a level that would make a difference with current practice?
- how to build up international credibility?
- how to deal with cultural variety concerning the need of wildlife rescue?
- how to develop and maintain an international network of stockpiles?

OWCN

The Oiled Wildlife Care Network is a national integrated oil spill response system for the Pacific coast of California. Its mission is to strive to ensure that wildlife exposed to petroleum products in the environment receive the best achievable treatment by providing access to permanent wildlife rehabilitation facilities and personnel trained in oil spill response. All network facilities are maintained in a constant state of readiness, and availability. Once the OWCN has been activated, wildlife response personnel are able to arrive at a spill site in less than 12 hours, if required. The network has resulted from:

- Detailed planning by all interested parties
- Four pieces of legislation

OWCN is sponsored by the California Department of Fish and Game’s Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response and funded through interest earned on an oil spill response trust fund contributed to by the oil industry (Mazet et al. 1999).

According to interviewed persons, the OWCN is the only formally existing rapid response network for oiled wildlife in the world, with objectives and an approach very similar to what is envisaged by Sea Alarm Foundation. Although OWCN is active exclusively at a national Californian level, many technical and organisational aspects of OWCN, and its development, are extremely useful to take into consideration when developing an international network.

In many respects OWCN would be a valuable model for building a global response network. Details on organisation, financial structure, training, protocols are very useful and worthwhile to be taken into consideration.
IFAW

The International Fund for Animal Welfare is an international organisation aiming “to improve the welfare of wild and domestic animals throughout the world by reducing commercial exploitation of animals, protecting wildlife habitats, and assisting animals in distress”. IFAW’s work is organized via three distinct campaigns:

- Preventing commercial exploitation and trade of wild animals
- Rescuing animals in distress (from cruelty and natural or man-made disasters)
- Protecting the few remaining wild spaces where so many animals live.

IFAW has offices around the world: USA (headquarters), Canada, EU (Brussels), UK, Netherlands, Germany, France, Australia, Russia, South Africa, China.

IFAW has experiences in offering international services in case of emergencies in which marine animals are in acute distress. IFAW contributes to rescue operations by sending experts (emergency relief team) and materials on the request of groups or authorities from the stricken country (see IFAW’s report on Erika involvement).

IFAW showed sincere interest in the initiative. IFAW’s worldwide organisational network, powers and experience would be very useful in setting up the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation network. IFAW would welcome further discussions.

New Zealand’s contingency plan

All species of marine mammal occurring within New Zealand, and New Zealand's fisheries waters are absolutely protected under the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978. Under the Act the Department of Conservation is responsible for the protection, conservation and management of all marine mammals. At a stranding the Department is responsible for the welfare of the stranded animals, the disposal of any dead marine mammals (including any part of a marine mammal) and the health and safety of its staff and any volunteers under its control, and the public. The Marine Mammal Stranding Contingency Plan contains the Department’s procedures for dealing with marine mammal incidents, other than oil spills.

The Plan is to be used by Conservation Staff when responding to stranded or distressed marine wildlife, other than during an oil spill. The Plan contains procedures and protocols for recording reports of marine wildlife, responding to distressed animals, euthanasia, disposal of dead animals, data collection and important contacts. All Conservancy reception, Area and Field Centre staff are required to be familiar with this plan.

It was expected that New Zealand would have some form of preparedness for marine wildlife emergency situations.

The information received from the Department of Conservation included the Marine Mammal Stranding Contingency Plan. The Plan can be taken as an example how a coordinated response can be organised.
RSPCA

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty against Animals (RSPCA) is a UK based charity organisation:

- investigating over 100,000 cruelty complaints a year in England and Wales and bringing perpetrators of cruelty to justice.
- campaigning in the UK and across the world for new laws which protect animal welfare
- supporting a variety of animal welfare projects (e.g. neutering and volunteer training schemes) in the UK and across the world
- supported by a volunteer network of 195 branches across England and Wales which fundraise, run animal centres and clinics, and operate extensive rehoming projects
- having 105 clinics and animal centres, four veterinary hospitals and three state-of-the-art wildlife hospitals.

RSPCA has experiences in offering international services in case of emergencies in which marine animals are in acute distress. RSPCA contributes through donations of materials and the involvement of experts on the request of groups (e.g. sister organisations) or authorities from the stricken country (see RSPCA’s report on Erika involvement).

RSPCA welcomes the initiative and would like to get involved in further discussions. RSPCA could share a lot of international field experience.

DGXI

The Directorate General XI (Environment) of the European Union is the executive body for the environmental policy of the European Commission.

The Directorate Nuclear Safety and Civil Protection (Directorate C) is responsible for Civil Protection and Environmental Emergencies. Accidental Marine Pollution is one of the policy areas in this field.

Community action in marine pollution is based on a Council Resolution of 26 June 1978, which set up "an action programme of the European Communities on the control and reduction of pollution caused by hydrocarbons released at sea". This was later supplemented to deal also with other harmful substances. The main purpose of the Community Action in the field of Accidental Marine Pollution is:

- to support Member States efforts to improve their capabilities for response in cases of major pollution incidents at sea involving oil or other hazardous substances, and
- to create the conditions for efficient mutual assistance and cooperation.

The Directorate Environment Quality and Natural Resources (Directorate D) has a program area Nature Protection, coastal zones and tourism. The theme Integrated Coastal Zone Management, which is run under this program, is a joint undertaking by DG Environment, DG Fisheries and DG Regional Policy.

In order to develop a network at a European level, the European Commission would be one of the most important bodies which could be approached for co-financing.

The European Union provides operational support to member states faced with major pollution incidents. An “Urgent Pollution Alert Section” is set up in Brussels and is operational on a 24 h a day basis. Also there is a Task Force, members of which have a
direct experience of emergency situations and well qualified to give effective assistance. The cost of this assistance are borne by the Commission. The Community Framework for Cooperation in the field of accidental marine pollution is to support Member States’ efforts to improve their capabilities for response in cases of major pollution incidents at sea involving oil or other harmful substances and to create the conditions for efficient mutual assistance and cooperation (Hayward, 1999).

February 2000 a call for proposals will be published (Budget Line B4-3300), which could be taken as an opportunity to seek for EU collaboration in the first steps to set up an international network for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation.

**Smit International, International Salvage Union**

Smit International is a company that offers a wide range of non-conventional maritime services, which are divided into three market groups:

- Port and Coastal (towage services, terminal assistance, pontoon chartering, inshore civil engineering, etc.)
- Maritime Contracting (for oil and gas industry and civil engineering clients, construction and installation of pipelines, heavy transport)
- Salvage and Towage (salvage and wreck removal, emergency response, ocean towage and consultancy)

Smit International has three main offices worldwide: Europe (Rotterdam, NL), North/South America (Houston, Texas), Far East (Singapore) and an additional network of daughter companies and associated companies.

Smit International, through its Salvage and Towage Market Group has built up extensive experience with rapid response activities, within 24 h on the spot. This means that personnel and logistics must be maintained in a constant state of readiness. Could this be used as a model for the envisaged network? Smit International presently chairs the International Salvage Union, in which 38% of the salvage industry is united.

See annex.

**Médecins sans Frontières**

Médecins sans Frontières is a private, international organisation founded in France, 1971. The aims and principles of the organisation are laid down in a four article Charter. The international activities are carried out by doctors, nurses, and paramedical and other professionals and groups (Engelse terminologie corrigeren) relevant for the envisaged aims and tasks.

At present, the organisations consists of five operational sections and 14 offices throughout the world, which are responsible for the recruitment of volunteers, funding and the promotion of the organisation’s principles.

It was expected that Médecins sans Frontières would operate within an international network with a high level of preparedness and a logistic system able to quickly mobilise personnel and material to any place in the world, possibly within 24 hours.

Individuals, groups and organisations working within the network of Médecins sans Frontières are bound by the Charter, which they have subscribed. The result is a flexible
An International Rapid Response Network for Marine Rescue and Rehabilitation

operational network in which broad expertise is quickly available. Crucial for its operations is a small group of experienced crisis managers.
Annex 3: Some useful Internet sites

- Marine Spill Response Corporation
- EPA - Oil Spill Prevention & Response
- IFAW International Fund for Animal Welfare
- ITOPF
- Marine Animal Lifeline
- Marine Animal Rescue Program
- marine salvage
- Oiled Wildlife Care Network, UC Davis
- Welcome to the RSPCA Web Site
- World Animal Net

http://www.msrc.org/
http://www.epa.gov/region09/waste/sfund/oilpp/oil.html
http://www.ifaw.org/
http://www.itopf.com/
http://www.stranding.org/
http://www.aqua.org/animals/conservation/rescue.html
http://www.marine-salvage.com/
http://www.rspca.org.uk/
http://www.worldanimal.net/
Annex 4: Documentation