



BpTT puts 'oiled' wildlife protection plan in place

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Protection of Trinidad and Tobago's wildlife was the focus of an intensive five-day workshop hosted by energy company bp Trinidad and Tobago (bpTT) at Cara Suites, Claxton Bay last week.

The workshop was organised jointly by bpTT's Regulatory Compliance and the Environment (RCE) and Crisis and Continuity Management and Emergency Response (C&CMER) teams. The Oiled Wildlife Response Training Programme workshop attracted more than 70 participants who represented oil and gas operators, regulatory agencies and various wildlife-based non-governmental organisations.



Sarah Tegtmeier, Oil Programme Manager at Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research, demonstrates the proper procedures for cleaning oiled wildlife.

Tyrone Kalpee, bpTT's vice president of Safety and Operational Risk, made the call for greater solidarity in environmental protection efforts: "This cause depends on all the stakeholders getting together and though not an end in itself, this workshop is a step in that direction.

"There is a lot of passion and commitment in this room, and we need to support one another and work together to ensure we protect this legacy for future generations. As we go forward together, we must continue to collaborate, share and acquire knowledge and develop a response plan with the hope that we never have to use what we learn."

The workshop sessions featured contributions from a panel of international experts, including Sarah Tegtmeier, oil programme manager at Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research, who assisted BP LLC with

the Macondo spill response in 2010; as well as Hugo Nijkamp, general manager of Sea Alarm Consultants and Paul Kelway, Global Preparedness Co-ordinator, Sea Alarm Consultants.

Gail George, senior environmental officer, Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, found the workshop to be extremely relevant.

"An oiled wildlife response plan has never been taken into consideration before in terms of this level of collaboration between all stakeholders. I have to commend bpTT for leading the way in this initiative and we have to work together to put plans in place, though we hope that an incident of this nature never happens.

"In fact, with the signing of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) in January 2013, this is another step forward in developing local capacity to mitigate the effects of oil spills on land and in marine areas. We have all shared and derived a world of information from this workshop," George said.

Nijkamp was optimistic about the initiative, "This is an important first step toward developing a comprehensive wildlife rescue response to an oil spill. These participants have been given a broad view of what is necessary, and with the varied experiences and expertise demonstrated over this past week, they can work toward developing a response plan that meets international standards. This is an exciting start and we are all committed to working together to preserve the environment and wildlife."

Participants were immersed in all dimensions of oiled wildlife response, including an introduction to the scope of developing a response plan, assessing the local capacity for oiled wildlife response, engaging key stakeholders in developing sustainable partnerships and conceptualising the required scope of the NOSCP.

Apart from the technical content, persons attached to rehabilitation centres were instructed in techniques to remove oil from wildlife in a simulated hands-on practical demonstration led by Tegtmeier.

Participants used carcasses of ducks to learn handling, basic medical and cleaning techniques, with the carcasses donated after to feed the ocelots at the El Socorro Wildlife Conservation Centre in Freeport.

Taking part was Dr Adana Mahase-Gibson, who represented a number of organisations as well as Asclepius Green, the Trinidad and Tobago Veterinary Association, the Wildlife Orphanage Recovery Centre (WORC) and Environment Tobago.

"This workshop is very timely and takes the form of a proactive response, which is critical to success in such incidents. Given that we have a hydrocarbon-based economy, these risks are very real. An impressive cadre of persons have been assembled here by bpTT, and it is up to us now to collaborate and continue to build upon this platform for developing a national oiled wildlife response plan," Mahase-Gibson said.

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