

Case Study: Global Oiled Wildlife Response System Project

Project overview

To develop an international oiled wildlife response system, utilising the knowledge of experienced international responders. The system includes Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for third parties to request Tier 3 response, as well as methods for developing and improving Tier 1 and 2 capacity for initial response to smaller incidents, and support for Tier 3 responses.

Background

In 2012, Sea Alarm initiated a meeting between international stakeholders from industry, government, and the non-governmental sector to formally recognise and discuss the gap between the level of global wildlife response preparedness, when compared to other aspects of international oil spill response. The meeting, held during the London Interspill conference, was kindly hosted by Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL), a long-time Sea Alarm collaborator.

As a result of that meeting, oil industry representatives invited the oiled wildlife response community to submit a preliminary proposal for a project to explore a work programme aimed at improving global wildlife response preparedness. To this end, the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (IOGP) and IPIECA (the global oil and gas industry association for advancing environmental and social performance) provided initial funding to Sea Alarm in 2013, for an exploratory meeting to look at processes and objectives and begin the development of a joint Standard Operating Procedure.

Personnel from eleven international oiled wildlife response organisations participated in that follow-up meeting, held in Brussels and hosted by Sea Alarm, which produced a proposal to develop the Global Oiled Wildlife Response System (GOWRS) Project. All participants agreed to become Project Partners (see Project Partners list at the end of this document), and the project proposal was submitted by Sea Alarm on behalf of the ten Partners.

Project implementation

Based on the proposal from the Project Partners, the IOGP/IPIECA funded Phase I of the project consisted of a two-year work programme (2015-2016), developed by the Project partners and contracted and coordinated by Sea Alarm, which included:

1. A governance model for the long-term management of a global oiled wildlife response system,
2. Systems for notifying responders, assessing response needs, and mobilising and demobilising teams for assessment and response,
3. A database of pertinent oiled wildlife care documents to ensure protocols are based on best available science,
4. A Good Practices Document for effective oiled wildlife preparedness and response,
5. An incident management system for organisations within the network, which includes equipment needs and recommendations for future equipment repositories,
6. Training for oiled wildlife responders, which include competency requirements and,
7. Exercise modules, incorporating aspects of integration of wildlife response into spill response activities.

To aid in aligning the work of the Project Partners with the needs and priorities of industry, an Industry Advisory Group was established (see Industry Advisory Group participants below). The IAG met bi-

monthly to keep abreast of developments in the project and assisted to ensure that the Standard Operating Procedure and Animal Standards Guidance Document were fit for purpose.

In 2017-18, a contract between Sea Alarm and OSRL allowed Phase II of the GOWRS project to move forward, this time with OSRL funding. The scope of work for this phase of the project covered:

1. Ensuring that Project Partners could receive formal notification and mobilisation request from OSRL members in the event of an oiled wildlife incident.
 - During the two years of Phase II the Partners held nine exercises and drills: three in-person during project meetings (in Ostend, Fairlight, UK and Cape Town) and six remote, which allowed them to test their joint response capability.
 - In addition, they developed a series of five guidance modules for industry members to integrate wildlife response into their regular oil spill drills
2. Further developing operational readiness of the system, with a focus on:
 - Training requirements and competencies,
 - Equipment and tools, and
 - Exercises.
3. Establishing a GOWRS Project Governance Model that develops and agrees a structure and approach for collaborative governance after 2018.
4. Conducting education and outreach activities for OSRL Shareholders to ensure their understanding of the scope and limitations of the project including:
 - Presentations at seven industry meetings, and
 - Presentations at four international oil spill conferences.



Figure 1 GOWRS Project meeting



Figure 2 GOWRS Project partners take part in an exercise

Results

Capacity building

Given the large number of project partners (working in a variety of time zones) and the ambitious objectives of the initiative, significant time and effort was invested into the process design and project management of GOWRS to ensure that activities could be delivered in a timely manner to high standards through a process that also helped to encourage a positive collaborative spirit and greater familiarity and cohesion amongst the group.

GOWRS Project Partners have developed systems and processes for joint notification and decision making which allows them to deal jointly with a response invitation from a requesting party in a variety of circumstances. This, in turn, allows them to work with industry in a coordinated manner.



The development of GOWRS also enables the scaling up of tier-3 response capabilities from local to regional to global. This was demonstrated during the 2018 Bow Jubail incident in the Netherlands, when local (Dutch), regional (EUROWA) and global (GOWRS) responders were working effectively together to rehabilitate 522 oiled mute swans.

Wildlife response preparedness

A Good Practice Guidance document, [*Key Principles for the protection, care and rehabilitation of oiled wildlife*](#), was developed and added to the IPIECA resource document library. The document serves as a global reference to illustrate what should be considered as international 'standards of practice' for animal protection and care in an oiled wildlife response.

The development of training and exercise modules and processes between and among the partners, is a key component of working towards an increased global oiled wildlife response preparedness.

Training and exercises

The exercises and drills carried out in Phase II form the basis for ongoing cooperative drills and exercises in the future, maintaining communication between the partners, and providing a method for checking that response capabilities continue to meet high standards.

Exercise guidance modules were developed for industry to focus on preparedness for different aspects or phases of response:

1. Initiating a Wildlife Branch
2. Tier 3 notification and deployment
3. Tier 3 assessment and planning
4. Tier 1 & 2 activation and deployment (including training and capacity building)
5. Establishing full wildlife operations (field and/or facility activities).

An ExxonMobil oil spill response exercise, which included a wildlife response scenario designed by Sea Alarm and the UC Davis Wildlife Center, allowed the Project partners to work with industry during a spill drill, allowing all parties to better understand and cooperate in the future. The project partners produced a full report on this exercise, including lessons learned and recommendations. The project partners continue to promote wildlife-focussed oil spill exercises.

Facilitating multi-stakeholder activities

One of the most significant outcomes of the GOWRS Project is the crystallising of an effective working relationship between ten different wildlife response organisations, working in different parts of the world, as an international collaborative network. Prototyping of governance structures has enabled the project partners to determine their preferred common identity for the future. The present governance structure is laid down in a Collaboration Agreement that was signed between the 10 partnering organisations in 2019. The network is led by elected Chairs and Vice-Chairs, whose role is to prepare and lead the decision making process during network meetings. Work groups have formed around various main topics, each with an elected work group chair. In the course of 5 years, a strong bond has developed between the groups and a deeper sense of trust and shared vision has resulted from the collaboration on the GOWRS Project. The in-person meetings, held in the home countries of the different partners, have been essential in strengthening these bonds. This is now feeding back to other team members within each organisation and it is hoped that each organisation can involve other organisational representatives in future activities such as exercises and in-person workshops.



Next steps

The project has been granted two one-year extensions (in 2019 and 2020), pending a decision by the wider industry to adopt GOWRS as a contracted service. In 2019 a proposal to this end was developed and submitted by the project partners. The project partners are currently working on communicating their business plan to the oil industry and developing a road map for activities from 2021 onwards. Management of the GOWRS project nowadays is carried out by the ten project partners themselves, while Sea Alarm continues its support via facilitating the notification and project contracting systems. Further updates on progress will be provided in due course.

Links

[Key principles for the protection, care and rehabilitation of oiled wildlife](#). IPIECA-IOGP, 2017.
[Wildlife response preparedness: Good practice guidelines for incident management and emergency response personnel](#). IPIECA-OGP, 2016.

Project Partners

Aiuká (Brazil)
Focus Wildlife International (USA & Canada)
International Bird Rescue (USA)
Oiled Wildlife Care Network, UC Davis Wildlife Health Center (USA)
PRO Bird (Germany)
RSPCA (UK)
SANCCOB (South Africa)
Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research Inc. (USA)
Wildbase, Massey University (New Zealand)
Wildlife Rescue Centre Ostend (Belgium)

Industry Advisory Group

BP
Chevron
Exxon Mobil
Hess Corporation
ITOPF (Phase I only)
Oil Spill Response, Ltd.
Petrobras
Shell
Equinor
Total