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## North Shore Geographic Response Plan (GRP) Project Meeting Summary

September 22, 2009, 1:00 p.m.  
Parker River Natural Wildlife Refuge  
Newburyport, Massachusetts

### Attendees

Lou Bochynski – Beverly Facilities Manager  
Bob Bourke – Lynn Fire Department  
Polly Bradley – Nahant SWIM  
Chris Bresnahan – MA DEP NE Region  
Ben Bryant – Nuka Research  
Dennis Carmody – Lynn Fire Department  
Glenn Casey – MA Div. of Marine Fisheries  
Martha Dansdill – Health Link, Swampscott  
Elise DeCola – Nuka Research  
Frank Drauszewski – Parker River  
Pamela Garcia – USCG Sector Boston  
Art Howe – Ipswich Fire Chief  
Jeff Kennedy – MA Division of Marine Fisheries  
Kathy Leahy – MA Audubon Society  
Joan LeBlanc – Saugus River Watershed Council

Amy Maxner – Beverly Conservation Commission  
Rich Packard – MA DEP  
Karen Pelto – MA EEA  
Caleb Queen – Nuka Research  
Dave Sargent – Gloucester Shellfish Constable  
Sanne Schneider – Nuka Research  
Jackie Diehl Singer – Nahant SWIM  
Ron Skinner – Danvers Dep. Harbormaster  
David Standley – Ipswich Conservation Commission  
Lt. Roger Thurlow – MA Environmental Police  
Barbara Warren – Salem Sound Coastwatch  
Justin Yow – USCG Sector Boston  
James Zabelski – Ipswich Harbormaster Office

### Welcome & Introduction

Rich Packard of the MA DEP introduced himself and welcomed the group. After all introductions were made he stated that although the DEP has initiated three GRP projects, the North Shore being the third, their success would not be possible without the contributions of all the participants. He emphasized that the GRPs can be used as guidance should an event occur, but that they are not a substitute for knowledge and experience. Frank Drauszewski welcomed the group to the Parker River Natural Wildlife Refuge, where the meeting was hosted.

### Activities Since Last Meeting

Ben Bryant of Nuka Research reviewed the agenda. He began with a brief review of what a GRP is and how it is used for those who had not attended previous meetings. A GRP is a tactical plan to protect a sensitive area from an oil spill and to mitigate the damages a spill could cause. GRPs focus on areas at some distance from an actual spill site, and are designed as protection plans for before the oil reaches shoreline rather than clean-up plans. During this last meeting as a group, Bryant said, the focus will be to review the 34 GRPs that have been developed for the North Shore. He then reviewed the project timeline:

- April – kick off meeting
- May/June –Final site selection and field surveys
- July – First Draft of GRPs
- August –Project team members review
- September –Review meeting
- October – Deadline for comments, NSGRPs published (final draft)
- November/December – Present GRPs to Area Committee for incorporation into Area Plan



Since the last meeting, Bryant noted that the group has reviewed the initial list of sites and then gone out on the water and surveyed them. Draft GRPs were developed and posted online for review, with an opportunity for comments. Fourteen days of surveying from late May to early July covered 34 sites. Each boat had a team onboard, which often consisted of state and local representatives and response personnel. Bryant thanked everyone who participated in surveys, including harbormasters, the United States Coast Guard, MA Division of Marine Fisheries, and people from additional agencies. He acknowledged the many agencies and departments who donated vessels for use in the surveys. There were 45 individuals who participated in at least one survey and many participated in more than one.

Bryant then reviewed the site selection criteria: sensitivity to spill, probability of spill, and feasibility of deployment. He reminded the group that the North Shore geography is very diverse and though there is a range of tactics, not all areas can be protected. One challenge was that some areas can be threatened from more than one direction. He referenced Plum Island Sound, which could be affected from an on-sea spill or one occurring on an inland highway. He noted that in many cases, sites had been delineated or broken out based on the probably direction of oil trajectory (inland based or open water based).

### **Overview of GIS Mapping**

Elise DeCola introduced Caleb Queen of Nuka Research. Queen provided a brief overview of the mapping process used to develop the GRPs. He explained that a computer software called ArcGIS, a mapping and geospatial data management program, was used to develop the maps. Having GRP tactics available in GIS can be extremely useful to responders if they have GIS-capable computer or technicians on scene to overlay the GRP tactics with other information. Queen briefly highlighted some of the major GIS capabilities, explaining that for the GRPs all features are drawn to scale, users can easily add data, query it, and layer it. One drawback he spoke of was that ArcGIS is proprietary software, which means that licenses must be purchased and training is required to operate the program. Queen demonstrated the efficiency of mapping with GIS by showing that if an oil spill affected an area that covered more than one GRP, the amount of boom needed could be easily calculated within the program. He remarked that the information is more interactive, and the data is consistent so responders and state agencies can manipulate it.

Packard added that when the NSGRP project is finished, the MA DEP will have a website administered by Nuka Research, where the GRPs will be posted. These can be viewed and downloaded by anyone. The final GIS data will be included as a layer in the online MassGIS website, which has a viewer that allows anyone to view the data within a web browser, although it cannot be manipulated in this format. Barbara Warren of Salem Sound Coastwatch asked about whether the other GIS users could perform the calculations that Queen had demonstrated, and he replied that they could.

### **Review of Oil Spill Response Tactics**

DeCola began by noting that the strong participation in this project would strengthen the overall GRP, because the work group participants would be the ones with an interest in maintaining and updating the GRPs. She then began to review the basic oil spill booming tactics that are used in the GRPs. She noted that standard terminology is important, so that all responders are in sync. She referenced the Massachusetts GRP Tactics Guide, which defines the tactics used in all Massachusetts GRPs. A copy was passed around and she said it is also online, with links on the GRP website. She noted that all of the tactics are able to be modified; and should be used as strategies along with current knowledge on-scene.



DeCola explained that some sites and shoreline features are more protectable than others, and that we focus GRP strategies on areas where the tactics are likely to be successful using available equipment and responders. She then reviewed hard booming and recovery tactics. A copy of her Powerpoint presentation is included with the meeting materials.

Packard concluded by saying that MA DEP has a project underway which tests GRPs using local responders and local equipment. This assesses the efficacy and usability of the GRPs and helps the responders gain experience. MA DEP started this testing program this past spring and will test two more GRPs this fall.

A participant asked if there was more than one plan per site depending on which way the wind/current is going. Bryant spoke to that saying that on some GRPs there is an accommodation for that. DeCola reiterated that GRPs are used as guides and it is important to recognize that there are many variations due to weather and tides.

### **Review and Comments on Draft GRPs**

Bryant began by opening the floor to general questions. Art Howe asked if there have been any local spills in the last six months that we could discuss in terms of the GRPs. Packard answered that the MA DEP equipment has been used in the last few months though not specifically in GRP deployments. Chris Bresnahan, a responder for the MA DEP, spoke from personal experience, citing an incident with a tanker on I-95, which occurred while the site surveys for the North Shore were taking place. He noted that the materials used were brought on site. Packard followed up by saying that on the equipment trailers have been used on Cape Cod, for smaller spills (e.g. fishing boats, marinas) when the equipment was used to contain a spill.

Polly Bradley, of Nahant SWIM, asked whether it was possible to change the terminology of the GRPs, specifically the title. She explained that people seemed to have trouble remembering what GRP stands for as well as relating Geographic Response Plans to oil spills. If the nomenclature GRP could not be changed, she suggested adding a subtitle along the lines of "oil spill containment plan." Packard said that he thought the term GRP originated from the USCG and was transferred from use in other parts of the country. He understood her concern because he also is familiar with explaining the term GRP. Bradley emphasized her concern that people understand it because it's such an important issue.

Bryant first reviewed the general GRP format. Typically they are four pages long, with the first page being a diagram/map. Some sites require additional map pages because of their size. The next two pages are tables that give deployment details and resource sets and the final page is combination of photographs and contact information. The tables are set up so that when the GRP is printed on double-sided paper, the rows line up across the pages. Each tactic has an ID number and includes resources (staging area access, resources to be protected, and special considerations).

Glenn Casey of the MA Division of Marine Fisheries, suggested adding MA Division of Marine Fisheries, local shellfish constables and the MA Environmental Police to the contact lists. There was discussion regarding the chain of notification during an oil spill and the difference between the incident notification process through the National Response Center and the state (MassDEP and MEMA), and the contacts on the GRPs, which are meant to include agencies or groups that would have a specific interest in deploying the GRP.

Dave Sargent, Gloucester Shellfish Constable, stated that shellfish constables and MA Division of Marine Fisheries need to be notified of a spill immediately, due to concern regarding contaminated food products. Packard said that MA DEP notifies major players but



the contact lists on the GRPs had a narrower focus. Lt. Commander Pamela Garcia of the USCG spoke about established channels that are used during a spill response. The GRPs are an additional tool that can be used in case of an oil spill, but that there are also other plans in place. During an event, Packard noted, people at the local level notify the USCG/MA DEP. The equipment trailers are onsite for local responders in the first few hours after a spill. They can use the equipment if they feel they have the training to be effective. When the state and/or USCG responders arrive, they address the responsible party and have them take over cleanup from there and assist as necessary. It was agreed that the MA Division of Marine Fisheries should be added to all contact lists and to confirm local shellfish/natural resources departments are included. Typically harbor masters are on each contact list. Sargent said that he would follow up the meeting with a written comment before the deadline. Bradley suggested that local people could designate a contact in their town, which then could be added to the specific GRP.

### Draft GRPs

The group then reviewed each GRP site in numeric order. Bryant led the discussion, and for each site he began with a description of the overall strategy and the protection priorities at each site. Before reviewing individual sites, he asked for general comments on layout/format and there were no comments, but during the course of discussion there were a few suggestions that will be incorporated across the board:

- Add legend to all map pages.
- Add MD symbols where missing.
- Add DMF and town shellfish departments to all contact lists.
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NS-01 Head of Merrimack River – Bryant used this first GRP to explain some of the general symbology used on the maps. He emphasized that for all of the sites, the GRP tactics were designed to show a range of options and that the assumption was that responders would not necessarily deploy all of the tactics. There were no specific comments on this GRP.

NS-02 Newburyport – LT Thurlow of the MA Environmental Police noted that that boat ramp is only accessible at mid/high tide. He suggested a ramp on the Salisbury side, on the reservation. This information will be added to the GRP.

NS-03 Merrimack River Entrance - Barbara Warren asked how the amount of boom to set at Ram Island was decided upon. Bryant noted that the current there is strong and that smaller lengths of boom are easier to set. He stressed the importance of not taking on too much.

Drauszewski referenced the sensitive areas noted in May; tern nesting on some of the islands. The best strategy for those areas was soft boom. Packard stated that those areas are difficult to protect with hard boom so sorbent (soft) boom was suggested.

Packard remarked on area below Plum Island Turnpike. He wondered if EX boom would work there but there is no access to clean up oil. The area is worth developing a plan. He suggested that a vac truck on the bridge could collect oil. When he asked if boom could be set north of the bridge Drauszewski replied that the current there is 4-6 knots and there are eddies. DeCola suggested booming where the river starts to bend because the current is slower there. This tactic will be added to the GRP.



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NS-04 Plum Island River – Drazszewski remarked that the boat ramp shown is unusable at low tide but it should be replaced next spring. There were no other comments on the tactics in this GRP.

NS-05 Parker River – There was some discussion of mosquito ditches and why they are identified separately from other PR sites – it was explained that these ditches make a marsh more vulnerable to oiling because of the multiple channels within the marsh. There was also discussion about the availability of resources to conduct Free Oil recovery (FO) and it was noted that there is limited local capability for this. FO is typically a contractor function.

NS-06 Egypt River – There is a railroad that runs parallel to Oyster Point Road which is not on the diagram but will be added. LeBlanc asked for more detail on PR (passive recovery) and Bryant and DeCola offered additional information about how sorbent (absorbent) materials are used to attract and pick up oil. They emphasized the need to constantly tend and switch out oiled sorbent materials.

NS-07 Rowley River – No comments on the tactics at this site.

NS-08 Eagle Hill River – No comments on the tactics at this site.

NS-09 Ipswich River – Sargent said there's another boat ramp on Little Neck Road with good access by car. This will be added to the GRP.

NS-10 Plum Island Sound Entrance – No comments on this site.

NS-11 Essex River – No comments on this site.

NS-12 Essex Bay – Warren asked what happens with sandbars/mudflats which are shown at low tide. Bryant said that oil tends to sit on the surface and get remobilized during the next high tide. Art Howe of the Ipswich Fire Department asked if strategies had been discussed for Crane's Beach. Bryant said it was discussed but the waves are too active.

NS-13 North Annisquam River – Bresnahan mentioned that this GRP is a "busy" plan, illustrating a problem. Gloucester only has one response trailer. He thought that locals could work with contractors, but this GRP has too much information. Bryant stated that an important part of process is to have local information and that these first responders have an awareness of the strategies. DeCola said that on the bottom of each GRP draft is a blank space for how many state response trailers are needed. This number will be added in the final copy to show how many response trailers are needed to implement all these strategies. It was agreed that the final review of GRPs would include a consideration of whether some tactics were redundant at very "busy" sites.

Bryant noted at the entrance to the North Annisquam River there are two main points. It is important to try and stop oil there, instead of further up river. Thurlow noted that the tide comes from both ends.

NS-14 Rockport Harbor – No comments on the tactics at this site.

NS-15 Milk Island – Packard asked what is out there for resources to protect, i.e., bird populations. Bryant said at the site selection meeting the group chose Milk and Misery Islands to be representative of other islands. Many times it will be PR on these islands



due to wind and waves. Sargent said that the only bird population on Milk Island is seagulls, which is a low priority. Warren said that the Massachusetts Ocean Plan has all the populations mapped out. Packard suggested removing the Milk Island GRP because we need to limit the focus of our efforts. DeCola agreed saying we should protect areas with higher sensitivity. This site will be eliminated.

NS-16 Long Beach –Sargent suggested another SR symbol at the end of the road near creek mouth. This will be added.

NS-17 Good Harbor Beach – This GRP calls for a beach berm (BB) and Bryant noted that an emergency permit is necessary to put this in place. You have to close of the creek for a while, but the water needs aeration, so often a pipe is placed under the berm. The EX tactic is a back-up and Packard suggested it be marked as an alternate. Sargent said that the creek is fed by rainfall and the BB may not be necessary after high rainfall since all flow would be downstream. Packard suggested changing or removing the BB strategy.

NS-18 South Annisquam River– Montgomery St. should be added to this site.

NS-19 Gloucester Inner Harbor – Niles is spelled incorrectly and will be corrected. Two EX sites will be added. CB needs to be added. Map is deceptive – marsh area shows up looking more like sand.

NS-20 Gloucester Outer Harbor – No comments on the tactics at this site.

NS-21 Black Beach –Warren asked how the boom is attached on each side of the beaches. Bryant replied that you can use permanent attachments (e.g. a bolt in a rock) or you can use a large tree, rebar, or crags in rocks. He stated there is access from a boat or car. Warren suggested putting boom across further into the mouth of the harbor because she didn't think the road came out that far. DeCola remarked that car access is not necessary, as long as you can have a boat responder put ashore to set the anchors. Thurlow stated that you can pull a boat right up in there.

Kettle Island was identified as a priority nesting area and tactics will be added here for this site.

NS-22 Manchester Harbor – No comments on the tactics at this site.

NS-23 Great Misery Island – The group agreed to remove this GRP.

NS-24 Beverly Shoreline – An additional site was suggested for a CB here (box culvert).

NS-25 Danvers River – It was noted that the boat ramp at Bunkie's Marina can only be used at high tide and that since it is private, we shouldn't count on being able to use it. This will be noted in the GRP.

NS-26 Beverly Harbor – Barbara Warren asked about noting the water intake. Bryant replied that since we couldn't capture them all we removed water intake notations from the GRPs. Salem contacts need to be added here.

NS-27 Salem Harbor –Packard asked about whether the tactics would work in heavy weather or high seas, and it was acknowledged that they would not. This will be emphasized in the next draft.



NS-28 South Salem Harbor – No comments on the tactics at this site.

NS-29 Marblehead Harbor – Warren noted that two culverts and a salt marsh were not marked on the map (Goldthwaite's Marsh). These will be added.

NS-30 Swampscott Shoreline – No comments on the tactics at this site.

NS-31 Lynn Harbor – Bradley asked why the eelgrass beds were not marked and protected. Packard agreed that eelgrass beds are great productive habitats but they are usually below the water, so they may not get oiled anyway. If EX boom was used and then oil sank below the boom, there would be no way to protect eelgrass from that. DeCola seconded that we don't have any real ability to protect them.

NS-32 Saugus River – LeBlanc raised the question on how to remove oil if it gets up near Lincoln Avenue and Bryant answered with SR, which will be added to the GRP. The CB is very important near old rail bed.

NS-33 Pines River – The group agreed that Rumney Marsh is a very important, sensitive area. Joan LeBlanc wondered if more could be done before the oil gets to Rumney Marsh. Bryant stated that it is a solid strategy at the mouth of the river, as well as SR and a great deal of PR along the shoreline. There is also a good collection site near the boat ramp. It was recommended that this site be expanded to include the potential for spills from the rotary upriver. It will be. There was also some discussion of the fact that the area where the Saugus and Pines Rivers come together is not included on either site – the sites will be redrawn and re-centered to show this.

NS-34 Nahant – There was some discussion regarding additional tactics for Nahant Bay and agreed that a recommendation will be made in writing.

Once the GRPs had been reviewed, there was some discussion regarding training for use of the trailers, and Packard indicated that he would make sure the contractor conducting the training reached out to the local towns. Concern was expressed that many of the attendees were unaware of this training.

There was extensive discussion about the overall Unified Command structure and how it integrates with other emergency management functions covered under MEMA, and about whether MEMA resources are incorporated into oil spill response planning. DeCola recommended that Packard extend an invitation to the next Area Committee so that the work group participants had a better understanding of the oil spill planning and response structure that is in place.

### **Action Items**

- Comments by October 16, 2009
- December Area Committee meeting in Boston – date TBA

Bryant closed out the meeting by thanking everyone for their participation and attendance and asked that any further input and comments be made by October 16, 2009.