

Testimony

CA Assembly Hearing sponsored by Loni Hancock
November 15, 2007
Emeryville, CA



Introduction

- Baykeeper has been the pollution watchdog on the Bay since 1989.
- Since last Wednesday morning, our staff, volunteers and skippers have been patrolling the waters, fielding hotline calls, and gathering data.
- We've also been contacted by over 5000 Bay Area residents about the spill – either with information related to the incident or with an interest in volunteering.

Baykeeper's timeline (highlights)

- Wed 9:00-12:00
 - Vessel captain on the water at the time of the accident noticed oil slicks greater than 1/3 mile long near the site. At 9:00 he said it was foggy but it cleared up by about 10:30. Around 10:00, he said there were no booms or skimmers on the scene. He has photos of the Cosco Busan moving from Treasure Island to Anchorage 9, leaving behind a trail of oil.
- Wed 14:00
 - Baykeeper patrol of the accident site and Treasure Island saw no booms or skimmers. Only a Coast Guard vessel on site. And no fog.
- Thurs 6:00
 - Vessel captain saw "huge" oil slick near Raccoon Straits. He saw no oil recovery boats in the area. He radioed Pacific Responder and heard others doing the same. PR said they were busy.
- Sat 10:00
 - Baykeeper patrol came across a mile-long oil slick near accident site, lots of debris. Called the phone number listed in the San Francisco Chronicle to report oil – it was O'Briens' headquarters. O'Briens: "We're not set up yet. The hotline will be set up for people to leave information about slicks and we will evaluate the information and prioritize our response accordingly." Baykeeper: "Can you send a skimmer out to this site now? We have GPS coordinates." O'Briens: No, we've used all the resources we have. We're all tapped out and we can't be everywhere at once."

Conclusion

- I'd like to end my testimony today by reminding everyone that we found out yesterday at the US Senate hearing held by Senators Boxer, Feinstein, and Snowe that Commandant Allen, the top official in the Coast Guard, did not find out about the size of the spill until 21:00, when the rest of the public, local officials, and media learned that the spill was much larger than earlier estimated. This epitomizes the lack of transparency and communications failures of our agencies during this incident. It is frightening to wonder what would have happened had this been a bigger emergency such as a debilitating earthquake or terrorist attack....
- Thank you for your investigation of this matter and for your good questions. Hopefully your inquiries and solutions can help the agencies and companies improve their response to better protect the Bay and the public from such emergencies.



Pollution hotline: 1-800 KEEP BAY
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