09.11- 4/1/91-00011

Oil cleanup efforts continue; tar flow eases

By MIGLISA CAPO
Of The STAR Staff

Oil cleanup efforts continued for the fourth day at al Culebra beaches Sunday, while officials said the of tar seems to be tapering off.

team of nearly 30 workers from Clear Ambient ervice Co. and volunteers collected tar balls from the beaches of Flamenco, Larga and Punta Soldado in Culebra and eastern shore of Culebrita.

Fernando Bermúdez, director of the Culebra Conservation and Development Authority, said these beaches were given priority because they are the worst hit and some of them are nesting areas for endangered sea turtles.

The hawksbill and leatherback sea turtles are endangered species that nest in Culebra, Culebrita and other areas in eastern Puerto Rico. Their nesting season runs from March until June.

Teresa Tallevast, who is in charge of the Culebra turtle program, said the spill has had no noticeable effects on the nesting season so far.

Bermúdez said the cleanup teams have filled hundreds of plastic bags with tarballs they removed from the four beaches in Culebra.

"We are making progress, but we can't say when we'll be done," said Bermúdez. "It depends on Larga Beach, which is the most contaminated."

Once the workers are done cleaning the four beaches, they will move to Brava, Resaca and Manzanilla beaches in Culebra, he added.

U.S. Coast Guard Cmdr. Ray Perry, on-scene coordinator for Culebra and Vieques, said the flow of oil onto Culebra and Culebrita "seems to be less, but it's still coming in."

He said oil in Culebrita has been almost completely removed, but that a team will continue monitoring the site for new inflows.

In Vieques, only a minimal amount of oil has been spotted in a rocky coastal area in the northeast. As a result, Commonwealth and federal officials decided to let nature take care of the cleanup.

Attempts to get information on the oil spill situation in Fajardo, Roosevelt Roads Naval Base in Ceiba and other areas in eastern Puerto Rico were fruitless Sunday.

Meanwhile, Bermúdez said none of the beaches in Culebra were closed to the public during the holiday weekend because of the spill. He said the situation at Flamenco Beach, the favorite spot for tourists, is under control.

STAR photo by Farah Rivera

Oil cleanup efforts continue on Culebra and eastern Puerto Rico. Above, workers fill plastic bags with oil seaweed, tarballs and tar in Ceiba.

The 24-day-old oil spill originates from a Trinidadian barge carrying a half-million gallons of bunker fuel which sank off St. Kitts. Oil has reached St. Kitts and Nevis, Dutch St. Maarten, the French island of St. Barts, the Duth islands of Saba and St. Eustatius, the British Virgin Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In the British Virgin Islands, a visiting specialist from the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund is helping the BVI government in determining liability for damage and cleanup.

The United Kingdom is one of the signatories of the compensation fund, the Associated Press reported from Tortola.

Compensation Fund specialist Torsten Moller said the BVI could make claims from the International Oil Tanker Owners Pollution Fund.

EPA considers 20 island sites for Superfund list

By MIGLISA CAPO
Of The STAR Staff

Up to 20 local sites could be added to the Superfund National Priority List — a hit parade of the most contaminated areas nationwide, a federal official said.

Nine local sites have already made it onto the list. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates it would cost $20 million to clean up each site.

Under Superfund law, federal authorities would pay 90 percent and the state 10 percent of the cost of cleaning up hazardous sites on the list.

Carlos O'Neill, of the EPA Caribbean Field Office, said the 20 new sites would be chosen from a local list of potential Superfund sites. The local list so far contains 197 hazardous sites islandwide, including the nine that already made it to the Superfund program.

"We estimate that 10 to 20 new hazardous locations could become Superfund sites," said O'Neill.

The sites on the local list are reported by the public, federal or Commonwealth agencies or industries. About 30 of the 197 hazardous sites on the list were added during 1990 alone, federal documents show.

The sites on the local list are investigated to decide if cleanup is necessary. If they get a rating of 28 points or more, they are considered a threat to the environment and to public health and are thus included in the national Superfund program.

O'Neill said it could take about five years to studies

Under Superfund law, federal authorities would pay 90 percent and the state 10 percent of the cost of cleaning up hazardous sites on the list.

[illegible] and two before May of the remaining [illegible] the Superfund program [illegible] Some of the sites included in the local list in 1990 [illegible] Distillery in Ponce; Union Carbide Grafica in Yabucoa; Terraco facilities in the Isla Verde Market; International Airport in Carolina; in Cataño and Guayanilla, Esso facilities at Cataño and Guayanilla; Quality Electroplating, in Caguas, and Crowley Environmental Services.

O'Neill said none of the 197 sites have been removed from the local list of potential hazardous sites.

[illegible] U.S. Navy [illegible] that EPA [illegible] investigated [illegible] Camp Garcia and [illegible] they are within legal limits and required [illegible]

[illegible] sites on [illegible] said [illegible] included [illegible] a potential [illegible]

[illegible] cleanup work is under way at the [illegible] plant in Barceloneta, one of the nine Superfund sites. The site was contaminated with carbon tetrachloride, which leaked into ground water.

Studies on how to clean up the remaining eight sites are still being conducted. The sites and their contaminants are:

- Wells in Juncos, Guayama — chemical solvents.
- Frontera Creek, Humacao — mercury, pesticides.
- Juana Diaz (General Electric del Caribe) — mercury-filled switches dumped in half-acre site.
- Juncos landfill — defective, mercury-filled thermometers.
- RCA plant, Barceloneta — ferric chloride dumped into lagoon.
- Wells in Vega Alta — volatile organic chemicals.
- Naval Security Station, Fallaba Saca — pesticides.
- Barceloneta landfill — tank trash dumped into sinkholes and absorbed by ground water.