

FISHERIES NEWS (from page 28)

The Framework for Addressing the National Academies Recommendations is available on the MRIP [website](#).

<http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/recreational-fisheries/MRIP/index>



MRIP Strategic Plan

The other document just released, the five-year MRIP Strategic Plan, was developed by a Working Group with broad federal and regional representation, and incorporates feedback from stakeholders gathered during the public comment period. The Plan lays out a clear, well-defined strategy for continuing to improve our survey methods, while providing a sound basis for implementing new and expanded surveys through a system of regional partnerships.

The Plan emphasizes enhancing collaboration with partners, meeting customer needs, ensuring sound science and quality products, and improving communications with partners and stakeholders. It identifies specific strategies, tactics, outcomes, metrics, and timelines for achieving these goals. The document also articulates MRIP's mission, vision, and values, and provides a detailed history and major milestones of the Program.

The Plan and several supporting documents can be found [here](#):

<http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/recreational/documents/mrip-strategic-plan/2017-2022-MRIP-Strategic-Plan-final.pdf>

NY Company fined \$13 million for 2003 Buzzards Bay oil spill

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the state of Massachusetts, and the state of Rhode Island reached a proposed settlement Oct. 19, which, if approved by the court, will require the Bouchard Transportation Co. Inc. and its affiliates to pay more than \$13 million to settle outstanding federal and state natural-resource damage claims for an April 2003 spill of up to 98,000 gallons of oil into Buzzards Bay.

The recent settlement compensates for injury to migratory birds. In addition to the settlement, the New York-based company previously paid \$6 million to resolve claims for injuries to shoreline and aquatic resources, coastal recreational uses, and piping plovers, bringing the total combined natural-resource damages recovery to nearly \$20 million.

On April 27, 2003, the tug *Evening Tide* was towing the tank barge *Bouchard B.120* from Philadelphia to Sandwich, MA, when the barge grounded on a shoal soon after entering the western approach to Buzzards Bay. Its hull ruptured, and the barge released its cargo: No. 6 fuel oil. For weeks following the spill, migrating birds such as loons and sea ducks were exposed

to oil as they fed in offshore waters, while terns and shorebirds tried to nest in the oiled shoreline along islands and beaches.

Biologists estimated that, in total, thousands of birds were killed as a result of the spill, including loons, terns, eiders, dunlins, scoters, and gulls.

Common terns, a species of special concern in Massachusetts, and roseate terns, a state and federally endangered species, suffered severe losses from direct exposure to oil, as well as from habitat disturbance caused by clean-up efforts. The adult common terns' deaths and nesting habitat disruptions were estimated to lead to the loss of thousands of tern chicks that would likely have been born in the absence of the oil spill.

Additionally, scientists estimated that the spill killed more than 500 common loons.

"Coastal Rhode Island and Massachusetts provide important habitats for shorebirds, sea ducks and seabirds, and are destinations for birdwatchers from all over the world," said Wendi Weber, Northeast regional director for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. "Today's settlement means we can help those migratory birds affected by the Bouchard oil spill, and help the communities that benefit from that ecotourism."

If the settlement is approved by the court, the trustees will develop one or more draft restoration plans with public input and, once finalized, implement the projects designed to restore populations of affected bird species to what they would have been if the spill hadn't occurred. The process will be similar to the one pursued after the first settlement to address impacts to shoreline and aquatic resources, coastal recreational uses, and piping plovers.

"Buzzards Bay is a national treasure and known throughout the world for its natural beauty, wildlife, commercial activities, and recreation," Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey said. "This settlement will allow us to begin the work needed to address the oil spill's devastating impacts on injured migratory bird species, while sending a message that those who damage our valuable coastal resources will pay a hefty price."

The federal and state trustees have used the funds received under the first settlement, in 2010, to implement a variety of restoration projects through partnerships with state and municipal agencies and local organizations. The trustees used those settlement funds to assist with the protection of nearly 450 acres of coastal habitats in Fairhaven and Mattapoisett, Mass.; support quahog, oyster, and bay scallop restoration projects in nine towns around Buzzards Bay; and enhance public access to coastal areas, including the construction of trails at parks and nature sanctuaries in Fairhaven, New Bedford, and Dartmouth, Mass.

The trustees also increased piping plover nesting success at locations along both the Massachusetts and Rhode Island shorelines through a variety of management actions.

The proposed consent decree outlining the settlement was lodged in court Oct. 19 and is available [online](#). It's subject to a 30-day public comment period.

(courtesy ecoRI News)

(to page 30)