

Geographic Response Planning in the Chesapeake Bay



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What is a Geographic Response Plan (GRP)

The development and implementation of Area Contingency Plans (ACP) and Geographic Response Plans (GRP) is a core component of the Coast Guard's Marine Environmental Response (MER) program.

GRPs provide tactical guidance to first responders to ensure that sensitive areas and resources at risk are protected in the immediate aftermath of an oil spill. GRPs contain maps and descriptions of areas and resources, outline strategies to protect those resources, incorporate pre-determined booming and equipment deployment strategies, and set priorities for various spill scenarios.

Since 2011, several Area Committees within the Fifth Coast Guard District (*Virginia and Coastal Maryland Area Committee* and *Upper Chesapeake Estuary Area Committee*) developed GRPs for their respective areas of responsibility, including the Chesapeake Bay.



Pre-Approved Response Strategies

Once promulgated by the Area Committee, GRPs serve as "pre-approved" spill response strategies for the protection of sensitive areas and resources at risk in a given geographic area. This enables spill responders to rapidly identify priorities and act swiftly to mitigate the spill while incident response coordinating mechanisms are still being activated.

GRPs should be utilized during the initial response and assessment phase of the incident. As the response progresses, the GRP will continue to be used to inform the strategies and tactics developed by the response organization.

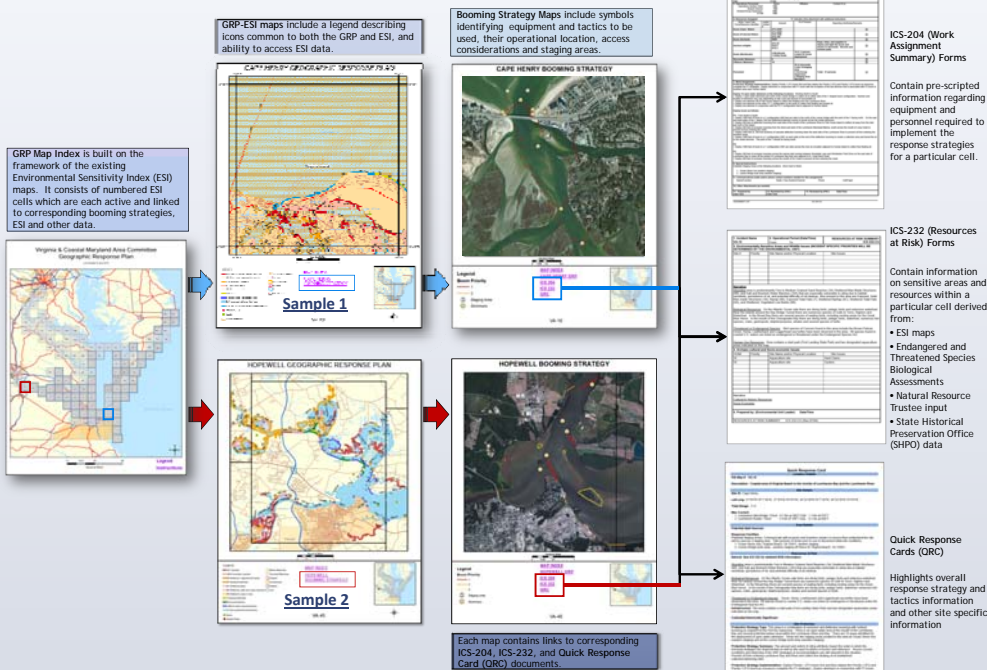
GRP Development Process in the Chesapeake Bay

Collaborative Interagency Process

Development of the GRPs included extensive coordination with federal, state and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. Planning input was obtained, in part, through a series of workshops in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia to identify sensitive resources at risk and develop spill response strategies to aid in their protection. The collaborative, consensus-driven approach used by each Area Committee was critical in ensuring that all stakeholder concerns were considered, and that the initial protective strategies represented in the GRPs were fully supported.

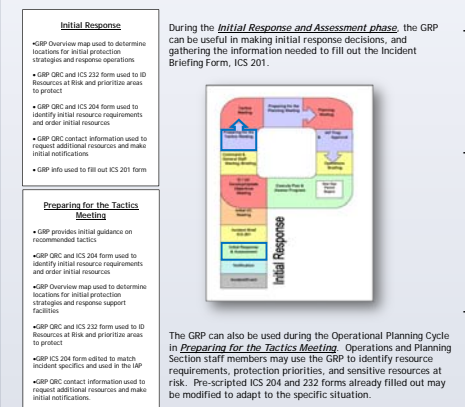


Elements of the GRP



GRP Use within the Incident Command System (ICS)

The GRP is designed to be a guideline for initial response actions versus a dictated set of actions. Because these initial response strategies and tactics are approved by the Area Committee, they can be immediately implemented by the initial Incident Command and modified based on local conditions.



The strategies and tactics in the GRP are recommendations to first responders responsible for their implementation. Prevailing conditions on-scene may require that GRP booming strategies be modified based on weather, seasonal variations, or other incident-specific considerations.



How to Access the GRPs

The Virginia & Coastal Maryland Geographic Response Plan is an Annex to the *Virginia & Coastal Maryland Area Contingency Plan* and can be downloaded via Homeport at the following website: <http://homeport.uscg.mil/hamptonroads>

For additional information about the GRP and the Virginia & Coastal Maryland Area Committee, please contact the Sector Hampton Roads Contingency Planning Department at 757-295-2010.

The Upper Chesapeake Estuary Geographic Response Plan is an Annex to the *Upper Chesapeake Estuary Area Contingency Plan* and can be downloaded via Homeport at the following website: <http://homeport.uscg.mil/baltimore>

For additional information about the GRP and the Upper Chesapeake Estuary Area Committee, please contact the Sector Baltimore Incident Management Division at 410-576-2654.

GRP Field Testing and Validation

To validate GRP strategies, boom deployment exercises were conducted at various sites to evaluate effectiveness. Equipment was deployed in real-time to validate:

Testing and Validation Requirements for Success

- Required resources (type and amount of boom, anchors, skimmers, personnel, and boats).
- Effectiveness of boom deployment configurations at various tides and tidal current flow.
- Recommended anchors and anchor points.
- Suitability of pre-identified equipment staging and support areas.
- Suitability of oil collection areas.
- Site access considerations.

