Introducing ESA Consultations to the Planning Process

The National Response Team (NRT) initiated a review of the MOA and established New guidelines for conducting Endangered Species Act consultations on oil spill planning and response activities.

**Implementing ESA Consultations to the Planning Process**

These guidelines and tools in development will provide USCG Sectors and Units, EPA Regions and Regional Response Teams with a clear process for implementing Environmental Management Practices in response to species and habitats while developing species and habitat protection and restoration strategies in the Near and Regional Contingency Plans (ACP, RCP).

- The 2017-424 Abstract ID serves as a brief outline view. The full paper includes additional content not covered in this summary.

**Benefits to the RP**

- ESA consultations provide a process to assess potential impacts to species and habitats from response actions and to develop and implement mitigation measures.
- Environmental compliance consultations. These revised guidelines further facilitate interagency cooperation, reduce paperwork, and improve the efficiency of the consultation process.

**Benefits for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

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- The ACP and RCP must not capture actual impacts to ESA listed species or habitats, but they can identify risks of impacts to species and habitats that could require further actions.

**Summary**

The products being developed by the NRT/NEC subcommittee for the Action Agendas and the Services must work together to develop the best contingency plans and protection strategies for the environment and the economy. These tools and guidelines will promote the use of ACPs and RCPs that capture potential impacts to species and habitats from response actions, and they will help to ensure that these plans and guidelines are effective and efficient.

- Environmental protection laws. BMPs are measures designed to avoid or minimize impacts on ESA-listed species and critical habitats. BMPs may be a written part of a plan, may be standard practice during a response, or may be specific measures developed by USCG and/or EPA in cooperation with the Services. The list of ESPs on the right below are specific to certain oil spill response. The list of BEMs on the right below are specific to certain oil spill response. These new guidelines will suggest larger, more ecologically-meaningful geographic areas for consultations and BA/BEs. Writing ESPs and BEMs to cover areas larger than a single ACP will reduce the time, effort and costs for all agencies involved; enhance the ability for Action Agencies to the ACP and RCP to prevent or minimize further impacts from response actions. Species and habitats at risk can be identified in the Wildlife Annex and the BA/BE template document will more completely include descriptions of content and protect the environment for future generations.

**References**

- The information in this paper reflects the views of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the official position or policy of the agencies they work for, and documents and products discussed above must be approved by the National Response Team and its agencies before use.