

**Impact and Implications of an International Oiled Wildlife Response****Preparedness Project**

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**ABSTRACT****2017-133**

December 2016 marked the conclusion of a two-year global oiled wildlife response preparedness project, funded by the International Association of Oil & Gas Producers/IPIECA Oil Spill Response-Joint Industry Project (IOGP/IPIECA OSR-JIP). This project brought together leading oiled wildlife response organizations from seven countries to design a preparedness and response system that would support the mobilization and integration of tier 3 (international) wildlife response resources if activated by the oil industry or other stakeholders.

The project outcomes include written standards and procedures that represent a further step towards integration of oiled wildlife preparedness and response as an oil industry standard worldwide, and allow for the foundations of a global approach to be built upon good practice as defined by the international oiled wildlife response community. 2017 sees the system entering a second (beta) phase with a further funding commitment being provided by the oil industry via Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL).

Building on the introduction and overview to this project as presented at the International Oil Spill Conference in 2014 (Kelway et al., 2014), this paper will explore key outcomes and assess the project's impact and implications, particularly in relation to the present and future role of multi-stakeholder collaboration in the advancement of global oiled wildlife response preparedness.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of a multi-stakeholder project to explore global oiled wildlife response preparedness dates back to the Interspill Conference in 2012. During an international meeting of stakeholders from industry, government and the non-governmental sector, the gap between the level of wildlife response preparedness compared to other aspects of oil spill response – from a global perspective - was formally recognized and discussed. Furthermore, all stakeholders present acknowledged their shared responsibility in seeking to address this gap in the future.

As a next step, oil industry representatives in attendance invited representatives of the oiled wildlife response community to submit a 'terms of reference' for a project that could explore a potential work programme aimed at improving wildlife response preparedness. A proposal was subsequently developed over the course of two years, with meetings in Brussels in 2013 and at the International Oil Spill Conference (IOSC) in Savannah in 2014, for a two-year project to design a global oiled wildlife response system. As well as exploring the long-term requirements of expanding wildlife response capabilities and capacity within an oil industry context (global tier 3 system), the aim of the project was also to consider ways to improve preparedness at an in-country level (tier 1 and tier 2 capacity). As such, the concept of a global system was one in which the synergy between all stakeholders at all levels of

preparedness and response – from local and national to international – needs to be considered and improved.

Following the initiation of the IOGP/IPIECA Oil Spill Response-Joint Industry Project (OSR-JIP) – which aimed at identifying lessons learned from the Macondo and Montara incidents and developing new oil industry-wide standards of good practice (IPIECA, 2016) - funding was first awarded to a cohort of leading oiled wildlife response specialists to develop a ‘Good Practice Guide on Wildlife Response Preparedness’ (IPIECA-OGP, 2014). This guide – one of a series of 24 good practice guides developed as part of the OSR-JIP (IPIECA, 2016) - updates the previously published Volume 13 of IPIECA’s Report Series ‘A Guide to Oiled Wildlife Response Planning’ and aims to also place the topic within the broader context of how to effectively operationalize wildlife response through a multi-tiered approach to developing preparedness. This guide can be seen as an extension of the OSR-JIP’s development of new industry-wide guidance on tiered preparedness and response in which the three tiers describe where the capabilities to mitigate an incident are sourced (IPIECA-OGP, 2015). As such, this document provides an important system-wide perspective on good practice in wildlife response preparedness and serves as a helpful reference point for the initiation of the second funded wildlife preparedness project of the OSR-JIP to begin consciously designing a global system for wildlife response.

The OSR-JIP’s Global Oiled Wildlife Response System or ‘GOWRS’ Project was initiated in 2015 - involving 11 leading wildlife response organizations (see Table 1) in the implementation of a series of deliverables organized around four core work streams (Governance, Operations, Animal Standards and Readiness), which were defined as part of the proposal writing process described above. The OSR-JIP GOWRS Project successfully concluded in December 2016 and has now led to a two-year follow-up project from 2017-18,

funded by Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL) and its members. This paper will first describe the approach to the OSR-JIP GOWRS project and then provide an overview of the key outcomes and next steps, particularly as they relate to the key objectives of the follow-on project in 2017 and 2018. Lastly, these outcomes will be placed into the broader context of wildlife response preparedness (as described in the new IPIECA Guide) to assess the impact of achievements to date and the work that remains in order to achieve the good practice in tiered preparedness and response that has now been defined and adopted by the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers and its members as a result of the Oil Spill Response – Joint Industry Project.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aiuká (Brazil)</li> <li>• Focus Wildlife International (USA &amp; Canada)</li> <li>• International Bird Rescue (USA)</li> <li>• Oiled Wildlife Care Network, UC Davis Wildlife Health Center (USA)</li> <li>• PRO Bird (Germany)</li> <li>• RSPCA (UK)</li> <li>• SANCCOB (South Africa)</li> <li>• Sea Alarm Foundation (Belgium)</li> <li>• Tri-State Bird Rescue &amp; Research Inc. (USA)</li> <li>• Wildbase, Massey University (New Zealand)</li> <li>• Wildlife Rescue Centre Ostend (Belgium)</li> </ul> |
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*Table 1: OSR-JIP GOWRS Project - Project Partners*

## **METHODS**

### **Project design and approach**

Given the large number of project partners working in a variety of time zones, the ambitious objectives of the initiative and the relatively short timeline (while designed as a two-year project OSR-JIP GOWRS did not commence until July 2015 and ran until December 2016), significant time and effort was invested into the process design and project management to ensure that activities could be delivered in a timely manner to high standards

through a process that also helped to encourage a positive collaborative spirit and greater familiarity and cohesion amongst the participating stakeholders.

In a 2006 IPIECA report on Partnerships in the Oil and Gas Industry (IPIECA, 2006), the authors suggest that, “partnering works because it involves an appreciation and leveraging of differing but complementary competencies, but it can take much longer to deliver outcomes. It is therefore important for partners to focus on areas either where the desired outcomes cannot be attained except through partnership, or where particular benefits will be derived from the process of partnering” (p. 9). These two factors in considering a partnering approach were integral to the OSR-JIP GOWRS Project. Indeed, for a change initiative to be successful those involved must have a shared vision of the future (Jackson, 2006). As such, the intention was to create a project process in which those people and organizations that would be most impacted by a global system could have the opportunity to explore and develop a shared vision for its design and development. Thus, the OSR-JIP GOWRS Project sought to involve multiple organizations from the oiled wildlife response community as well as representatives of the broader oil spill response community to allow for maximal exchange potential, and for a design of a global oiled wildlife response system that would fit the maximum of interests. Furthermore, the multi-organizational approach was seen as adding tremendous value; allowing for insights and outcomes that could not have been achieved should only one individual or entity have delivered the project alone (Partnering Initiative, 2016).

The project approach was informed by a series of interviews with each of the 10 wildlife organizations during the proposal-writing. While all organizations expressed interest in developing closer relationships with the oil industry for purposes of response and preparedness, many also requested further information and a better understanding of the

framework for implementation and operation of a future system. Their decision to participate fully in a future global oiled wildlife response system would be dependent on this information. Thus, through a short-term project structure – serving essentially as a microcosm of the system – the project partners were able to explore the future by doing and experimenting (Scharmer, 2009). The intention in such a prototyping approach is to present and test concepts before they are fully finalized in order to optimize learning and to develop further, improved iterations (Scharmer, 2009). Some of the learnings and outcomes of this approach as it relates to questions of future governance of the system are described in the outcomes below.

The project process was outlined in a project charter, which defined the role of smaller teams (GOWRS Working Groups) that would serve as activity hubs within a larger governing body (GOWRS Steering Group), with the project process and management facilitated by a coordinator. The funding allowed for remote work days by the project partners as well as an opportunity for the project team to meet in-person three times during the course of the project. These meetings took place in August 2015 (in Brussels, Belgium), February 2016 (in Praia Grande, Brazil) and August 2016 (in Newark, Delaware, USA). In addition, these in-person meetings provided an opportunity for project partners to host meetings, thus providing an added learning opportunity for their staff and other local stakeholders. These meetings also afforded an opportunity for the project partners to tour and experience each other's oiled wildlife response facilities. This component was seen as hugely valuable as a learning tool by all project partners.

### **The role of the Industry Advisory Group**

An Industry Advisory Group (IAG) served as the bridge between industry stakeholders and the project team (see Table 2), providing input and feedback on draft

deliverables to ensure the end results were fit-for-purpose from an oil industry perspective. The IAG was established based on invitations to IOGP funders to nominate company representatives. The IAG operated according to an agreed 'terms of reference' that identified the need for technical input into the products being developed. The terms of reference also identified the importance of developing 'confident ambassadors' – stakeholders with a greater appreciation for the complexity of oiled wildlife response and an understanding of the limitations of any tier 3 approach without active assessment and investment in tier 1 and tier 2 capabilities. In turn, these ambassadors could help to assess and advocate for wildlife response preparedness activities in their own organizations and identify education and outreach opportunities to their companies and communities. The IAG was comprised of representatives from eight IOGP companies and from Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL) as well as from the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation (ITOPF). ITOPF's role on the IAG was to provide objective advice to the project to ensure consideration of how national policies and cultures will influence and determine the overall objective of a tier 3 wildlife response and thus the operational capacity and optimal approach of a global oiled wildlife response system.

The IAG met bi-monthly via teleconference throughout the course of the project in order to stay abreast of activities and developments. The IAG Chair also attended part of each in-person project meeting to provide input and insights on behalf of the IAG and to report back. The two core deliverables in which the IAG were formally involved were the Standard Operating Procedure and the Animal Standards Guidance Document. For each of these deliverables the IAG was given one month to review and provide comments and suggestions. These comments were compiled and submitted to the respective working groups for incorporation into the drafts. In both cases the IAG review was extremely thorough and

valuable and most of the suggestions have been incorporated into the final versions. These outputs are discussed in more detail below.

The Industry Advisory Group will continue into the next project phase in 2017-18. For this period, the membership will be extended to incorporate additional OSRL shareholder companies. In 2017-18, the IAG role as confident ambassadors will become even more prominent. As well as exploring opportunities for education and outreach on the GOWRS initiative to each company, the IAG will also actively explore opportunities to include wildlife response within oil spill response exercises as a way to test how the GOWRS standard operating procedure interacts with company incident management systems as well as within a particular site-specific context. Regular, well-designed exercises are a vital component of any wildlife response preparedness program (IPIECA-OGP, 2014) and will serve an important function in the ongoing education on and development of the GOWRS deliverables within each company, particular in regard to industry responsibilities and obligations in the creation of an operationally functional response system.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chevron (Chair)</li> <li>• Oil Spill Response Ltd. (Vice-Chair)</li> <li>• ExxonMobil</li> <li>• Statoil</li> <li>• Shell</li> <li>• BP</li> <li>• Hess Corporation</li> <li>• Petrobras</li> <li>• ITOPF</li> </ul> |
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*Table 2: The OSR-JIP GOWRS Industry Advisory Group*

## RESULTS

The GOWRS Scope of Work included deliverables in four core work streams: Governance, Operations, Animal Standards and Readiness. The outputs of these work streams are summarized below:



## **Governance**

If wildlife response organizations are going to work together more formally on an international level, as well as with the oil industry and other stakeholders, a core question to be answered is what governance systems – in terms of organizing structures and decision-making systems - would best support this. This was the focus of the governance work stream of the OSR-JIP GOWRS Project.

An underlying assumption of the project from the beginning was a recognition of the value that each wildlife response organization has brought to the field through their own unique experiences and expertise. As such, the intention of the system was not to replace but to enhance these existing resources through a collaborative model that advanced standards and alignment and, in turn, improved capability. All the wildlife response groups involved in the project have similar ways of operating with regards to response activities and animal care, but have different governance and organizational structures - from NGOs dependent on public donations and NGOs who benefit from business contracts and retainers to for-profit organizations that are run as businesses in their own right. This mix of governance structures are a result of history and legislative requirements or provisions within each country. This mix therefore made the concept of creating a cooperative governance structure for an international network a challenge.

At the inaugural GOWRS meeting in Brussels, governance formed one of the main areas for discussion. An introductory presentation outlined the possibilities, with a need for all organizations to agree what they wanted to achieve in the project (alongside what the project partners had been asked to deliver) and how that might work. The presentation also asked what structure would GOWRS take in the future (beyond the project) – a new organization or legal entity or a loose collaboration of individual organizations for example.

Also, what were the risks of working in different structures and how did the different organizations feel about such risks? Five models of collaborative working were explored (ranging from informal to more formal, legal structures). Many felt that these models were not necessarily stand alone, but could be steps in an evolutionary process for the development of a governance structure over time.

In order to better quantify the different organizations' attitudes to different models of collaborative working, a questionnaire was developed and circulated to all participating organizations during winter 2015/16. A paper summarizing the results was circulated prior to the second in-person meeting in Brazil, noting that the questionnaire responses identified many common areas between the groups. The results of the questionnaire were used as the basis for proposed governance models that were then presented at the meeting in Brazil. The proposals set out short and medium term models for governance. The short term being to effectively extend the current project structure for 2017-18, using the existing governance structure (a Project Steering Group), and provide an extended period to further investigate and confirm a longer-term structure beyond the project.

It was apparent from discussions in Brazil that there was still a need to agree a vision statement that all organizations could commit to, outlining their intent to and reasons for collaborating above and beyond the OSR-JIP GOWRS Project. At the third and final project meeting in Delaware, all representatives were thus involved in the collective development of a 'Declaration of Intent,' a non-binding agreement that set out the aspirations of the organizations present and what they would like to achieve by working together. This document would form the basis of their future collaboration. In addition, the GOWRS Steering Group agreed to a change to the project governance structure with the election of a Chair and Vice-Chair from the participating wildlife response organizations. A new

governance document has been produced to describe the functions of these two roles and how they should be elected. This new structure is now in place for the second phase of the project in 2017-18.

### **Standard operating procedure**

A core output of the GOWRS JIP project was a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that would allow for a third-party request for tier 3 wildlife response resources to be received, assessed and actioned by the GOWRS groups. The SOP is a living document that aims to outline the activation process for a tier 3 response as depicted in a series of developed flowcharts showing key steps in the Notification, Assessment and Response phases. Key aspects taken into consideration were:

1. The level of preparedness for wildlife response varies greatly by country and by region. Therefore, a tier 3 wildlife mobilization cannot be guaranteed in all situations given the wide variety of variables (culture, infrastructure, available local resources, government regulations etc.). As such, the deployment of an assessment team was built into the process to allow for essential criteria to be checked and confirmed before a wildlife response would be mounted. These variables or criteria were developed into a list of ‘response pillars’ that would need to be met in order for a response to be activated.
2. The composition of a response team would also vary greatly depending on the incident location, conditions, species affected etc. As discussed above, the intention of the GOWRS Project is to improve collaboration amongst existing organizational resources. As such, the SOP includes certain decision-making processes and criteria to balance decisive action with a network-based framework which might result in only one or a small number of the GOWRS partners being formally activated to

respond to a particular incident, taking into consideration any existing arrangements at a tier 1 or tier 2 level.

3. The SOP has no formal status as long as there is no formalized Global Oiled Wildlife Response System in place. Until a description of a formalized governance structure has become an explicit part of this SOP, this current document is not intended to be integrated into any emergency response plans as it will provide false expectations. For the same reason, this SOP does not replace the need for a site-specific oiled wildlife response plan or any level of required preparedness, as described in the Good Practice Guide on Wildlife Response Preparedness (IPIECA-OGP, 2014).

### **Animal standards**

The GOWRS project partners, being very aware that specific treatment protocols can vary greatly and evolve quickly between organizations and within individual incidents, made the conscious decision to develop guidelines that embrace a broader definition of animal care principles. This guidance document was felt to be a more valuable document – upholding good practice as defined by a large number of wildlife response organizations within the field (including animal welfare organizations and veterinary institutions) while also allowing for flexibility in the application of specific protocols to achieve these principles. The result of this work was a 70-page document set to be published by IPIECA as a Good Practice Guide on *Key Principles for the Protection and Care of Animals in Oiled Wildlife Response*. This document will be available electronically by mid-2017.

### **Readiness**

The intention of the OSR-JIP GOWRS Project was to lay the ground for a system that would require ongoing operational implementation through an active readiness programme. The core components of this programme were defined and mapped out, and organized around

three distinct works streams – Equipment and Tools, Training Requirements and Competencies, and Exercises. A set of long-term objectives for system readiness were developed during the August 2016 meeting in Newark, Delaware (see Table 3) as a way to map out and organize key tasks within the 2015-16 project and subsequent two-year project phase. Tasks identified as foundational activities for achieving these objectives were prioritized in the OSR-JIP GOWRS Project and actioned by small teams focussing on each of the identified work clusters. Further tasks aimed at realizing the long-term objectives will be implemented during the second project phase in 2017-18.

**1. Equipment & Tools**

- a. Develop tools to support and operationalize the GOWRS Standard Operating Procedure and allow effective communication and ability to access/share key data to optimize all phases of a response.
- b. Develop modularization system for Tier 3 oiled wildlife response equipment.

**2. Training Requirements & Competencies**

- a. Standardise training of GOWRS oiled wildlife responders
- b. Quantify capacity of GOWRS organizations and identify gaps
- c. Expand capacity of the GOWRS network over time and build awareness with other stakeholders

**3. Exercises**

- a. Ensure regular opportunities for internal tests to familiarize GOWRS responders with and operationalize the GOWRS SOP, and incorporate feedback into future versions of the Standard Operating Procedures.
- b. Promote the integration of wildlife response exercises (as defined within the OSR-JIP GOWRS Project) by industry and other stakeholders

*Table 3: Readiness objectives 2016-2020*

**Follow-up two-year project**

A significant outcome of the OSR-JIP GOWRS Project was a scope of work and agreed funding (provided by OSRL and its members) for a follow-up two-year project, starting in 2017. This second phase of the project - referred to as the ‘beta phase’ – has the intention of actively seeking opportunities to involve GOWRS members and the GOWRS Standard Operating Procedure in wildlife response exercises, including exercises with the oil industry and other stakeholders. These tests will inform the ongoing development of

readiness, not only through the implementation of the GOWRS readiness objectives described above, but also by helping to identify the current readiness of end-users – namely industry and governments. By creating practical opportunities to test wildlife response in realistic scenarios, tasks and activities necessary for wildlife response to be operationally feasible in the short-term and operationally effective in the long-term can be more clearly identified, understood and actioned. This important relationship between the GOWRS Project and the broader context of developing system-wide preparedness (tiers 1-3) is discussed in more detail below.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Towards a global network**

The process of delivering the OSR-JIP GOWRS Project has certainly deepened relationships between the wildlife response organizations involved. However, the development of a governance system for GOWRS is not yet complete and is likely to take some time while the different organizations get to know each other further and build greater trust. It was recognized that trust is one of the major building blocks for any governance process and this can only be earned by cooperative working through exercises, training programmes, meetings and real-life responses.

While the foundations of a shared vision outlining the core purpose of future collaboration has been developed by the wildlife groups, there are additional layers of complexity to be explored. While the aspiration for cooperation is strong, the question of how best to navigate the paradox between cooperation and competition remains, and the group of organizations need to more fully determine how best to organize themselves for potential bi-lateral and multi-lateral response activities as well as for peacetime projects. Without this clarification and agreement around governance, the GOWRS standard operating procedure

cannot be considered fully operational. The question of how to involve additional organizations in a future international network adds an additional layer of complexity to this issue and is another important topic for the next two-year project phase.

In attempting to resolve the above questions, the challenge of working remotely and across vastly differing time zones also remains. In this context, technology such as Skype and Zoom have proved invaluable but still have their limits. The funding for the next two years allows only for limited opportunities for the GOWRS Steering Group to meet in-person. Since all project representatives unanimously agreed that face-to-face meetings are more efficient at developing ideas and delivering products, the question remains of how to create additional opportunities to bring people together from different organizations and stimulate further collaboration and cohesion between the different groups. These less tangible aspects - the relationships and bonds amongst responders and response organizations - have been a critical component of past wildlife response efforts and further investment in increased cohesion will be just as vital as investment into formal preparedness systems and procedures in the years ahead.

### **Towards a global system**

Reflecting back to the original ‘terms of reference’ for the OSR-JIP GOWRS Project, a strong emphasis was placed on the need to explore wildlife response preparedness at all three tiers – local, regional or national, and international. As has been previously mentioned by the authors, this approach echoes the key messages expressed in the IOGP/IPIECA Good Practice Guide on Wildlife Response Preparedness (IPIECA-OGP, 2014). While this definition has now been adopted as a good practice standard by the industry, its implementation industry wide still remains to be achieved. In the interim, it is important that

the ability of a tier 3 system to be effective in an oiled wildlife incident not be assessed in isolation from the above activities.

Looking at the world as a whole, responders are presented with a complex, global situation with an array of challenges. End-users (industry, governments, NGO's) expect wildlife response organizations to be effective whenever, wherever an incident happens. Even if responders restrict efforts to just a few animal groups (aquatic and marine birds, marine mammals, marine reptiles), there is a huge amount to cover. As such, while the OSR-JIP GOWRS Project is a commendable and significant step in advancing oiled wildlife response, it is important to recognize that the outcomes of this project are not intended to be and thus cannot be relied upon as the sole component of tiered preparedness for oiled wildlife response. Effective tiered preparedness and response requires an evaluation of the level of preparedness at all three tiers, and includes site-specific plans and programmes that develop tier 1 and tier 2 capabilities over time, with the involvement of key stakeholders from industry, government and the NGO sector. Of critical importance in this planning process is to understand the compatibility of the different resource tiers to ensure that a tier 3 response system is complimentary to local resources and infrastructures and is indeed a feasible response option if required.

As a next step the GOWRS Steering Group, working with the Industry Advisory Group, will seek to proactively engage the oil industry during the 2017-18 'beta phase' of the project to stimulate and encourage investment in intentionally designed wildlife response exercises (including table-tops and field deployment exercises amongst others). The ability to test wildlife response in such situations provides an active learning opportunity for all involved and places preparedness within the all-important local context of the incident. In this way, local actors (government trustees and local NGO's) can be identified and involved;



building awareness of the current state of local preparedness and appreciation for what may be feasible before, during and after further investment into response capabilities.

In terms of wildlife response planning, effective exercises involving multiple local stakeholders (and potentially international responders) would also help to highlight the need for agreements and understandings ahead of time regarding legal frameworks and restrictions, helping to clarify how best to approach culturally sensitive topics such as euthanasia as well the roles and responsibilities different stakeholders would assume in a response. Furthermore, well-designed exercises would allow for greater clarity regarding the needs of an internationally mobilized team - including visas, safety assurances and equipment etc. - and also ensure that the expectations on what an internationally mobilized team could achieve are appropriate and realistic.

In the long-term, recognizing that the system is indeed much broader than simply the international cooperation amongst oiled wildlife response organizations, all stakeholders – government, industry and NGOs - must continue to explore cross-sector partnering opportunities in order to advance preparedness. Partnering may be a longer journey but it is a necessary one, since the desired results in this case cannot be achieved without a partnering approach (Partnering Initiative, 2016). Furthermore, significant benefits can be gleaned from the partnering process itself (IPIECA, 2006). As such, this journey of collectively designing and developing a truly global oiled wildlife response system will require a long-term commitment from all stakeholders. However, it is perhaps heartening to note that the process of partnering in support of this aim is likely to be as valuable and transformative to those involved as the more tangible technical outputs it delivers.

## CONCLUSION

The initiation and conclusion of the two-year OSR-JIP GOWRS Project was a significant achievement. This paper has described the background to the project, the approach as it was conceived and conducted, and the project outcomes. Important advancements have been made in terms of agreed international standards and structures as a result, and the support from the participating member companies in the IOGP/IPIECA OSR-JIP, as well as the hard work of all project contributors, should be acknowledged.

However, it is important to recognize that in terms of a system – including the involvement of all stakeholders at all levels (tiers 1-3) – there is a significant amount that remains to be achieved. The further defining of relationships and standards between wildlife response organizations during this next two years is key, but even more critical is the active and continued involvement of the oil industry and other stakeholders (as well as NGOs) to ensure that expectations are clearly defined and investments and activities can be planned for and prioritized as part of a long-term commitment and journey to achieving wildlife response preparedness.

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<sup>1</sup> Organizations from left to right: Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research Inc., International Bird Rescue, PRO Bird, Aiuká, Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research Inc., RSPCA, SANCCOB and Wildlife Rescue Centre Ostend.

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