

Citizen-Based Emergency Response Monitoring

Danielle Donkersloot¹ and Faith Zerbe²

¹New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
PO Box 427, 35 Arctic Parkway, Trenton NJ 08625

²Delaware Riverkeeper Network
300 Pond Street, Second Floor, Bristol, PA 19007

On November 27, 2004 the Athos I spill over 473,400 gallons of crude oil into the Delaware River. Immediate citizens, volunteers and river enthusiasts began contacting the Delaware Riverkeeper Network and the Volunteer Monitoring Program Coordinator at the NJDEP to provide donations and assistance.

The Delaware Riverkeeper Network and the Watershed Watch Network began assigning volunteers to segments of tidal creeks and estuaries to conduct visual assessments of the migration of the oil contamination, and oiled waterfowl. The volunteers were assigned to areas of concern. The areas of concern were defined through the cooperation of the Natural Resources Damage staff and DRN and NJ's Citizen volunteer programs. As volunteers found problems or immediate concerns, NJDEP and the Delaware Riverkeeper would immediately contact the Coast Guard so the problem would be documented and corrected. There were over 70 eyes and ears spread throughout the impact area along tidal streams, wetlands, and the main stem Delaware River using visual assessment techniques to assist with tracking the damage done by the Athos I.

We would like to share our experience with the organizations and agencies, so others may be proactive instead of reactive. A tool kit has been developed that can be modified to meet your areas own unique needs. We have created sample outreach materials to give citizen monitors when in the field, sample assignment packets for volunteer coordinators, example contact lists, and assessment field and tip sheets. This presentation is designed to introduce the concept of volunteer involvement in these types of emergency situations. Participants will gain an understanding of how volunteers can assist and will provide a forum to introduce the Emergency Response Oil Spill Tool Box.

KEYWORDS:

Volunteer monitoring, citizen action, natural resource damage claims, oil spill, hazardous monitoring, visual assessment