



Delaware Bay and River Cooperative, Inc

Over 30 Years of Service

The Early Years

Early oil spill legislation has its roots dating back to 1948 when a nation and the states tried to address water quality in a consistent way. After several previous amendments, the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 created an oil discharge standard and an enforcement program. In Jan 1975, the Delaware Valley was exposed to one of the largest ship disasters in the nation's history when the Algerian Tanker Corinthos containing 300,000 barrels of crude oil caught fire and burned itself out in Marcus Hook. Local accounts tell a story of a disastrous fire, loss of life and an oil spill 50 miles long. The nation's focus on oil spills was intensified by the grounding of the Argo Merchant in 1976 off Nantucket spilling 183,000 barrels of oil and causing a 100 mile slick.

Not long after, the Delaware River Cooperative (DRC) was established by the local petroleum industry with the objective of dealing with a one tank release from a ship in the industrialized upper river area. The primary strategy was to provide protective booming for tributary streams flowing into the Delaware River in order to protect the sensitive wetlands. In the 1978-1979 time frames, the Delaware Bay Cooperative (DBC) was established by the local oil companies and vessel operators to meet the oil spill response capability needed for the Delaware Bay lightering area. To do this the DBC built the 68' Oil Spill Response Vessel DELBAY, a self propelled oil recovery vessel with a rated capacity of 500 gallons per minute recovery, and 10,000 gallons of onboard storage. At that time, the DELBAY was the only vessel of its kind in the world. The DELBAY and other equipment including oil boom were stationed in the lower Bay area with the primary purpose of providing protection to tank ship lightering operations conducted in Big Stone Anchorage.

Consolidation

In January of 1981, the members of the DRC and DBC voted to consolidate the cooperatives, and name the new entity the "Delaware Bay and River Cooperative". This newly combined cooperative would provide oil spill response skimming, and booming for 110 miles of the Delaware River and the Delaware Bay. For the next five years the DBRC and the DELBAY were very busy responding to over 27 spills including a large terminal spill in Claymont in 1982, the GRAND EAGLE spill in 1985, and the INTERMAR ALLIANCE and VIKING OSPREY spills in 1986. During this five year period, spurred on by new Co-Op members, DBRC acquired new equipment through purchase and donations from members, revamped the radio/repeater system to allow more complete coverage throughout the River and Bay, and took on the task of creating a permanent staging location in the vicinity of the Bay. DBRC Board began negotiations with the University of Delaware to expand the Marine Operations Building in Lewes and create docking space for the DELBAY. In 1986, a dedication ceremony was held for the now Adrian S. Hooper Building, formerly the Marine Operations Building, and new pier and dock space in Lewes, DE. This project was completely financed by the members of

DBRC, and enhanced the already strong partnership between the DBRC and the University of Delaware that began in the days of the Delaware Bay Cooperative. DBRC continued to build strong partnership in the port, especially with the US Coast Guard and the State environmental departments of DE, PA, and NJ. During the 1987-1988 time frames, DBRC was instrumental in identifying and prioritizing the environmentally sensitive areas in the lower Delaware River and Bay. Our port was one of the first to pre-identify these areas, and develop a protective booming strategy, and the required equipment for each deployment. As was witnessed in the Deepwater Horizon Spill, some areas of the country still don't have this level of preparedness.

Oil Pollution Act Impacts

The grounding of the EXXON VALDEZ and the resulting massive oil spill in March of 1989 was a pivotal event in the Nation in terms of oil spill prevention and response policy. The Delaware River and Bay being the second largest oil port in the U.S., and the largest on the East Coast was to be directly impacted by the resulting legislation and regulations. Anticipating this, the DBRC Board of Directors created an Operations Subcommittee to review the oil spill risks in the River and Bay. This analysis was a natural next step to build upon the work DBRC had already been doing with the US Coast Guard and States to protect environmentally sensitive areas. The intended result of this analysis was the first step in a plan to expand the response capability of the Cooperative based on a series of four seasonal environmental sensitivity maps issued by NOAA in May, 1989. Prior to any proposed legislation as a result of the EXXON VALDEZ, the DBRC Operations Subcommittee submitted an initial report and preliminary recommendation to expand the DBRC response capability. Soon after, the tanker PRESIDENTE RIVERA grounded in Marcus Hook, PA spilling 306,000 gallons of # 6 heavy fuel oil. According to US Coast Guard records, it took responders more than 5-6 hours to totally encircle the vessel. This was unacceptable. Oil from the PRESIDENTE RIVERA impacted numerous tributaries, and extended down to Pea Patch Island. These events prompted a Task Force review of the oil industry's activities in the port. While the petroleum industry as a whole sought to create a Petroleum Industry Response Organization (PIRO) through agreements with contractors in two East Coast regional centers; New York City, and Norfolk VA, the Task Force concluded that the oil spill threat to the Delaware Valley from tank vessels, pipelines, and shore side facilities could not be addressed by commercial contractors in the expected timeframes. The capabilities considered the most important by the Task Force centered on sensitive area protection, and skimming of free floating oil. As a result, the DBRC members agreed to invest over 3 million dollars to enhance DBRC's capabilities. This investment included boom, boats, skimmers, dispersants, and the purchase and conversion of an Offshore Supply Vessel (OSV). This OSV is now the DELRIVER; she was christened in Lewes, DE on September 25, 1991, and is now berth at the dock built by DBRC members at the Adrian S. Hooper building at the University of Delaware in Lewes, DE. The DELBAY was then moved to Marcus Hook to provide a substantial skimming capability up river. Coincident with this investment, the DBRC incorporated as a non-profit oil spill response

corporation, The Delaware Bay and River Cooperative, Inc., and hired mariners to operate both vessels.

Today

To this day, protective booming and open water skimmer remain the hall mark of DBRC. The response to the most recent major oil spill, Athos I, fully demonstrated the reliability, effectiveness, and proven capability of the DBRC. During this spill response, all of the DBRC's 80,000 feet of boom was deployed, and every skimmer and boat saw action. The quick response and deployment of DBRC resources over the Thanksgiving holiday in 2004 has set the bar for response times in the Delaware River and Bay; a claim no other entity can make. This capability is a tribute to the member company response teams and the approved commercial oil spill contractors that DBRC trains and works with on a regular basis. DBRC continues to provide the services rooted in tradition since the 1970's, and is proud to be a key asset in the port's arsenal to prevent and respond to oil spills in the Delaware Valley. DBRC's partnerships with the Federal agencies, States, and other environmental groups like Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research, Inc have never been stronger. In fact, DBRC was the recipient of the First Annual Corporate Wildlife Stewardship Award presented by Tri-State in 2007. DBRC also holds a seat on the Executive Steering Committee of the Delaware Bay Area Committee representing the oil spill response community of the area, and remains actively involved in assessing the protection of the environmentally sensitive areas in the River and Bay. DBRC remains true to the tradition and services that the founding members envisioned, and remains committed to protecting the Delaware River and Bay from oil spills should they occur.

DBRC has been extremely fortunate to retain much of the experience and expertise gained over the 30 + years of operation. Unfortunately, DBRC is losing one of longest employees to retirement. George Hunsicker is retiring from Delaware Bay & River Cooperative. For more than thirty years George Hunsicker has served the people of the Delaware Valley aboard the Oil Spill Response Vessel DELBAY. First as Engineer then later as Master, Captain George has protected the shores of the Delaware Bay and River against waterborne oil spills.

Hunsicker was hired as Port Engineer by Interstate Ocean Transport to care for the Delaware Bay Cooperative's newly built DELBAY in 1979. George later became Captain in 1993.

George looks forward to spending time with his grandchildren, traveling with his wife Sandy, and restoring his two antique trucks.

