

**PUERTO RICO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL
RESOURCES, NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION, AND
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

**NOTICE OF EMERGENCY RESTORATION ACTIONS
FOR THE M/V JIREH GROUNDING INCIDENT**

Pursuant to 15 C.F.R. § 990.26

On June 21, 2012, the 202' *M/V JIREH* ran aground in the Mona Island Nature Reserve off the west coast of Puerto Rico. The grounding of the vessel, its subsequent movement, and response activities undertaken to remove the vessel and prevent a significant oil spill (collectively the "Incident") caused injuries to coral reef habitat

The impacted site is located on the southwest shoreline of Mona island in an area characterized by rocky shore and coral reef. The impact area is hard bottom of underlying limestone, varying in depth from 4 to 60 feet with scattered deeper sand, coral and rubble depressions. The site habitat supported a diverse assemblage of soft corals, sponges, and hard corals, including Elkhorn coral (*Acropora palmata*), a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

The Trustees have periodically visually assessed the site from the time of the incident until the final piece of Jireh was removed on October 5, 2012. During the response, some corals that would otherwise have been likely to sustain injuries were moved by the Trustees in coordination with the Coast Guard. The Trustees' observations revealed notable impacts including destruction, crushing, breaking, dislodging or burying of many species of soft and hard corals including Elkhorn coral (*Acropora palmata*), as well as sponges and other benthic invertebrates.

Officials of the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (PRDNER), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce (NOAA), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior are designated, pursuant to section 1006(b) of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA), 33 U.S.C. 2706(b), as trustees ("Trustees") for natural resources harmed by this Incident. PRDNER has further authority to address the harm caused by this Incident pursuant to Law 147 of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. NOAA is serving as the Federal Lead Administrative Trustee (FLAT) for coordinating the natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) for the Incident.

Based on conditions revealed in their earliest investigations, the Trustees determined emergency restoration actions would be needed to reduce injuries to and prevent unnecessary future losses of injured resources. Emergency restoration is being undertaken to accelerate reef recovery. This work was planned, and will be carried out, by the Trustees.

The vessel was abandoned following its grounding, and no operator or owner has been identified. Therefore, there is no known Responsible Party ("RP"), as that term is defined in the OPA. Accordingly, the Trustees will seek funding to carry out the required emergency restoration from the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Trustees' Determinations Regarding Emergency Restoration

The Trustees made the following determinations pursuant to the OPA NRDA regulations at 15 C.F.R. § 990.26(a):

1. The emergency restoration actions described below are needed to avoid the irreversible loss of natural resources (i.e., coral) and to prevent and reduce additional damage to unimpacted coral reef areas when loose corals and rubble are mobilized during storms or large swells.
2. The emergency restoration actions will not be undertaken by the lead response agency.
3. The emergency restoration actions are feasible and likely to succeed.
4. Delay of the emergency restoration actions to complete the full restoration planning process laid out in 15 C.F.R. Part 990 would result in increased natural resource damages.
5. The costs of the emergency restoration actions are not unreasonable.

Emergency Restoration Actions to Be Undertaken

The Trustees determined that the following immediate actions are needed to minimize continuing injury and/or prevent additional injury:

1. Rescuing and caching displaced corals found in and adjacent to the impact areas.
2. Reattaching cached biota and associated substrate to promote biological recovery.
3. Installing moorings in the vicinity of the site to secure work vessels during restoration operations to avoid potential for further habitat impacts due to anchor deployment and recovery during emergency restoration efforts.
4. Tagging/mapping of reattached biota to facilitate relocation for monitoring.
5. Monitoring to verify/evaluate emergency restoration actions.

Status of Emergency Restoration Actions To Date

The emergency restoration actions have not yet begun. The Trustees anticipate work will begin as early as October 25, 2012.