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TASK FORCE MT. PRINCESS EMPRESS OIL SPILL INCIDENT

SITUATIONAL REPORT NO. 3

4 March 2023

Sources: Philippine Coast Guard, Office of Civil Defense, DENR EMB (incl. MIMAROPA and Region VI), DENR BMB, PENROs and CENROs

I. SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

On 28 February 2023, at approximately 04:16 AM, MT Princess Empress was reportedly half submerged at vicinity waters of Balingawan Point, Naujan, Oriental Mindoro with 20 crews onboard, loaded with 800,000 liters of Industrial Fuel Oil. The vessel came from Bataan and was on its way to Iloilo when it encountered engine trouble due to overheating. At approximately 04:20 AM, all 20 crew members were rescued and brought to Subic Bay, Zambales.

On 01 March 2023, MT Princess Empress had already sunk. The exact location of the submerged tanker is yet to be identified.

II. EFFECTS

As of 04 March 2023, the following municipalities are reported to be affected: 1. Naujan, Oriental Mindoro

1. Pola, Oriental Mindoro
2. Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro
3. Roxas, Oriental Mindoro
4. Caluya, Antique

Specifically, in Caluya, Antique, oil slicks were found in the following barangays:

1. Sitio Sabang, Brgy. Tinogboc (1kilometer);
2. Liwagao Island, Brgy. Sibolo (2kilometers);
3. Sitio Tambak, Brgy. Semirara (2kilometers)

The oil slick in Caluya, Antique is estimated to be seventy (70) nautical miles South from the latest suspected source.

The summary of expected environmental damage is as follows¹:

- Three (3) Fish Sanctuaries of the Municipality of Naujan
- Seven (7) Fish Sanctuaries of the Municipality of Pola
- Four (4) Fish Sanctuaries of the Municipality of Pinamalayan
- Three (3) Fish Sanctuaries in the Municipality of Gloria

Since 02 March 2023, there were observed fish kill and seeping of industrial fuel oil reaching the surrounding water bodies of Oriental Mindoro and Romblon, including mangrove areas and marine protected areas as a result of the oil spill.

Strong odor was noticeable during the conduct of water sampling along the coast of Tablas Strait, Naujan, Oriental Mindoro. Black sticky substance was found within the shoreline of Brgys. Calima, Buhay na Tubig, and Bacawan in Pola, Oriental Mindoro while presence of oil film was observed in the coastal waters of Brgy. Lumangbayan, Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro.

III. ACTIONS TAKEN

DENR Task Force

- DENR issues daily Department Statements / Press Statements to provide regular updates to the public.
- On 01 March 2023, the DENR Secretary, together with Key Officials from the Central Office, Regional Office MIMAROPA, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO) and Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer (CENRO) met with Oriental Mindoro Governor Bonz Dolor and Naujan Municipality Mayor Henry Joel Teves to prioritize the protection of marine and biodiversity resources and prevent the spillage to reach the protected areas.

In the afternoon, the DENR joined the 1st Quarter Council Meeting of Oriental Mindoro PDRRMC and coordinated with Petron and Shell to deploy equipment including oil spill booms. Task Force Naujan Oil Spill with Usec Marilou Erni as the Task Force Commander was created.

- On 02 March 2023, at approximately 3:00 PM, the Task Force organized a meeting with PCG, the Department of Agriculture- Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR), the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (PDRRMO), and the Provincial Agriculture Office (PAO) for latest situation updates and to arrange for aerial assessment to be led by the DENR Secretary.

At approximately 4:00 PM, the DENR Secretary gave a video statement on the measures being taken by the Department based on the Strategic Action Plan of Task Force.

- The DENR Task Force has established linkage with the Incident Management Team to be jointly led by the Local Chief Executives, PCG and DENR using Unified Command approach.
- On 03 March 2023, at approximately 8:35 AM, the Task Force led by the DENR Secretary conducted aerial inspection over the extent of the slick as well as ground visit to the affected areas.

At approximately 10:00 AM, the DENR met with the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) to discuss arrangements as to how the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) can augment the requirements for containment and cleanup.

At approximately 1:00 PM, Sec Loyzaga presented the situation updates to the President.

- On 04 March 2023, at approximately 7:30 AM, NARMIA vessel BRP Ventura has departed for Oriental Mindoro. Estimated time of arrival is 8:00 PM.

At approximately 5:00 PM, the DENR Task Force led by Usec Erni met with the NDRRMC Task Force led by OCD MIMAROPA Regional Director Eugene Cabrera to discuss updates and progresses, as well as resolve collective issues and concerns. There will be joint mechanism for situation reporting by the DENR, focusing on environmental matters, and the NDRRMC, for the overall report.

DENR MIMAROPA, EMB MIMAROPA, PENRO Oriental Mindoro and CENRO

- On 01 March 2023, preliminary investigation and water sampling commenced in collaboration with PCG, BFAR and the local government units.

At approximately 8:00 PM, Asec Gilbert Gonzales together with DENR Regional Officials met with PCG and BFAR to discuss updates. PCG was requested for assistance in terms of boats and other logistical provisions.

- On 02 March 2023, water samples were collected along the coast of Tablas Strait, Naujan, Oriental Mindoro.

At approximately 9:00 AM, PENRO commenced clean-up operations in areas with spotted oil spill from the shoreline covering the barangays of Calima, Buhay na Tubig and Bacawan, Pola, Oriental Mindoro.

At 10:00 PM, the Regional Environmental Laboratory of EMB – MIMAROPA Region has released the Result of Analysis based on the water samples collected from the established sampling stations in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro and ground zero (oil spillage area) on 01 March 2023.

The water samples collected from ground zero and seven (7) sampling stations namely: Estrella, San Jose 1, San Jose Proper, Pitugo Beach, Papangkil Beach, Montemayor Proper, and Tujod Fish Sanctuary, show that the water quality greatly exceeded the parameters for Oil and Grease as required under DENR Administrative Order No. 2016-08.

- On 03 March 2023, EMB MIMAROPA continued to conduct water sampling within the province of Marinduque.
- On 04 March 2023, per coordination with and assessment by the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP – MSI), according to the trajectory models developed to forecast the track and transport of the slick over the next four days (March 4 to 7, 2023), the prevailing weather patterns and conditions, and the recent information on the location of the slicks, there is a potential for the oil spill to move southwards considering that oil slicks has reached the municipalities of Pinamalayan and Bongabong in Oriental Mindoro. The oil spill may potentially pass through Caluya Island (Northwestern Antique) and could eventually reach Cuyo Island in Sulu Sea.

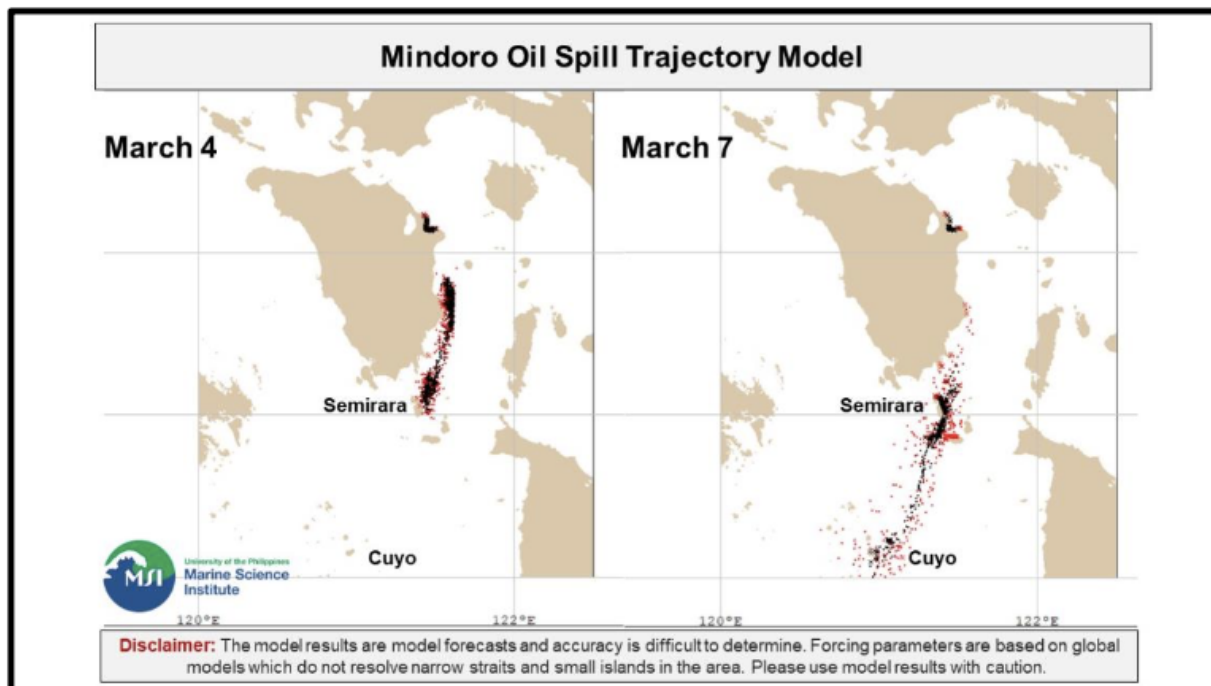


Figure: Mindoro Oil Spill Trajectory Model from March 4 to 7, 2023

DENR and EMB MIMAROPA joined the Task Force in the meeting with the NDRRMC held at approximately 5:00 PM.

DENR REGION VI AND EMB REGION VI

- On 03 March 2023, initial coordination was made with the Local Government of Caluya for updates and the Semimara Mining and Power Corporation (SMPC) for possible assistance.

- On 04 March 2023, EMB Region VI planned out to deploy personnel to conduct inspection and water sampling.

EMB VI also commenced installation of provisional spill booms made of locally available materials such as cogon and sawali. These barriers are a precautionary measure to prevent the oil slick from reaching the shore and mangrove areas of Pola, Oriental Mindoro.

EMB Region VI further attended the meeting with OCD Region VI and concerned agencies. Agencies involved were tasked to be on heightened alert and monitoring. The Oil Spill Contingency Plan of the PCG shall also be disseminated.

In response to the request for assistance, SMPC has provided 50 drums, 100 sacks, and fabricated rakes and spades for the clean-up to the Barangay Tinugboc Oil Spill Response Team. To date, PCG and the Barangay Response Teams have collected 6 drums from Brgy. Sabang and 5 drums from Brgy. Sibolo.

DENR and EMB Region VI joined the Task Force in the meeting with the NDRRMC held at approximately 5:00 PM.

IV. WAYS AHEAD

1. Work with PCG and other agencies and experts to fast track the determination of the tanker's location and ultimately stop the source of oil leak
2. Determine sensitive areas that need to be further protected from oil spill
3. Collaborate with the Department of Health (DOH) in strengthening Information and Education Campaigns (IEC) for the communities regarding health risks associated with the oil spill
4. Coordinate with members of the private sector who have signified readiness to mobilize by providing PPEs, technical assistance, and other forms of support that may be needed
5. Finalize arrangements with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) on the augmentation for the cash-for-work scheme for the clean-up teams
