

**THE RECENT REVISION OF SECTION 9310 OF THE NWACP REQUIRES THAT SECTION 3200 BE MODIFIED AS WELL. PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING TO REPLACE THE TEXT CURRENTLY FOUND WITHIN SECTION 3200 (WILDLIFE BRANCH) OF THE NWACP.**

3200 Wildlife Branch

The primary purpose of the Wildlife Branch is to provide the best achievable care for oil-impacted wildlife and to minimize wildlife losses during oil spills. This includes preventing injury to wildlife or habitats, from either the oil itself or from any response countermeasures. The Wildlife Branch, working within the Operations Section, develops the operational strategies, tactics, and resource needs for its activities and submits these for inclusion into the incident action plan.

It is the policy of the Northwest Area Committee (NWAC) that representatives of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will assume the positions of Director and Deputy Director of the Wildlife Branch. State fish and wildlife representatives will assume these positions if a USFWS representative is not available or if designated by a USFWS representative. This designation may be made on a case-by-case basis or through a pre-existing agreement. Appointment of other parties, including tribal or responsible party representatives, to one or both positions may be made by a USFWS representative or their designee at any time during an incident, and for such periods of time as may be deemed appropriate. Unless otherwise indicated by USFWS, these positions will be delegated to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for spills that occur within the legal boundaries of Washington State.

The Wildlife Branch Director is responsible for implementing the Northwest Wildlife Response Plan (Section 9310) for the Northwest Area, which describes the roles, responsibilities, and duties of the Wildlife Branch and its associated personnel. The Wildlife Branch Director is also responsible for ensuring compliance with applicable federal and state wildlife laws and mandates on behalf of the Unified Command (UC) during a response.

Indian tribes retain sovereign authority to manage wildlife resource issues within their respective reservation boundaries and the Wildlife Branch will consult with and coordinate any wildlife response operations with tribal governments whose lands may be impacted by an oil spill.

The Wildlife Branch is activated whenever a federal or state trustee agency, responsible party, or a UC determines that an oil spill has occurred in the vicinity of wildlife resources (primarily mammals or birds) or when a spill's expected trajectory puts these wildlife resources at risk. Activation of personnel and equipment is based primarily on anticipated impacts to wildlife and will be appropriate to the size of the spill. Depending on the incident size, and the potential threat to wildlife, the Wildlife Branch may range in size from just a Branch Director to a more complex organization such as is represented in Figure 3000-1 (below). The equipment and other resources needed for a wildlife response can also vary significantly depending on the specific circumstances.

To help assess and reduce potential wildlife impacts, it is important that an initial wildlife assessment be conducted on-site by trained professionals as soon as is practicable. This assessment serves to identify already impacted wildlife, wildlife that is potentially at risk of being impacted, and to determine whether specific strategies (such as deterrence) could be implemented to reduce wildlife impacts from occurring all together. This assessment will also help to determine the type and kind of resources that the Wildlife Branch will need to mobilize to address the needs of the incident, including which trustees may need to become involved in the Wildlife Branch.

Whenever possible, representatives of appropriate trustee agencies should be included in the Wildlife Branch to assist in the planning of branch activities to ensure that wildlife operations will comply with each trustee’s governing laws and obligations to preserve and protect wildlife and habitat. These trustee agencies may also be able to provide important information about local wildlife resources, sensitive species or habitats, logistical considerations, and other issues that could arise during a spill response.

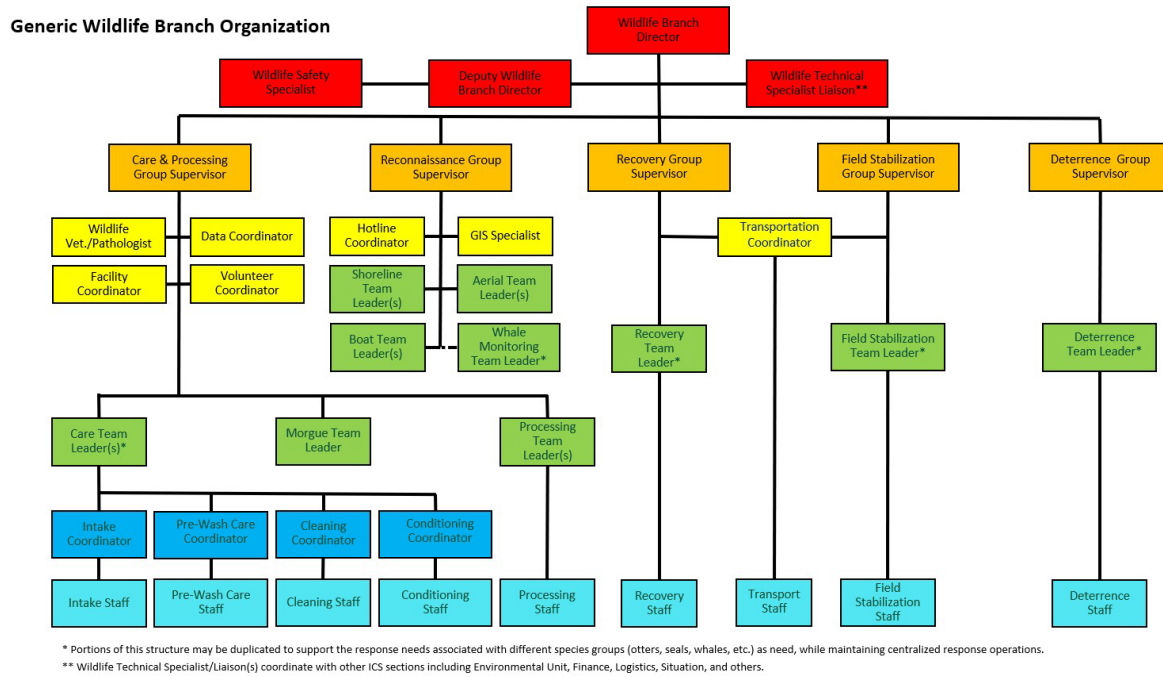


Figure 3000-1 Wildlife Branch Organizational Structure

The Wildlife Branch Director coordinates and manages the activities of all personnel in the Wildlife Branch who are under the authority of the UC during a spill response, including those associated with any federal, state, and local agencies or any commercial and nonprofit organizations involved in the wildlife response.

The Wildlife Branch is organized into five main groups: Wildlife Reconnaissance, Deterrence, Recovery, Field Stabilization, and Care and Processing. Each of these is managed by a Group Supervisor that reports to the Wildlife Branch Director. As with other parts of the Incident Command Structure (ICS), this organization can be modified as needed according to the needs of a particular response.

Wildlife Branch activities affect and interact with other parts of the ICS including the UC, the Environmental Unit, the Situation Unit, and the Public Information Officer/Joint Information Center. To ensure that wildlife activities are smoothly incorporated into a response, it is necessary that good communication is established and maintained between the Wildlife Branch and these other parts of the response structure.

Worker safety must be considered as a part of any wildlife response effort and all Wildlife Branch activities must conform to the Incident Site Safety Plan during a response. Additional safety requirements may also be included in an incident specific Wildlife Branch Safety Plan as necessary.

Appropriate biosecurity measures will be utilized as needed to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases between wildlife and personnel.

The determination to suspend wildlife operations and demobilize the Wildlife Branch is made by the UC based upon a recommendation from the Wildlife Branch Director and in consultation with other trustee agencies. The process of cleaning and rehabilitating oiled wildlife can take several weeks and some animals, especially those recovered late during a response, may still require care for some time after other response resources have demobilized. For this reason, the wildlife rehabilitation personnel, equipment, and facilities deployed by the Wildlife Branch may be the last resources to be demobilized following a response. As fewer animals remain in care, Wildlife Branch personnel and equipment will be demobilized as appropriate, and this process will follow any checkout procedures established by the UC.

See Section 9310 for more detailed information concerning the organization, activities, and responsibilities of the Wildlife Branch.