

11 mallards mired in Placentia oil spill

Pat Brennan, Orange County Register, 9-1-10

Four mallard ducks were recovering at a rescue center Tuesday after being coated with oil at a spill site in Placentia, while workers continued cleaning up oily water that burst from a production-well pipe last week.

In all, 11 oiled mallards have been collected at the site, said Debbie McGuire, wildlife director at the Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center in Huntington Beach. Seven were captured alive and four survivors remain.

“Some died from the stress of being oiled,” McGuire said. “They all came in 100 percent oiled.”

She said rescuers have ended their search for one or two other oiled birds that might still be at the site, but that cleanup workers would alert them if they see the birds.

The size of the spill was still being determined Tuesday, but the oily water flowed over about 1.2 miles of drainage channel — the Atwood and Richfield channels, which merge at the point of the spill.

On Friday, the spill gushed from a failed pipeline connecting two production wells with a facility owned by Bridgemark Corp., said state Department of Fish and Game warden Christian Corbo.

The reason the pipeline failed is still being investigated, he said.

“It appears to be external corrosion,” said Kevin Mugavero, vice president of operations at Bridgemark. “That’s strictly just me doing a visual, and seeing this kind of thing before.”

Forty seven contract workers were still cleaning up the oil Tuesday.

Bridgemark will pay for the cleanup, though the total cost has not yet been calculated, Corbo said.

“Bridgemark Corp. has been super cooperative,” he said. “They brought out contractors when we asked for more support. They’re working toward cleanup and restoration to natural habitat.”

Fish and Game officials did not notify the public about the spill until Tuesday because Friday was a furlough day for state employees, and because the spill was “small” and quickly contained, said Fish and Game spokeswoman Alexia Retallack.