

A swamp boom flounders in the current at the mouth of Bolinas Lagoon. Efforts to keep oil out failed. Photo by Jacoba Charles.

Rented booms fail to protect Bolinas Lagoon

by Justin Nobel

Booms to protect the Bolinas Lagoon from Busan oil failed Thursday, Friday, Saturday and again on Sunday, when the slick finally appeared in the area. Some oil got in, but only because only some oil was there.

“We were very fortunate that we didn’t get a huge amount of oil or else we would have ruined the lagoon,” said Sharon McNamee, superintendent of Marin County Open Space, the group that oversees the lagoon.

Booms bust

On Thursday afternoon, the National Response Corporation (NRC) deployed a boom across the mouth of the Bolinas Lagoon, from Wharf Road to the tip of the Seadrift Spit. The group is one of several subcontracted by the shipping company responsible for the spill, Hong Kong-based Regal Stone Ltd.

By Friday morning, the boom had been inundated and the contractors were gone. Rather than wait for more outside support the county ordered booms of their own. The 5,500 feet of boom cost \$2.60 a foot a day and came from an Oakland-based company, Morgan Environmental Services. The county also bought absorbent pads meant to be placed behind the boom. The National Park Service donated an additional 1,200 feet of boom.

On Friday evening, Open Space, with the help of Bolinas and Stinson firefighters, the National Park Service and several Bolinas fishermen, placed booms in the manner suggested by a plan developed by

the Coast Guard and the Department of Fish and Game five years ago.

The main boom was bow-shaped and connected Wharf Road to a point inside the Seadrift Spit. Secondary booms connected both Bolinas and Seadrift to Kent Island, providing a backup measure in case the primary boom failed.

When county officials arrived on the scene at 7:00 a.m. on Saturday, the Seadrift-Kent Island boom had broken. An hour and a half later, the main boom broke as well. It was reconnected in the driving rain during the afternoon but broke after 20 minutes. By Saturday evening the Wharf Road-Kent I

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