

Navassa Island Oil and Hazardous Substance Contingency Plan

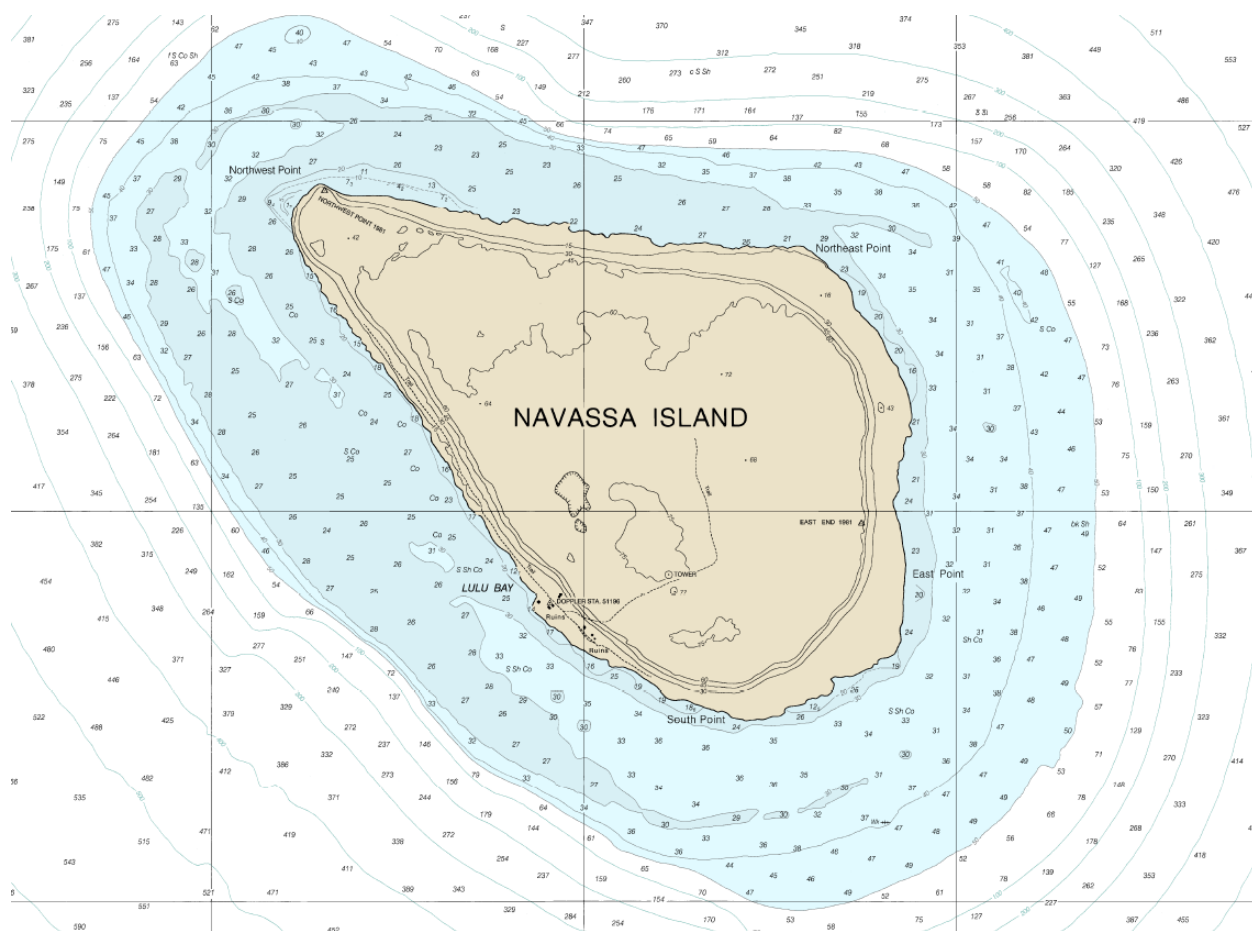


Geographic Boundaries and Description:

Navassa Island lies about 100 miles south of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, between Haiti to the east and Kingston, Jamaica, to the west (latitude 18° 25' N and longitude 75° 02' W) in the Caribbean Sea. The island is approximately 5.2 square kilometers (km) in area, with a 12 nautical mile territorial sea, 200 nm EEZ and is currently uninhabited. It is an unincorporated territory of the United States and administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a National Wildlife Refuge.

Navassa Island is a flat to undulating raised coral and limestone plateau. The island is ringed by vertical white cliffs (9 to 15 meters high) and possesses an 8 km coastline. The highest point on the island (77 m above sea level) is at an unnamed point on the southwest side. There are no ports or harbors on the island. Only one access point exists at Lulu Bay, located on the south side of the island.

Maps, photographs and a history of Navassa Island can be found at the following website:
<https://coastal.er.usgs.gov/navassa/>.



Oil Spill Risk Analysis and Response Operations:

Navassa Island lies in the Jamaica Channel in way of various commercial vessel routes. In 2000, the Coast Guard's Intelligence Coordination Center conducted a study of vessel traffic in the vicinity of the island. In a 9-month period, over 260 cargo vessels and over 100 tankships transited within a 40-nm radius of the island. Three tankships and one cargo vessel transited within the islands territorial sea during that same time period. In addition to cargo and tank ships, commercial fishing vessels from neighboring islands often transit the waters of the Navassa Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Response operations will be adversely impacted by the islands remote location. The island can only be accessed by small boat at Lulu Bay or via helicopter. Response equipment will most likely need to be staged from a vessel. All response contractors plan to respond by vessel.

A U. S. Coast Guard Medium Endurance Cutter and a Coast Guard Patrol Boat routinely patrol the waters around Navassa Island. Additionally, a Coast Guard C-130 fixed-wing aircraft and a HH-65 helicopter routinely transit the area. Since the Seventh Coast Guard District Maritime Law Enforcement Bulletin 13-99 requires Coast Guard assets to notify the Seventh District Command Center on any activities related to Navassa Island, a report of an oil spill will likely be from Coast Guard vessel or aircraft that can immediately assume on-scene coordinator duties.

Three oil spill response contractors with existing Basic Ordering Agreements have been identified that can respond to an oil or hazardous substance release at Navassa Island:

1. Caribbean Environmental Services: Plans to respond in coordination with NRC who maintains two vessels and one barge in St. Croix, USVI. Point of Contact (POC): Mr. Oscar Rohena, Caribbean Environmental Services (787) 286-2240/4434.
2. Induchem – POC: Mr. Miggi Ramos (787) 620-8787.
3. Caribe Hydroblasting – POC: (787) 863-1110.

The U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, can serve as a staging area for both Coast Guard and private response equipment. To arrange use of the U.S. Naval Base, contact Ms. Barbara Howe at 011-5-399-4662 ext. 321 or ext. 304.

USCG Sector San Juan should contact the following offices and personnel immediately after becoming aware of an oil or hazardous substance spill within the Navassa Island National Wildlife Refuge:

1. Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuge Manager: (787) 851-7258 x 306 or 305.
2. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Contaminants Specialist: Mr. Felix Lopez (787) 510-5208.
3. Seventh Coast Guard District Marine Safety Division via the Command Center at (305) 415-6800.
4. Scientific Support Coordinator: Mr. Brad Benggio (305) 530-7931.
5. Gulf Strike Team: (251) 441-6601.

6. Incident Management Assist Team: (757) 448-5572.
7. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Damage Assessment and Restoration Program: (301) 713-3038.
8. Maintenance and Logistics Command (MLC): (757) 628-4566/4564.

Resources at Risk: Navassa Island is surrounded by various reef formations composed predominantly of soft corals and sponge habitat. Individual reef colonies are found on the submerged vertical walls of the island. Massive coral reefs are not found in the area. According to the Center for Marine Conservation (CMC) 2000 Expedition Report, the Navassa Island refuge includes virtually pristine waters with corals apparently free of the coral disease found elsewhere. There is a great diversity and abundance of invertebrate and plant life comprising the coral reef community.

Shoreline: Vertical cliffs composed of limestone rock (ESI 1A and 2A) characterize the shoreline.

Sea Turtles: There are no sea turtle nesting habitat on Navassa. However, it is a feeding ground for hawksbill turtles. Hawksbill sea turtles feed on sponges found on the island's reef.

Sea Birds: There are several species of seabirds that use the island for nesting and roosting. These include the brown, red footed and masked booby, frigate birds and terns.

Island flora and fauna: Navassa has a native biota that is relatively complex for an island of its size and includes a significant number of plants and animals that occur nowhere else. The macro-biota (vascular plants, vertebrates and more conspicuous invertebrates) consists of 82 known indigenous species. It is already known that at least 12 species are endangered or severely depleted. Two endemic lizards *Cyclura nigerrima* and *Leicocephalus erimitus* have been considered extinct for many years. Numerous plant and animal species native to Navassa are endemic and occur nowhere other than this island. The small size of the island has resulted in a high rate of endemism in these organisms. Based on updated taxonomy, 15 terrestrial plant and animal species (9 species, 4 subspecies, and 2 plant varieties) are known with certainty to be endemic to the island. Numerous other species are thought also to be unique to the island but are not included in these figures due to inadequate information. CMC expects that many more species will be recognized endemic to the island once the results of the 2000 expedition and subsequent surveys have been assessed.

The Navassa biota also includes several species that occur only on a small number of islands. For example, the herb, *Chamaesyce hepatica*, occurs only on Navassa and two offshore islands; however, as Navassa is less accessible and less developed than the other islands, it provides the best refuge for the species. This is an example of a general pattern: the island's remoteness and inaccessibility enable it to serve as an important refuge for several West Indian species that, while not restricted to the island, have very limited distributions.

Additional information on the islands flora and fauna can be found at the following website: <https://coastal.er.usgs.gov/navassa/>. Information on the reptiles of Navassa Island can be found at <http://198.209.196.35/bobpowell/6pownav.htm>.

Response Operations: The primary objectives for a pollution response at Navassa Island include protecting sea birds and the fringing coral reef and preventing adverse impacts to the unique flora, fauna, and cultural resources on the island.

Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Consultation: Federally listed or endangered species include whales, hawksbill and green sea turtles, and roseate terns. Department of Interior Trust Resources include federal lands, migratory birds and endangered species. Numerous species of flora and fauna are endemic to Navassa Island and must be protected.

The waters that encompass Navassa Island, out to 12 nm, are classified as Essential Fish Habitat.

The Federal On-Scene Coordinator should immediately consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service to document an ESA and EFH consultation. This can be accomplished by contacting the Seventh Coast Guard Marine Safety Division (see contacts above) who will coordinate with the Caribbean Regional Response Team.

Cultural Resource Considerations on Navassa Island: Navassa Island contains extensive, apparently extremely well preserved historic properties whose protection is mandated by the National Historic Preservation Act and related federal laws and regulations. These include architectural and archeological remains from nineteenth century guano mining operations on the island (including barracks, houses, warehouses, a church, a blacksmith shop, and a railroad line), and a 162-foot lighthouse and associated keepers station built in 1917. In addition, prehistoric remains from the several thousand years of human occupation in this part of the Caribbean may be present, although this has not been confirmed by a formal archaeological investigation. A popular history of the island, including pictures of the lighthouse complex, may be found at: <https://coastal.er.usgs.gov/navassa/>

A programmatic agreement (PA) on procedures to be used during an emergency response was developed by the National Response Team (refer to <http://www.achp.gov/NCP-PA.html>). This PA describes, in general terms, procedures the FOSC should follow in the event of an emergency and, once the emergency period is past, in subsequent clean up or stabilization phases of the action.

By the Secretary of the Interior's Order No. 3210 of December 3, 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) assumed administrative responsibility for Navassa Island, which became a National Wildlife Refuge Overlay. Coordination regarding the protection of cultural resources, accordingly, should be made through USFWS. Mr. Val Urban, Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuge Manager; Mr. Richard Kanaski, USFWS Regional Archaeologist; and Mr. Felix Lopez, USFWS, should be notified immediately (refer to contact list above).

In addition, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) or the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) [<http://ncshpo.org/resources/section-106/>] are also signatories to the PA and can provide assistance during a response operation.

Response Operations: In general, the following steps should be taken during a response to address archeological and cultural resources: (1) identify possible threatened cultural resources; (2) identify specialists who can provide assistance and, if necessary, establish contracts with them; and (3) consult with local authorities responsible for oversight of cultural resources.

Specific actions include:

1. Notify USFWS personnel with oversight for the island as noted above, and request that they consider cultural resources in their planning.
2. In the absence of a cultural resources survey on Navassa Island, response team members should assume the obvious historic resources on the island (i.e., standing architecture, obvious artifact scatters) are significant. Accordingly, they should exercise care and consideration when mobilizing people and equipment. In addition, shoreline areas, or level terrain overlooking the ocean, may have been highly favored locations for prehistoric human settlement or use. Care should be exercised in the movement of people and equipment in these areas. Heavy equipment use should be avoided, if possible, until a cultural resource specialist can check these areas for possible cultural resources.
3. If at all possible, all people and equipment involved in emergency responses should avoid obvious historic properties or, should contact prove be necessary, this should be done in consultation with a cultural resources management specialist and with consideration for the resources in question. Destruction of cultural resources is to be avoided at all costs, unless absolutely necessary to maintain public health and safety.
4. Once the emergency response period is past, routine clean up operations must be conducted in compliance with existing federal historic preservation legislation.
5. Response team members and clean-up crews must be educated about the importance of cultural resources, and the strict federal penalties (misdemeanor or felony, depending on the extent of the damage) for their looting or vandalism, under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA): NOAA's Damage Assessment and Restoration Program (DARP) conducts natural resource damage assessments and restoration of coastal and marine resources injured as a result of oil spills, releases of hazardous substances, and ship groundings. The NMFS Southeast Regional Office in St. Petersburg, Florida, is responsible for coordinating NRDA's in the Caribbean Region.

As noted above, contact Mr. Jim Jeanson, NMFS, at (727) 570-5391 ext. 159, immediately after being notified of an oil spill or hazardous substance release to initiate the NRDA process. Information on NRDA's can be found at <http://www.darp.noaa.gov/>