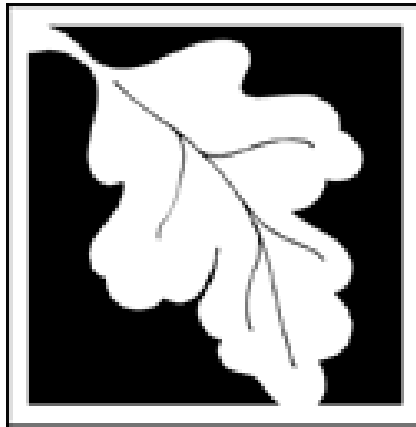


**Fall River/Acushnet Oil Spill Boom Deployment Exercise**

**May 10, 2012**

**AFTER ACTION  
REPORT/IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**May 2012**



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## HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

1. The title of this document is the Fall River/Acushnet Oil Spill Boom Deployment Exercise After Action Report.
2. The information gathered in this AAR/IP is unclassified.
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Fall River/Acushnet Oil Spill Boom Deployment Exercise occurred on May 10, 2012. The Tactics Map for Battleship Cove was developed as a tool specifically for the exercise, since no GRP currently exists at this site (See Figure 1). This exercise lasted an entire day, with a classroom portion in the morning and field exercise in the afternoon. The goal of the classroom training session was to provide basic information on GRPs, protective booming strategies, an equipment overview, and deployment tactics. The objectives of the functional exercise were to prepare the necessary equipment, deploy boom from the designated staging area, and properly retrieve and re-stow the boom in the trailer, utilizing as many responders as possible to provide hands-on experience with oil spill response.

Figure 1. Map of Battleship Cove



The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Fall River/Acushnet exercise at Battleship Cove was developed to test local area first responder's Planning, Communications, and Community Preparedness and Participation capabilities. The exercise planning team was composed of numerous and diverse agencies, including the Fall River Fire Department, Acushnet Fire Department, Fall River Harbormaster Department, U.S. Coast Guard, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and Nuka Research and Planning Group (contractor) (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Participants gathered during briefing



The exercise planning team discussed classroom training, trailer equipment familiarization, staging and field locations, manpower and vessel needs, timing of the exercise in relation to tidal cycle, and establishing overall objectives. Over the course of three months there was one planning team meeting which served as an Initial Planning Meeting, two scheduled teleconferences (which served as both a Mid-Term and Final Planning Conference), and multiple email communiqués. The exercise objectives were focused on inter-agency planning and coordination, communication and on site incident management for the purpose of improving initial response capacity to oil spills in the towns of Fall River and Acushnet.

The exercise planning team also considered proposed locations for the boom deployment and their feasibility in terms of access, staging, mobilization/demobilization of equipment, vessel traffic, and tidal schedule (See Figure 3). Once the site was chosen, the team focused on equipment and manpower needs and scheduling the exercise at a date and time that was optimal in terms of availability of responders and the tide cycle for the site.



Figure 3. Battleship Cove boat ramp



Based on the exercise planning team's deliberations, the following objectives were developed for the Fall River/Acushnet Oil Spill Boom Deployment exercise.

- Objective 1: Foster inter-agency planning by providing the opportunity for local responders to work with Federal (USCG) and State (MassDEP) responders to plan for and deploy a GRP protective booming tactic during a simulated incident.
- Objective 2: Promote communication among responders from vessel to vessel and vessel to shore and assess ability to establish and utilize an effective interoperable communications plan.
- Objective 3: Provide opportunity for responders to increase level of preparedness for oil spill response and gain experience by participating in an oil spill boom deployment.

The purpose of this report is to analyze exercise results, identify strengths to be maintained and built upon, identify potential areas for further improvement, and support development of corrective actions.

## Major Strengths

The major strengths identified during this exercise are as follows:

- Local agencies ability to work closely together to achieve objectives.
- Local responders demonstrated ability to adapt to changing conditions and circumstances as necessary to complete tasks and objectives.
- The high-visibility location of the exercise (Battleship Cove/Fall River Heritage State Park) provided an opportunity for casual onlookers to learn about federal/state/local oil spill response preparedness.

## Primary Areas for Improvement

Throughout the exercise, several opportunities for improvement in the City of Fall River and the town of Acushnet's ability to respond to the incident were identified. The primary areas for improvement, including recommendations, are as follows:

- First responders would benefit from additional opportunities to practice boom deployment in a variety of environmental conditions.
- Common communications practices should continue to be exercised and tested, particularly for on-water operations.
- Future exercises should target deployment sites at a greater distance from identified staging areas to provide an opportunity to practice towing boom.

Figure 4. Deploying boom from Staging area



Overall, the exercise was successful in providing a basic understanding of local spill response equipment, and tactics, and an opportunity for first responders to deploy boom and achieve a common goal with inter-agency participation. Further exercises would be useful to continue to coordinate between the two towns, to incorporate other local towns, and to gain additional on-water operations experience.

## SECTION 1: EXERCISE OVERVIEW

### Exercise Details

**Exercise Name**

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Fall River/Acushnet Oil Spill Boom Deployment Exercise

**Type of Exercise**

Training Session/Functional Exercise

**Exercise Start Date**

May 10, 2012

**Exercise End Date**

May 10, 2012

**Duration**

6 hours

**Location**

Training session took place on board the Battleship Massachusetts (now a museum) in a designated meeting room at 5 Water Street and the field exercise followed at Battleship Cove on the Taunton River, in the City of Fall River, Massachusetts.

**Sponsor**

The Massachusetts DEP was the sponsor of the exercise, with input from the United States Coast Guard and facilitation by Nuka Research and Planning Group, LLC (contractor to MassDEP).

**Program**

Massachusetts GRP Exercise Program

**Mission**

This exercise was designed to provide basic knowledge of oil spill response plans, equipment, and booming strategies and the opportunity for participants to practice deploying a protective booming tactic in response to a simulated oil spill.

**Capabilities**

Planning, Communications, Community Preparedness and Participation

**Scenario Type**

The scenario is a simulated oil spill in Battleship Cove.

## Exercise Planning Team

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- MSTC Sean Baker  
USCG, Sector Southeastern New England  
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## Participating Organizations

Participating organizations included: Acushnet Fire Department, Fall River Harbormaster Department, Fall River Fire Department, United States Coast Guard Sector Southeast New England, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Moran Environmental, and Nuka Research and Planning Group.

### **Number of Participants**

- Players - 19
- Controllers - 1
- Facilitators - 2
- Observers/Evaluators - 11

## SECTION 2: EXERCISE DESIGN SUMMARY

### Exercise Purpose and Design

Geographic Response Plans (GRP) are tactical oil spill response plans tailored to protect a specific sensitive area from impacts following a spill. GRPs are developed by collaborative work groups that include local, state, and federal agencies, natural resource organizations, spill response organizations, and the oil industry. GRPs are incorporated into the state/federal Area Contingency Plans for oil spill and hazardous materials response. The Area Contingency Plan implements the National Contingency Plan and aligns with the National Response Framework. Once the GRPs have been published in the Area Plan, the next step in the planning and preparedness process involves exercising the GRPs to (1) field verify the resources and tactics identified in the GRP and (2) provide a hands-on opportunity for local responders to practice deploying spill response equipment.

The MassDEP GRP Exercise Program is currently in the fourth year of field exercises involving local fire, harbor, police, shellfish, and emergency management personnel along with state and federal agencies (Mass Division of Marine Fisheries, U.S. Coast Guard, Mass Environmental Police, NOAA). The exercise design, facilitation, planning, and reporting are funded by MassDEP. Participating towns received grant funding to cover overtime and backfill costs. These HSEEP-compliant exercises are designed to examine the strategies and provide experience to the responders.

### Exercise Objectives, Capabilities, and Activities

Capabilities-based planning allows for exercise planning teams to develop exercise objectives and observe exercise outcomes through a framework of specific action items that were derived from the Target Capabilities List (TCL). The capabilities listed below form the foundation for the organization of all objectives and observations in this exercise. Additionally, each capability is linked to several corresponding activities and tasks to provide additional detail.

Based upon the identified exercise objectives below, the exercise planning team has decided to demonstrate the following capabilities during this exercise:

- **Objective 1:**
  - **Planning:**
    - Successfully demonstrate the ability to plan and coordinate a multi-town/multi-jurisdictional exercise
      - Initial, Mid-Term, and Final Planning Conferences as outlined above under Executive Summary.
- **Objective 2:**
  - **Communications:**
    - Assign channel (tactical);
    - Supply radios as needed;

- Communicate effectively during drill between shoreside/on water responders and IC.
- **Objective 3:**
  - **Community Preparedness and Participation:**
    - Simulate incident; assign responders;
    - Deploy boom;
    - Demobilize boom

Figure 5. Field Assignments for Responders

<b>DIVISION ASSIGNMENT LIST</b>		1. Branch	2. Division/Group				
3. Incident Name <b>BATTLESHIP COVE</b>		4. Operational Period Date: <b>10 MAY 12</b> Time:					
<b>5. Operations Personnel</b>							
Operations Chief	<b>FR CHIEF PAPPAS</b>	Division/Group Supervisor					
Branch Director		Air Attack Supervisor No.					
<b>6. Resources Assigned this Period</b>							
Strike Team/Task Force/Resource Designator	Leader	Number Persons	Trans. Needed	Drop Off PT/Time	Pick Up PT/Time		
<b>HP 1</b>	<b>PROULX</b>	<b>2</b>					
<b>MARINE 1</b>	<b>LECOMTE</b>	<b>4</b>					
<b>HP2 (OPS)</b>	<b>BORGES</b>	<b>2</b>					
<b>CG AUX</b>	<b>PENTERLAST</b>						
<b>SHORE 1</b>	<b>ARRUDA</b>						
<b>SHORE 2</b>	<b>GEDLING</b>						
7. Control Operations							
<b>HP 1</b> <b>PROULX</b>		<b>M 1</b> <b>LECOMTE</b> <i>at Coaling Chiswick Boiler rd</i>	<b>HP 2</b> <b>BORGES</b> <b>MENTZER</b>	<b>CG AUX</b> <b>PENTERLAST</b>	<b>S 1</b> <b>ARRUDA</b> <b>CORBOLAN</b> <b>FARLEAND</b> <b>STALDER</b>		
<b>S 2</b> <b>FALLON</b> <i>Old Chiswick Swamp Mud</i>							
8. Special Instructions							
<b>9. Division/Group Communication Summary</b>							
Function	System	Grp/Channel	Frequency	Function	System	Grp/Channel	Frequency
Command		<b>6</b>		Support			
Prepared by (RESL)		Approved by (PSC)		Date	Time		

ICS-204

## Scenario Summary



The scenario was a simulated oil spill in Battleship Cove that is migrating toward Fall River Heritage State Park. Personnel from the Fall River Fire Department, the Acushnet Fire Department, Fall River Marine Patrol, and the Fall River Fire Department, were the primary field responders for this deployment exercise. The group assigned an Incident Commander and shore-side and vessel teams and task forces. After initial safety and operations briefings, the field responders transported, deployed, demobilized, and stored the boom and anchors used in the exercise (See Figures 6 and 7). Professional spill responders from Moran Environmental Recovery and the U.S. Coast Guard provided assistance and direction to the town responders. Personnel from Nuka Research and MassDEP acted as facilitators, providing direction, answering questions, and keeping the process moving.

Figure 6. Boom in closed chevron array



Figure 7. Rinsing and storing boom in trailer



After the boom was rinsed and loaded back in the trailer, there was a post-exercise ‘hot wash’ (See Figure 8), during which participants were asked to fill out evaluations, share any insights learned during the exercise and/or any suggestions on modifications needed to successfully deploy the tactic. There was a group of observer/evaluators who observed part or all of the exercise and were asked to participate in the debriefing. The observers included representatives from the Coast Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary, MassDEP, Nuka Research, and the Massachusetts Maritime Academy.

Figure 8. Post-Exercise ‘hot wash’



## SECTION 3: ANALYSIS OF CAPABILITIES

This section of the report reviews the performance of the exercised capabilities, activities, and tasks. In this section, observations are organized by capability and associated activities. The capabilities linked to the exercise objectives of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Fall River/Acushnet Oil Spill Boom Deployment Exercise are listed below, followed by corresponding activities. Each activity is followed by related observations, which include references, analysis, and recommendations.

### CAPABILITY 1: PLANNING

**Capability Summary:** The Planning capability was put into use during pre-exercise meetings/conferences and during the functional exercise. The capability required Fire Chiefs and Harbormasters from Fall River and Acushnet to identify objectives, select an exercise location, design a GRP tactic to be tested, and assign manpower, vessels, and other resources to support the exercise. Effective pre-planning led to a successful exercise.

**Activity 1.1:** Initial and Mid-Planning Conferences to discuss site selection, exercise objectives and other issues outlined above in the Executive Summary.

#### **Observation 1.1:**

Strength: Representatives from both towns worked well together, offering suggestions and weighing the merit of these before accepting or rejecting aforementioned suggestions and providing alternatives.

**References:** Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program, Volume II, February 2007

**Analysis:** Town-level objectives were well aligned and exercise design proceeded smoothly. Both fire departments, Fall River Harbormaster, Fall River Police, and USCG Auxiliary committed manpower, equipment, and/or vessels to the exercise. There was agreement that the exercise should provide an opportunity for broad participation by as many local responders as possible.

**Recommendations:** Consider future joint oil spill response exercises, possibly involving other towns or agencies.

**Activity 1.2:** Mid-Term and Final Planning Conferences to assign manpower and equipment, work through exercise logistics, and additional activities outlined above in the Executive Summary.

#### **Observation 1.2:**

Strength: Acushnet filled out requisite paperwork for funding to allow appropriate number of key personnel to participate in exercise and agreed to use response trailer from

Acushnet which had not previously been utilized. Fall River provided vessels for on-water responders.

**References: N/A**

**Analysis:** Logistical pre-planning led to a smooth exercise. Since the Town of Acushnet had not yet deployed boom from their state spill response trailer, the exercise provided an opportunity to utilize the boom in the trailer as well as anchors, lines, and floats. There were enough vessels and shore response teams to provide an opportunity to work together in a task force setting with mixed crews from both town fire departments.

**Recommendations:** Continue to periodically exercise using spill response equipment and mixed crews.

## **CAPABILITY 2: COMMUNICATIONS**

**Capability Summary:** On-water spill response operations require a common tactical communications capability so that responders from multiple agencies can work together safely and effectively on the water and shoreline, and so that the Incident Command can maintain situational awareness of tactical operations.

### **Activity 2.1:** Assign Communications Channel

**Observation 2.1:**

Strength: The assignment of Marine Channel 6 was made.

**References: N/A**

**Analysis:** The planning team recognized the need for a common channel so that all response teams could communicate with each other and Incident Command.

**Recommendations:** None.

### **Activity 2.2:** Supply Radios as Needed

**Observation 2.2:**

Strength: The City of Fall River recognized the need for portable radios for responders and provided these to most vessels and shoreside responders.

**References: N/A**

**Analysis:** The assignment and tracking of radios for interoperable communications provided a workable solution to address the fact that the two towns do not share tactical frequencies among their VHF radios. There were handheld radios available to ensure that all crews (vessel and shore) as well as the IC, Safety Officer, and exercise facilitators had

radio communications, with the exception of the Safety Boat, on which the Moran Environmental representative was participating. This limited the amount of input he had during the drill, even though he was on the water.

**Recommendations:** Ensure that all vessels and response teams have access to common frequency for exercise, whether by portable or marine radios.

**Activity 2.3:** Communicate Effectively During Drill Between On Water/Shoreside Responders and IC.

**Observation 2.3:**

Strength: Incident Command shared information concisely and clearly between responders on vessels and shoreside crews.

**References: N/A**

**Analysis:** Due to the close proximity to the shore, the Incident Commander could make his directions clear to certain response teams directly. Other teams further away, however, could not hear the spoken commands. Although verbal directions and hand signals were feasible for this drill, in other conditions (e.g. darkness, higher winds) they would not have been effective.

**Recommendations:** Utilize Comms system regardless of proximity to certain response teams, so that all responders may be apprised of situational updates.

**CAPABILITY 3: COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS AND PARTICIPATION**

**Capability Summary:** MassDEP has developed a community-based oil spill response capacity throughout coastal regions of the state by providing oil spill response equipment trailers to local fire departments, developing GRPs (tactical plans to protect sensitive areas from oil spill impacts), and providing initial training to local first responders. The classroom portion of the exercise reinforced initial training received when the communities received their trailers and served as a refresher for some personnel and a first-time introduction for others. The field exercise (functional segment) provided a key link by allowing first responders from the City of Fall River and the town of Acushnet to work together in a task force setting to exercise their ability to deploy boom from a state spill response trailer during a mock oil spill. The community-based spill response program requires that towns be able to work together, since a major oil spill may require significant mutual aid and assistance. This field exercise provided a realistic scenario for the two towns to work together to improve their spill response capacity.

**Activity 3.1:** Simulate Incident; Assign Responders

**Observation 3.1:**

Strength: Participants from both towns volunteered or were assigned to on-water or shoreside task forces. Task forces were intentionally configured to include participants from different towns and departments to promote inter-jurisdictional cooperation.

**References:** N/A

**Analysis:** The process of assigning responders to various task forces provided an opportunity for the departmental leadership to consider the strengths and abilities of their responders for various spill response functions. Responders were assigned either to vessels or to shore teams. The make-up of each team mixed responders from the two towns together to promote interagency coordination.

**Recommendations:** None

**Activity 3.2:** Deploy Boom

**Observation 3.2:**

Strength: Participants from both towns volunteered or were assigned to task forces. Vessel and shore crews worked well together to implement the booming tactic.

**References:** N/A

**Analysis:** The primary objective of GRPs is to deploy boom ahead of an oil spill to prevent or reduce negative impacts to environmentally sensitive areas. Successful deployment of GRP booming tactics requires that the boom be effectively anchored and positioned so that it would divert, deflect, or exclude oil from the sensitive area. The chevron boom configuration for the Battleship Cove exercise was successfully deployed by three vessel crews and two shoreside crews, despite the fact that strong currents and an ebbing tide made conditions somewhat challenging. Responders showed innovation in handling shoreline anchoring – for example, a pier and a floating dock were used to anchor boom instead of rebar. Vessel-based responders maneuvered around each other, moorings, and docks while towing and positioning boom. They worked well together to connect the boom and anchor it at the apex of the chevron.

**Recommendations:** Conduct future exercises to keep boom deployment skills current.

**Activity 3.3:** Demobilize Boom

**Observation 3.3:**

Strength: On water responders towed the boom to the boat ramp where participants who had previously been observing took on the role of rinsing and stowing the boom

**References:** N/A

**Analysis:** Demobilization of boom can be time-consuming and tedious. Responders worked well throughout this process, showing strong teamwork.

**Recommendations:** Continued exercises and practice opportunities.



## SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

The GRP deployment classroom training session on the Battleship was, judging by the evaluations that were completed and returned by participants, beneficial and effective. All evaluations indicated that a better understanding of spill response tactics (than prior to the training) was achieved. The field/functional exercise at Battleship Cove was the culmination of the classroom segment and the pre-deployment briefing. The group demonstrated the capability to assign participants to various roles, including Incident Commander, Safety Officer, shore-based and vessel-based crews, and observers. Equipment from the Acushnet Oil Spill Response trailer was prepared and deployed from vessels provided by Fall River and Acushnet, and the group became more familiar with deploying, setting, and demobilizing boom, anchors, and other ancillary equipment. The Incident Command communicated clearly with both vessel-based and shore-based responders. Interagency communications were successful, using Fall River Fire's portable VHF radios.

The exercise was successful on many levels. The GRP closed chevron tactic was deployed as intended, although with less boom as initially prescribed, and found to be an effective tactic for excluding oil from Battleship Cove. The two towns worked well together and offered valuable suggestions during the debriefing. The staging area worked well and there were sufficient number of vessels available for deployment and support (i.e. safety and observer transport).

Lessons learned from this exercise included but were not limited to:

- Responders demonstrated the ability to function effectively in a task force setting that mixed responders from both towns.
- The tactic does not have to look exactly as it is drawn and modifications are acceptable and even desirable if it makes the tactic more effective and successful.
- An established Communications plan should be utilized regardless of the proximity of the responders to the IC.
- Shorter boom segments are easier to tow in an area congested with moorings, boats, and docks.
- Towing boom from the stern is easier than from the bow.
- The Battleship Cove boat ramp is a good staging area.

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## APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

This IP has been developed specifically for Massachusetts, Bristol County, as a result of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Fall River/Acushnet Geographic Response Plan Exercise conducted on May 10, 2012. These recommendations draw on both the After-Action Report and the After Action Conference.

Table A.1 *Improvement Plan Matrix*

Capability	Observation Title	Recommendation	Corrective Action Description	Capability Element	Primary Responsible Agency	Agency POC	Start Date	Completion Date
Capability 2: Communications	1. Towns would benefit from shared marine tactical channel	2.1 Meet and discuss instituting shared marine tactical channel	2.1.1 Establish shared marine tactical channel	Communications	Fall River and Acushnet Fire Depts.	Fire Chiefs	June 1, 2012	June 1, 2013
Capability 3: Community Preparedness and Participation	1. Towns would benefit from further deployment exercises	3.1 Seek out opportunities to participate in other oil spill response deployment exercise to continue to gain experience	3.1.1 Volunteer to host another exercise	Community Preparedness and Participation	Fall River and Acushnet Fire Depts.	Fire Chiefs	June 1, 2012	June 1, 2013

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## APPENDIX B: SIGN IN SHEET

Last Name	First Name	Organization	Email	Attend
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Dennehy	E	Fall River Con Com	edennehy@fallriverma.org	
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Benedetto	Jim	MMA	JBenedetto@maritime.edu	X
Hutchinson	Julie	DEP SERO ER	Julie.hutchinson@state.ma.us	
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Geller	Arnold	MSO Prov / USCG Aux	arniemorg@cox.net	
Faulon	Keith	FRFD		✓



## APPENDIX C: FALL EVALUATION FORM

<b>GRP/Oil Spill Response Trailer Training Evaluation Form</b>		
<b>GRP Battleship Cove, Fall River</b>	<b>Test date: 05/10/12</b>	
Instructions to Evaluators: Complete this form based on your observations of the Oil Spill Response Trailer Training/GRP testing.		
<b>Classroom Training Portion</b>		
Evaluator Name:	Evaluator Organization:	
What did you find helpful about the classroom training portion?		
What, if anything, could be done differently to improve the classroom training?		
Please check a box to respond to the following.	YES	NO
1. I feel the facilitators were well prepared and knowledgeable about oil spill response/GRPs.		
2. I have a better understanding of spill response tactics than I did prior to this training.		
3. I found the handouts to be helpful.		
4. The objectives were clearly explained and the classroom training met the objectives.		
5. The room and facility were adequate.		
Other comments or suggestions about training facilitation, written materials, and/or the facility?		
<b>GRP/Oil Spill Response Trailer Training Evaluation Form</b>		

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY (FOUO)  
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
 AFTER ACTION REPORT/IMPROVEMENT PLAN

**AAR/IP**

**Fall River/Acushnet Oil Spill Boom Deployment Exercise**

<b>GRP Battleship Cove, Fall River</b>	<b>Test date: 05/10/12</b>	
What was your role in the exercise? (responder, observer, facilitator, etc.)		
What was your level of spill response experience prior to this exercise?		
Please check a box to respond to the following.	YES	NO
1. I feel more prepared to deploy GRPs now than I did prior to this exercise.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I have a better understanding of spill response tactics than I did prior to this exercise.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I would participate in future GRP deployments at other sites.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The objectives were clearly explained and the deployment test met the objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The exercise was conducted safely.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other comments or suggestions about exercise design & facilitation?		



## APPENDIX D: ACRONYMS

**Table D.1: Acronyms**

Acronym	Meaning
GRP	Geographic Response Plan
IC	Incident Commander
MADEP	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PFD	Personal Flotation Device
USCG	United States Coast Guard
GRP	Geographic Response Plan

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