



EXPERIENCE FEEDBACK ABOUT THE INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISERS IN THE FRENCH POLMAR-LAND POLLUTION RESPONSE PLAN

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ABSTRACTS :

On spring 2001, the Observatoire des marées noires financed the realization of an experience feedback by the NGO Bretagne Vivante - SEPNB (Quéré, 2001) about integration of environmental advisers in the French Polmar-Land pollution response plan during Erika oil spill. The report is based on the experience that this NGO developed thanks to the presence of their advisers in the Environmental Evaluation Commissions. The missions of these commissions were to give a scientific and technical advice in order to "limit the potential impacts of cleanup operations and to define priority and interventions limits especially by providing details on the ecological sensitivity of certain areas (Kerambrun, 2001).

In the Region of Pays de la Loire, the advisers worked as link between, on one hand, the Environmental Evaluation Commission of the regional delegation of French Ministry of Environment and its experts and, on other hand, the operational teams in the field. In the departments of Finistère and Morbihan, the advisers of Bretagne Vivante - SEPNB directly managed cleanup operations on sensitive sites. The objectives of this experience feedback concerned the limits of the missions of the advisers and generally the environmental problems occurred in the French Polmar-Land pollution response plan.

In Brittany, the availability of human and material resources has been very difficult and very unequal depending on the worksites. Moreover, the definition of the responsibilities between public services depending of the national administration and the local authorities were not very clear. The interventions of the technical services at local level sometimes strengthened human resources in the field, but in other cases the less of clear definition of the missions gave rise to clash of interests and influence which limited efficacy of the operations. In Pays de la Loire, the organisation of the operations was clearer and more structured. This situation helped a lot the integration of the environmental advisers and gave best results in application of environmental



recommendations on the worksites. However, administrative difficulties appeared during the missions especially concerning the renewal of contracts and refunding of costs.

Although the Erika oil spill is the thirteen which occurred on the French coast since 1967, the interest of recommendations about the natural areas during cleaning operations was not yet a priority. From this point, the creation of a ecological assistance to the shoreline cleaning has been a progress : instauration of Environmental Evaluation Commission, coordination of a pool of experts in botanic, geomorphology, biology by those commissions, integration of advisers of those commissions in the Advanced Command Centre to supply the work of the experts. Though a global evaluation has not been realized yet, this program can be considered as positive : recommendations of cleaning adapted to the situation could be given. This recommendations could be respected in the field thanks to the experts and the advisers. The integration of those environmental recommendations has been a reality but it became slowly and sometime too late. That's the reason why some impact on environment could not be avoided. However, lessons can and must be done specially about organization of the cleaning operations.

From now on, we can propose some reflections. This is specially the case for the lead of the regional services of the French Ministry of Environnement, the enforcement of the capacity of expertise and advice, the improvement of the requirements in human resources needed for sensitive shoreline cleanup, better integration of local authorities and associations in the Polmar Plan and at last to bring administrative procedure closer to the field situation.

