

## Communiqué

### **Oil Spill Incident at Marine Biotechnology Product Limited, Riche Terre**

1. An oil spill incident involving around 1500 litres of heavy fuel oil (HFO) which occurred at Riche Terre on 18 January 2024 due to the leakage from the HFO line that feeds the boiler of Marine Biotechnology Products Ltd (MBPL). On 19 January 2024, the Ministry was informed that the ruptured pipe had been sealed and the drain, within the premises of MBPL, that allowed HFO to enter the Feeder Sèche, had been blocked to prevent any further entrainment of oil downstream into Rivulet Terre Rouge.
2. During a monitoring exercise conducted by officers of this Ministry at *Pont Bruniquel* on 19 January 2024 it was observed that cleaning was in progress by workers of MBPL and the collected HFO had been stored in intermediate bulk containers.
3. Despite the initial deployment of booms at the entrance of the Estuary by Polygreen, the services of which have been retained by the MBPL, some oil had attained the mudflat, grasses and mangrove areas but did not reach the lagoon.
4. The National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) was activated and as at date, three meetings of the National Oil Spill Coordination Committee held. Actions to be taken by the stakeholders include the following:
  - a) MBPL to pursue cleaning at both the *Pont Bruniquel* and at the Estuary;
  - b) the National Environmental Laboratory (NEL) to pursue monitoring of the air and water quality at eight locations, comprising the water at the exit of the factory, *Pont Bruniquel*, the Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary and at Nasseau Bay. NEL to continue collecting samples of sediments at the Estuary for analysis;
  - c) the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping to undertake an ecological survey as well as water quality analysis in the lagoon of Baie of Tombeau, and
  - d) the National Parks and Conservation Service to continue monitoring the number of migratory birds in the Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary.
5. In view of the sensitivity of the Estuary in terms of mudflats and migratory birds, the MBPL has been directed to give high priority for cleaning. The services of some 20 fishermen of the region, equipped with boats, have been hired by the company to participate in the oil cleaning operation. Various cleaning methods, including trimming of the soiled grass, low pressure flushing, use of coco peat and wood chips have been tried under the supervision of the National Parks and Conservation Service. These techniques are being piloted to determine their optimal effectiveness and minimal level of impacts. A decision on the way forward would be taken by mid-February 2024 when the tide would be quite low for cleaning of mud flats.
6. A total of 240m sorbent booms and 395m of fence booms have been deployed by Polygreen and the Special Mobile Force at 7 different locations, namely, at *Pont Bruniquel*; three locations across the rivulet; at the entrance of the estuary; at the mouth of the estuary; and across the southern side of the estuary to prevent dispersion of the oil.
7. MBPL informed that, as at 25 January 2024, a total of 9,175kg of contaminated solid wastes and 35.5 IBCs (approximately 35, 000 Litres) containing a mixture of oil and water have been collected.

8. Amount of oil remaining has considerably reduced.
9. On 22 January 2024 the National Environment Laboratory (NEL) also conducted an ambient air screening exercise for detecting the presence of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) using the Portable Gas Analyzer at three residential sites surrounding the oil spill incident. At time of monitoring, no odour was discernible at the three (3) sites screened and at the time of measurement, all VOCs screened at all the sites were below the detectable limits of the Portable Gas Analyzer. On 26 January 2024, ambient air screening exercise carried out at four residential sites revealed no odour discernible and VOCs level were below detectable limit.
10. A site visit was conducted on Friday 26 January 2024 at the Estuary and *Pont Bruniquel*. No oil sheen or foul smell was discerned at the Estuary. Only stain on grass and minor stain patches on high water mark were observed. Tide was low and migratory birds were also seen. A light sheen of oil was observed at *Pont Bruniquel*. The two layers of booms downstream of *Pont Bruniquel* were still in position.
11. Close monitoring is being maintained by this Ministry in collaboration with authorities concerned.

**Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Environment and Climate Change Division)**  
**26 January 2024**