

Learning from the past, for the future

What happened?

- Exxon Valdez oil tanker ran aground on Bligh Reef on March 24, 1989, spilling approximately 11 million gallons of crude oil into the Prince William Sound and contaminating approximately 1,300 miles of shoreline.
- The inebriated captain illegally left the third mate in charge of the ship.
- No major oil cleanup took place the three calm days after the spill.



Photo courtesy of EVOSTC



Lingering Oil

In the 2001 Shoreline survey done by Auke Bay Labs, oil from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill was found to still be present on beaches in Prince William Sound. It is estimated that 15,500 gallons of oil remain on about 30 acres of beaches. This amount is also most likely underestimated because: oil isn't where the scientists thought it would be, also because the pits dug in the study were random and some beaches that were oiled weren't counted.

What does it all mean?

- The effects of lingering oil in PWS aren't only biological; it affects the attitudes of people of the Sound as well. It makes us angry that there is still oil on the beaches, because Exxon promised to "make us whole" but they did not. We cannot be whole with oil on our beaches.
- Another effect of the spill is it has made us more environmentally active and learn from our mistakes- today we have a much better system of oil spill response and watch industries closely
- Lingering oil could still be affecting wild populations of sea otters and sea ducks because they feed in the intertidal zone.





The oiled sediments in this jar were collected on March 17, 2006 in Herring Bay, Prince William Sound by (from left to right): Zeben Kopchak (Cordova, AK), Dr. Jeffrey Short (Auke Bay Lab, Juneau, AK), Marney Mallory (Cordova, AK), Emma Roemhildt (Cordova, AK), David Janka (Captain, M/V Auklet, Cordova, AK), Hannah Bradley (Homer, AK) and Kate Alexander (Prince William Sound Science Center, Cordova, AK).

“A lot of Alaskans are still waiting for the promise Exxon made to “make us whole.”

-Marney Mallory, age 15

“After the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, Prince William Sound was robbed of the source of their wealth, the fishing industry.”

-Emma Roemhildt, age 14

“You used to be able to tell that Spring had sprung in Cordova when you saw herring boats outside of the harbor just before their herring season started. I am wistfully reminded of this year after year as the boats continue to remain absent.”

-Zeben Kopchak, age 16

“I am not from a fishing family, but I am still an Alaskan, so the oil was still in my waters and my beaches. It makes me sad that something so huge as the oil spill that caused so much lasting damage could have been prevented.”

-Hannah Bradley, age 15

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