

WALTER J. HICKEL  
GOVERNOR



STATE OF ALASKA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
JUNEAU

March 22, 1994

My fellow Alaskans:

Five years ago, the **Exxon Valdez** ran aground right in the heart of one of the most beautiful and productive ecosystems in the world. Pitched in to mitigate the damage, thousands of people washed ashore, and the state conducted scientific research to understand what was happening.

I am proud to have been the first Governor to sign the court settlement in 1991 which resulted in the formation of the Oil Spill Trust Fund and which provides the basis for our efforts in restoring the environment of the spill-affected area. I am also proud of the progress we have made towards restoration.

The state Trustees have joined with federal counterparts to move forward with a comprehensive approach to restoration and enhancement. This balanced approach includes direct restoration activities, monitoring and research, and habitat protection.

The Trustees have also taken steps to ensure that a long-term monitoring and research program is established. This program includes developing a first-rate research institute in Seward, a Wood's Hole of the North Pacific. It also includes establishing a Restoration Reserve account so important research programs can be maintained well into the future.

I support the recent purchases of in-holdings in Kachemak Bay State Park and land at Seal Bay on Afognak Island, to protect habitat critical to the recovery of many of the species injured by the spill.

We have made great strides in cleaning up the spill and restoring the ecosystem. However, we must develop a comprehensive understanding of the complex effects this disaster has had, and may continue to have, on the resources and services that depend upon the health of our resources and the ecosystem that supports them. Many questions still remain unanswered.

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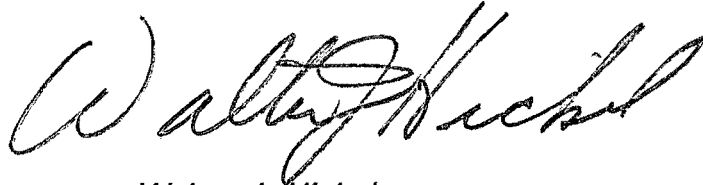
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*Providing opportunities for members of the public to hear reports from leading scientists about effects of the oil spill, such as today's public forum, is a very important part of the Trustee Council's mission. I welcome Forum attendees and participants, and urge you to use what we have learned to better the lives of all Alaskans and all Americans.*

*Sincerely,*

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# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

### OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Release: March 22, 1994

Bob Walker 202/208-6416

#### STATEMENT FROM INTERIOR SECRETARY BRUCE BABBITT ON THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL ON BEHALF OF THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

This week marks the fifth anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill -- one of the most devastating environmental disasters in our nation's history. Five years ago, the T/V Exxon Valdez ran aground and spilled over 11 million gallons of crude oil into the pristine waters of Prince William Sound and the northern Gulf of Alaska.

Without question, the oil spill was a major ecological disaster for the natural resources of Prince William Sound and other areas impacted by the spill -- for seabird populations, fisheries stocks, marine mammals and other species. Five years later, many populations of injured species have yet to fully recover. The spill was also a social and economic disaster for the people of the fishing communities and Native villages which depend on a clean and healthy ecosystem for their livelihoods and spiritual sustenance. For the people who live in the spill area, the social and economic impacts of the spill continue to be felt to this day.

But as we have seen so often in our nation's history in times of adversity, the people of Alaska rallied together to combat the advancing tide of oil and worked to help clean up and restore Prince William Sound to the condition God meant it to be. The Clinton Administration recognizes that Prince William Sound, the northern Gulf of Alaska and the Kodiak archipelago are truly special places for Alaskans and all Americans.

And just as we have found in other parts of our country, a clean and healthy environment in coastal Alaska is a precondition for strong local economies. In Cordova, Kodiak and villages throughout the region, hard-working men and women, their families and small businesses depend on a healthy, productive environment for recreation and tourism and for sport, commercial and subsistence fishing.

That is why the Clinton Administration has made the restoration of Prince William Sound and the entire spill area a top natural resource priority. As stewards for our nation's natural resources, Secretary Espy, Secretary Ron Brown and I have worked closely with Governor Hickel and the Trustees for the State of Alaska to develop a balanced, comprehensive approach to guide the restoration of natural resources that were damaged by the oil spill. Through our common efforts and cooperative relationship with the State of Alaska, we hope to seize the opportunity this year to improve our understanding of the biological workings of this spill area through research and monitoring, while we protect critical habitat for fish and wildlife as part of a balanced effort to restore this unique and productive ecosystem.

Secretary Bruce Babbitt  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL  
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EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL  
TRUSTEE COUNCIL  
ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD

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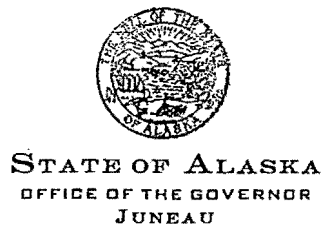
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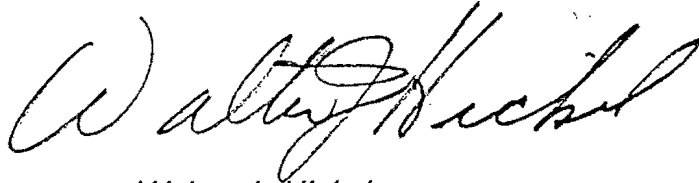
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## Perspectives on the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill--5 years later

by Charles P. Meacham  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
March 22, 1994

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EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL  
TRUSTEE COUNCIL  
ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD

Alaska passed a milestone this month, pumping the 10 billionth barrel of north slope crude oil through the trans-Alaska pipeline. Presently, over 25% of domestically produced crude oil passes through the trans-Alaska pipeline and into tankers which ply the waters of Prince William Sound. In the 17 years that tankers have been transiting the sound, over 12,800 trips have been safely executed.

Unfortunately, one serious accident occurred. Five years ago, on March 24, 1989, the 1,000 foot long supertanker *Exxon Valdez* ran hard aground on Bligh Reef in Prince William Sound. An estimated 250 thousand barrels (11.2 million gallons) of crude oil was spilled into the pristine waters of Alaska. Over the ensuing weeks, I watched oil spread with wind and ocean currents to impact about 1,300 miles of shoreline. This was the worst oil spill in United States history.

Response efforts were initiated shortly after the spill with considerable attention directed at containment, protection of critical areas, and cleanup. Efforts by Exxon Corporation were extraordinary--7 thousand people, 1,400 vessels, and nearly 100 aircraft joined the assault against the spilled oil. By the end of the 1992 cleanup season, Exxon had spent about 2.5 billion dollars to remove spilled oil. Today the casual observer is hard pressed to find any physical signs of oil contamination.

My personal involvement was in the damage assessment arena. Many studies that were initiated immediately after the spill documented resource injury that, surprising to many of us, continues today. For some pink salmon stocks, it appears that there may be genetic damage which inhibits reproductive success. Harlequin ducks appear to be experiencing limited recruitment. Unexplained disease problems seem to be afflicting herring. In the case of Cook Inlet sockeye salmon, oil related fisheries closures resulted in extremely large escapement levels that may have resulted in overgrazing of lake rearing areas. The summer of 1994 will be our first opportunity to actually quantify the number of adult sockeye salmon produced from those fish that spawned during the year of the spill.

Even though it was 5 years ago, I clearly remember my flight into Cordova shortly after the spill occurred as calm and uneventful--in stark contrast to events that would soon follow. A multi-agency team had been mobilized to develop injury assessment projects for the spill. The ensuing 10 days and nights were largely sleepless as the spill continued and the crisis assumed gargantuan proportions. This unprecedented event extracted the best each person had to offer with individual and state/federal agency efforts being meshed into an extremely powerful injury assessment program.



More than 100 studies were developed to determine the extent of injury or loss of natural resources that resulted from the spill. Studies were conducted in accordance with Natural Resource Damage Assessment regulations which outlined a process to determine appropriate compensation to the public for injuries to natural resources. Unfortunately, nearly all our activities were hidden under the veil of litigative secrecy.

At this point I must express my admiration of Alaska's Governor Hickel, the U.S. Department of Justice, and Exxon Corporation for pursuing an early settlement which provided over ONE BILLION dollars, largely for restoration and enhancement activities, rather than legal fees.

Our process is no longer litigious and secret. The public needs to understand what the trustees are doing and why. More important, we need meaningful public involvement up front--not just in review. In this regard I really appreciate the formation of the Public Advisory Group and especially look forward to their continuing contribution to this process.

Throughout history catastrophic events have often caused rapid, beneficial, changes in our philosophy. This is also true of ecological disasters, both real and perceived. About 100 years ago we had deforested an area of our country the size of Europe. The future of our forests looked bleak. Congress responded by creating federal forest reserves. In 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt converted forest reserves into the National Forest System, creating the U.S. Forest Service with Gifford Pinchot at the helm. The Chugach National Forest in Prince William Sound was created through this process.

A drastic reduction in the nation's wildlife during the 1930's coupled with the ecological horror of the "dust bowl" years inspired the nation, led by Aldo Leopold, to develop and support the new field of scientific wildlife management. And, in 1962 Rachel Carson's book Silent Spring which dealt with the disastrous ecological effects of some pesticides, aided in mobilizing our nation toward an environmental consciousness that continues today.

As the largest oil spill in the history of the United States, the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill may also precipitate beneficial change. Already, this catastrophe in one of the nation's most pristine environments has rewritten the book on the effects of oil in temperate marine ecosystems, as you will hear this afternoon.

As you learn of our continuing concern for some species and the recovery of others, keep in mind this was more than a natural resource problem. Please keep in mind the effects on the residents of the oil affected area. While those of us who reside elsewhere are legitimately concerned, in my view our challenge is to do right by those folks who were more directly impacted than me and many of you.

At this point, 5 years after the spill, we have expended or obligated only about one-third of the settlement funds. As we set about developing projects on which the remaining six hundred million dollars are to be expended, we need to proceed with a balanced approach that includes (1) continued research on affected species, (2) restoration and enhancement of damaged resources and service, and (3), acquisition of some critical habitat.