



## March 24, 2011: 22<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Exxon Valdez Disaster

Alaska's Arctic Ocean under threat from oil and gas development

On March 24, 1989, the oil tanker *Exxon Valdez* struck a reef in Alaska's Prince William Sound and an environmental nightmare began that changed Alaska along with the rest of the world. More than 11 million gallons of Alaska North Slope crude oil seeped into pristine waters and the region – an abundant habitat for salmon, sea otters, seals, sea birds and much more – continues to feel the effects today, 22 years later.



In places along the beaches of Prince William Sound the environment is “nearly as toxic as it was the first few weeks after the spill.” Tens of thousands of gallons of crude oil still linger below the surface of Prince William Sound beaches — some of it more than 450 miles away from the spill site. The remaining oil will likely take decades, possibly centuries, to disappear entirely.

BP's Deepwater Horizon disaster and the recent oil spill in Norway's Arctic waters show that oil spill clean-up methods have not improved in the 22 years since the Exxon Valdez. Yet despite their horrific track record, the oil industry is pushing to drill in America's Arctic Ocean – without the technology, know-how or capacity to clean up a spill in the Arctic's extreme conditions. Shell Oil's plans for oil spill response in the Arctic include “mops and buckets” in a place known for hurricane-force winds, icebergs the size of apartment buildings and blizzard conditions. As noted by the National Oil Spill Commission report, there are “serious concerns about Arctic oil-spill response, containment, and search and rescue.”

Often called the “least understood area in the world,” America's Arctic Ocean is home to some of our nation's most beloved wildlife species – including threatened polar bears, endangered bowhead whales, walrus, seals and beluga whales. These Arctic waters also have been “the garden” to the Inupiat people of Alaska's Arctic coast for thousands of years.

### **Our Arctic Ocean Must be Protected:**

The Exxon Valdez oil spill, the Deepwater Horizon disaster and too many other incidents have taught us that we cannot rely on the oil industry's shallow assurances. Oil drilling is a dirty, dangerous business. The question isn't if there will be an oil spill, but when. Shell Oil's plans to respond to an oil spill in the Arctic not only rely on the failed technology of the past but also fail to take into account the Arctic's unique conditions. In the Arctic, there is too much at stake to sacrifice for a headlong rush to drilling. The Obama administration must reject bad drilling plans and ensure that adequate science is in place before making decisions regarding any future development to ensure the protection of America's Arctic Ocean - known for its unique wildlife and unparalleled beauty.

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