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Contact: Emilie Surrusco
202-544-5205 or emilie@alaskawild.org

Alaska Sen. Murkowski Touts Oil-Funded Research on Arctic Oil Spill Clean-up; Ignores Warnings from Govt Experts, Scientists

Statement from Kristen Miller, Government Affairs Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

WASHINGTON - As Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) reasserted her call to drill in America's Arctic Ocean today, she trumpeted new research from Shell Oil and five other oil companies that claim the Arctic's icy conditions actually make it easier to clean up spilled oil – while ignoring scores of evidence to the contrary from federal agencies.

At a Senate committee hearing on environmental issues associated with offshore energy development, Sen. Murkowski praised Shell Oil's President Marvin Odum for his company's due diligence on an issue that could significantly contribute to the destruction of an entire unique, fragile, ice-based ecosystem, according to federal experts and scientists. Numerous scientists and government entities – from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Academies of Science to the Arctic Council and the U.S. Coast Guard – have warned about the lack of technology and capacity to clean up a spill in the Arctic's icy conditions.

To highlight a few of these warnings:

“Offshore oil production poses a spill risk. A spill could have severe consequences on living marine resources at a regional or population level scale....The challenges posed by Arctic conditions are greatly understated. Recovery rates of spilled oil in optimum situations (calm weather, in a harbor, rapid response) rarely exceed 20 percent, and response to spills in ice in remote areas is substantially more challenging. On-scene response efforts may take days to weeks to implement and are rarely effective.

- from [NOAA's comments](#) on the draft proposed outer continental shelf oil and gas leasing program for 2010-2015, submitted September 9, 2009.

“Arctic has high sensitivity to oil spill impacts and the least capacity for natural recovery. During much of the year and under many conditions, response capabilities and methods are limited by environmental conditions, lack of resources capable of responding in a timely manner, and limited technologies for responding to oil spills in ice conditions.”

- from the [2009 Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines](#), Arctic Council, April 29, 2009

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www.AlaskaWild.org

122 C St NW, Ste 240, Washington, DC 20001 * Tel: 202-544-5205 * Fax: 202-544-5197