What Comes After: The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill

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Start Date
1-5-2019 10:30 AM

End Date
1-5-2019 11:45 AM

Disciplines
Public History | United States History

Subjects

Description
This paper looks at the Exxon Valdez oil spill and the response that followed, including the cleanup efforts, litigation against ExxonMobil and the captain of the Exxon Valdez, Joseph Hazelwood. Also evaluated is the governmental response to the spill, both at the state level in Governor Steve Cowper’s reaction to the spill and the laws passed and hearings held in the federal government. The paper’s thesis is that though there was judicial and legislative action taken as a result of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, it was too narrow in scope to prevent future oil spills from happening and only prevented an exact repeat of the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Persistent Identifier
https://archives.pdx.edu/ds/psu/28506

The Exxon Valdez oil spill occurred in Prince William Sound, Alaska, March 24, 1989, when Exxon Valdez, an oil tanker owned by Exxon Shipping Company, bound for Long Beach, California, struck Prince William Sound’s Bligh Reef, 1.5 mi (2.4 km) west of Tatitlek, Alaska, at 12:04 a.m. and spilled 10.8 million US gallons (257,000 bbl) (or 37,000 tonnes) of crude oil over the next few days. It is considered the worst oil spill worldwide in terms of damage to the environment. The Valdez spill is the second The cleanup effort after the Exxon Valdez spill was very intense. One worker exclaimed, “Everything from paper towels to kitchen utensils are being used.” The most publicized aspect of the Exxon Valdez spill was the damage to the wildlife in the surrounding area, especially the animals. Hundreds of birds, sea otters, fish, shell fish, and marine mammals were killed. More than eighty-eight species of birds were affected by the spill. Fish were also affected by the oil spill, however, the extent of the casualties is unknown. Fishing is a huge industry in Alaska, so there has been much concern over the welfare of the fish. Many natives also live by subsistence fishing.