

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. _____

Acknowledging the 30th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Acknowledging the 30th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Whereas, on March 24, 1989, the *Exxon Valdez* oil tanker ran aground on Bligh Reef in Prince William Sound, Alaska, releasing approximately 11,000,000 of the more than 53,000,000 gallons of crude oil on board the tanker;

Whereas the Exxon Valdez oil spill changed the pristine ecosystem of Prince William Sound and significantly altered the way the United States views the production and transportation of oil;

Whereas the Exxon Valdez oil spill covered over 1,300 miles of coastline;

Whereas, at the peak of the cleanup efforts, more than 11,000 workers, 1,400 boats, and 80 aircraft were working to address the crisis, and more than 11,000 residents

of Alaska were involved in the cleanup efforts over the course of 4 summers;

Whereas massive natural and economic losses caused harm to fisheries, subsistence livelihoods, tourism, and wildlife;

Whereas the spill caused—

(1) up to \$580,000,000 in losses to recreational fishing;

(2) the loss of roughly 26,000 recreational and tourism jobs that, after returning to the region, generated \$2,400,000,000 in sales in 2003;

(3) devastating impacts to commercial fisheries and subsistence harvests due to the loss of billions of salmon and herring eggs, including the long-term collapse of the Prince William Sound herring fishery; and

(4) significant harm to the social fabric of communities in Alaska, including causing an increase in divorce, depression, substance abuse, and mental health issues;

Whereas the Exxon Valdez oil spill is the 36th largest tanker spill in the world, and the second largest oil spill in the waters of the United States;

Whereas the Exxon Valdez oil spill is regarded by many as the most environmentally devastating oil spill in history due to—

(1) the timing of the spill;

(2) the destruction of pristine landscape; and

(3) the abundance of wildlife harmed in the spill area;

Whereas the spill is estimated to have killed approximately—

(1) 250,000 seabirds;

(2) 2,800 sea otters;

(3) 300 harbor seals;

- (4) 250 bald eagles;
- (5) 22 killer whales; and
- (6) billions of salmon and herring eggs;

Whereas the spill was caused by a number of factors, including—

- (1) a failure to properly maneuver the vessel;
- (2) a failure to provide proper navigation;
- (3) a failure to supervise and provide a rested crew;
- (4) a failure by the operator of the vessel to prevent the use and abuse of alcohol by the crew;
- (5) a failure by the Coast Guard to provide an effective vessel traffic system; and
- (6) a lack of effective pilot and escort services;

Whereas, following the enactment of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (33 U.S.C. 2701 et seq.), significant improvements were implemented in Prince William Sound to ensure the safe transportation of tankers through the area, including—

- (1) monitoring of tankers throughout the entire area by the Coast Guard via satellite;
 - (2) requiring that tankers be double-hulled;
 - (3) requiring each tanker to be accompanied by 2 escort vessels;
 - (4) requiring advanced training of tanker officers, tug officers, and marine pilots;
 - (5) putting in place detailed oil spill prevention and contingency plans that are approved by State agencies and designed to clean up over 300,000 barrels of oil within 72 hours;
 - (6) stockpiling of oil dispersants for emergencies;
- and

(7) having barges standing by that are capable of holding over 650,000 barrels of recovered oil-contaminated water;

Whereas a qualified response coordinator is on site 24 hours a day and 7 days a week to schedule escorts and direct vessel movements, working closely with the Coast Guard, tanker and tug masters, security personnel, and others to ensure the safety of tankers in Prince William Sound;

Whereas, to ensure the safe transportation of tankers through Prince William Sound, as of March 2019—

(1) there is an Automated Identification System to track vessels;

(2) there is expanded radio coverage throughout Prince William Sound;

(3) incident management software is available to dispatch and direct vessels during the first minutes and hours of a response;

(4) there are speed limits in Prince William Sound;

(5) alcohol screening and increased training requirements have been implemented;

(6) there are weather restrictions in place;

(7) there is pilotage to and from Bligh Reef; and

(8) tankers are equipped with specialized Prince William Sound towing equipment;

Whereas, in 1989, there were 3 tugs, 1 deck barge, and approximately 5 miles of boom in Prince William Sound, but, as of March 2019—

(1) there are 10 fit-for-duty escort and response tugs, the strongest escort tugs in the world, in Prince William Sound;

(2) there are 4 purpose-built, crucial skimmer barges, the largest purpose-built oil spill response barges in the world, in Prince William Sound; and

(3) there is more than 49 miles of boom in Prince William Sound;

Whereas, as of March 2019—

(1) response and protection equipment is staged around Prince William Sound at critical locations, including 5 hatchery protection sites;

(2) there is 100,000 feet of protective boom pre-positioned in Prince William Sound;

(3) there are 5 response centers located at Chenega Bay, Cordova, Tatitlek, Valdez, and Whittier; and

(4) there are more than 400 fishing vessels and more than 1,500 participants in the Vessels of Opportunity program; and

Whereas the Exxon Valdez oil spill caused widespread destruction within Prince William Sound, but the incident also yielded many discoveries of important methods of oil spill prevention and cleanup that will be used to protect and rehabilitate damaged wildlife populations around the globe for generations: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) acknowledges—

3 (A) the destructive and decades-long im-
4 pact the Exxon Valdez oil spill has had on Alas-
5 ka; and

6 (B) the social, environmental, and eco-
7 nomic consequences the Exxon Valdez oil spill
8 has had on the world;

1 (2) celebrates the return of sea otter popu-
2 lations and other wildlife populations to estimated
3 pre-spill numbers in Prince William Sound;

4 (3) recognizes the resilience and perseverance of
5 the Prince William Sound community in working to
6 rehabilitate and protect the environment after the
7 Exxon Valdez oil spill;

8 (4) encourages the safe and reliable transpor-
9 tation of the natural resources of the United States
10 around the world; and

11 (5) pledges to work to provide appropriate oil
12 spill response resources—

13 (A) to ensure the protection of all oceanic
14 ecosystems and pristine shorelines; and

15 (B) to promote the safe and reliable trans-
16 portation of the natural resources of the United
17 States.