



MEDIA ADVISORY:
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Bristol Bay Fishermen Travel to Capitol Hill for the 20th Anniversary of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill

Group calls on Congress, Obama Administration to Protect Nation's "Fish Basket" from Offshore Drilling

A group of Bristol Bay fishermen, including a Yup'ik Tribal Chief, *Exxon Valdez* spill claimants and the president of Bristol Bay's largest salmon fishermen's association are travelling to Washington, D.C. next week to remind members of Congress and decision makers in the Obama Administration of one of the important actions triggered by the largest environmental disaster in North American history.

Congressional protection from offshore drilling for Bristol Bay and the southeast Bering Sea was put into place after the *Exxon Valdez* spill in 1989. The disaster released more than 11 million gallons of oil into Alaska's Prince William Sound. The tragic event demonstrated the tremendous risks that oil and gas activities pose to Alaska's coastal communities, economies and cultures that are dependent upon healthy fisheries and an intact marine ecosystem.

This Tuesday, March 24, will mark the 20th anniversary of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. Bristol Bay fishermen are hoping to leverage the ties between that catastrophe and the current risk posed to their livelihoods by proposed offshore drilling in the nation's "fish basket."

In January 2007, President Bush stripped away the last layer of protection for Bristol Bay - the executive ban on offshore drilling. The move once again placed our nation's lucrative fishing grounds in Bristol Bay on the table for drilling. The Minerals Management Service has scheduled a lease sale for 2011 in the very same 5.6 million acre block of fish-rich waters previously sold and then bought back with taxpayer dollars after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill.

The group is calling on Congress and the Obama administration to take Bristol Bay out of the national offshore drilling program and put in place permanent protections for the region.

The fishermen travelling to Washington, D.C. include:

- Tom Tilden - Chief, Curyung (Dillingham) Tribal Council, Board member, Nunamta Aulukestai (association of eight Bristol Bay Native Village corporations), Vice President of Bristol Bay Native Association Board, Bristol Bay salmon and halibut fisherman. Dillingham, AK
Contact: Home # (907) 842-2259, cell # (907) use from 3/21-3/29, (907) 227-5846
- David Harsila - President of Alaska Independent Fishermen's Marketing Association (AIFMA), the largest salmon fishermen's association for Bristol Bay, comes from a family of Bristol Bay fishermen and has fished in the bay himself since the 1970's. Seattle, WA
Contact: Cell # (206) 618-3824
- Alan Parks - Bristol Bay salmon and Gulf of Alaska halibut fisherman, *Exxon Valdez* spill claimant, Climate Change Organizer for the Alaska Marine Conservation Council. Homer, AK
Contact: Cell # (907) 399-3096
- Kelly Stier - Grew up in Homer, Alaska fishing for salmon, halibut, herring and crab with his father; is an *Exxon Valdez* spill claimant and worked on spill cleanup as a young boy; has crab fished the Bering Sea and skippered a crew in Bristol Bay since age 19. Homer, AK.
Contact: Cell # (360) 201-1873