



Healthy Oceans. Healthy Communities.

Oil spill model shows risks to B.C. coast

For Immediate Release

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SOINTULA, B.C. — Living Oceans Society today released an online computer-generated model that shows how oil spills would affect ecosystems and communities on the North Coast of British Columbia. The oil spill animation, built using leading edge computer modeling software and the most up to date oceanographic data available, is able to generate oil spill scenarios from oil tankers and drilling platforms in coastal waters.

“The oil spill model clearly demonstrates that Canada and the Province of B.C. must strengthen and enforce the moratorium on oil tankers and offshore oil and gas in order to maintain the wealth of marine resources on B.C.’s coast,” said Oonagh O’Connor, Living Oceans Society Energy Campaign Manager. “There is considerable pressure to open the coast to oil tanker traffic and offshore oil and gas. The federal government is already turning a blind eye to the tankers that are sailing into Kitimat to deliver condensate, a highly toxic petro-chemical product used to thin oil extracted from Alberta’s tar sands.”

The planned expansion of the tar sands has led to at least six proposed mega-projects in northern B.C. calling for pipelines to move condensate from the coast to Alberta and crude oil from the tar sands to the ports of Kitimat or Prince Rupert for shipment by oil tanker to the United States and Asia.

“If these projects proceed, over 300 tankers would travel through North Coast waters every year—a disaster waiting to happen,” O’Connor said. “It is not a question of if a spill would happen, but one of when and how big. The oil spill model clearly demonstrates that a spill from just one tanker could devastate coastal ecosystems and communities.”

The oil spill animation takes into account the amount and type of oil spilled and predicts its movement based on oceanographic conditions such as water currents, tides and winds. The animation is based on a model developed using a software program built by the U.S. National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration that provides information on how various types of oil spread in the ocean. This same software is used by response crews during actual spills to determine where clean up efforts should be directed.

The oil spill animation is available at www.livingoceans.org/spillfreecoast

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