

Alaska Oil Spill Curriculum Introduction

The Alaska Oil Spill Curriculum was originally created in 1990 after the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (referred to in the curriculum as “the spill.”) The 20th anniversary of the spill is in 2009, and a major concern now is complacency. To combat this we continue to upgrade this curriculum for use in the schools and we invite comments and additions. We hope everyone that uses this can learn lessons from this tragic spill so that it never happens again.

This curriculum does not concentrate on the oil spill, but rather on the positive steps that everyone has made and can make to help prevent future spills, and to reduce the need for oil by energy conservation and recycling. It is important to look at uses of oil in our own communities – so waters close to our homes are not contaminated.

The curriculum provides hands-on experiences to connect events with their consequences. We hope you will experience the joy of being part of this fragile planet as well as explore the responsibilities we have for its well being.

It is organized in three sets: Grades K-3, 4-6, and 7-12, each with its own table of contents. They are all available at no cost from the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council website (<http://www.pwsrccac.org/outreach/education.html#curric>). Subjects covered are science, social studies, language arts, mathematics, economics, technology, engineering, consumer science, art, music, and geography. Each lesson includes extensions at the beginning. In the appendices you will find listed other resources on these subjects. Teachers can use them to amend or enhance each lesson. Appendix A contains some articles courtesy of the Anchorage Daily News and others.

We have tried to make the curriculum objective with exciting activities. We welcome your suggestions, and if you are interested in having someone from the Prince William Sound Science Center or the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council present some of this curriculum to teachers or students, contact us via information on our websites.

Disposing of Oily Waste

Some lessons in this curriculum suggest using motor oil for in-class experiments and educational demonstrations. For proper disposal methods of oil, contact your local landfill manager for guidelines. The following sites also offer information about disposal and recycling of oil and other hazardous wastes.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Wastes

<http://www.epa.gov/osw/>

Anchorage Municipality Hazardous Materials Management

<http://www.muni.org/sws/hazardouswaste.cfm>

QUOTES TO REMEMBER

“I hope that we can all learn from this tragedy and work together to protect our jobs, wildlife, and natural heritage.”

Steve Cowper, Governor of the State of Alaska 5/4/89

“It is too shocking to understand. Never in the millennium of our tradition have we thought it possible for the water to die. But it is true. ...what we see now is death. Death – not of each other, but of the source of life, the water. We will need much help, much listening in order to live through the long barren season of dead water, a longer winter than before... We have never lived through this kind of death. But we have lived through lots of other kinds of death. We will learn from the past, we will learn from each other, and we will live.”

Walter Meganack, Sr., traditional chief of Port Graham

“To trace on a map the tortured routes of the oil spilled from the Exxon Valdez is to appreciate the vulnerability of every coastline on earth as supertankers of 500,000 deadweight tons and more carry crude oil to market.”

Walter B. Parker, chairman, Alaska Oil Spill Commission 1/5/90

“On Good Friday, every citizen of Alaska suffered a tragic loss, including the more than 800 employees of Alyeska... What is going to be done is to attempt to see to it that this doesn't happen again, in Alaska or anywhere else in the United States... Government and industry together can cooperate to prevent a repetition of the Exxon Valdez spill and its consequences... We at Alyeska are committed to the path which leads to cooperation and achievement.”

George Nelson, Alyeska President, The Anchorage Times

“One pint of used oil can produce a slick approximately one acre in size, and only one part per million (1ppm) contamination will spoil the taste and odor of drinking water. At this ratio, it would take just 1 pint of oil to noticeably contaminate 125,000 gallons of drinking water. That's more than 15 people drink in a lifetime... A study done for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reported that in 1983, 350 million gallons of used oil were disposed of improperly in the United States. This means that in one year alone, almost 32 times the amount of oil spilled in Prince William Sound was disposed of in environmentally harmful ways nationwide. Crankcase oil drainings have been reported to account for more than 40% of the total oil pollution of US harbors and waterways.”

Dennis Kelso, Commissioner, AK. Dept. of Environmental Conservation

“If you convinced two people to do something for the environment, and the next day they convinced two people, and so on, it would take less than a month to get everyone in the U.S. to take action.”

National Wildlife Federation Wildlife Week Poster 1990