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Background Information

- The Gulf of Alaska and the Southern Gulf Coast have been the sites of the two worst oil spills in U.S. history, **Exxon Valdez (1989)** and **Deepwater Horizon (2010)**.
- These oil spills had detrimental and long-lasting **environmental, economic, and societal impacts** in both regions.
- In recognition of this shared history, the Gulf Research Program (GRP) hosted a workshop series to bring together representatives from both regions to **share experiences, knowledge, strategies, and best practices to help prepare for and recover from potential future spills**.

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Gulf-Alaska Knowledge Exchange

- A series of workshops targeted at engaging **researchers, practitioners, and other stakeholders** was developed by an ad-hoc planning committee.
- The planning committee assigned workshop topics relevant and beneficial to stakeholders from the two regions, while also being consistent with GRP's mission and purpose.
- Topics included but were not limited to: the **restoration of oil-afflicted ecosystems**, particularly those that support species of commercial, recreational, and cultural value; **how climate change impacts could exacerbate oil spills**; and **potential impacts of oil spills on local communities**.

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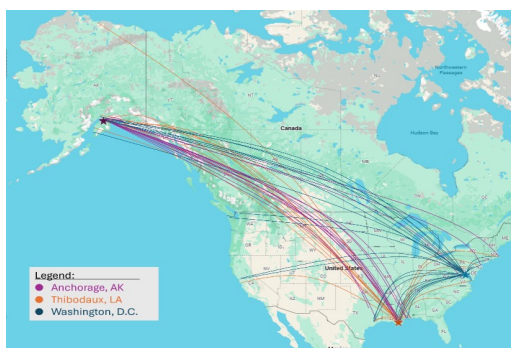
Workshop Format

- Attendees and participants gathered from both regions.
- Panel sessions with Q&A highlighted voices from communities, academia, policy-makers, and responders.
- Extended breakout discussions (in-person and virtual) encouraged collaboration and connection.
- Report-out surfaced themes from across discussions.

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Workshop Format, Cont'd

Interactive World Café Session

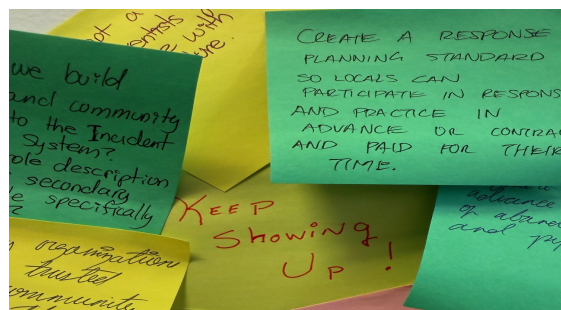
What is the
change you
want to see?

What are the
current barriers?

How can we
overcome
them?

Round-Robin Breakout Activity – Best practices, lessons learned, and areas of improvement structured along the oil spill timeline

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WORKSHOP 1: OCT. 8 - 9, 2024

Anchorage, AK



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Workshop 1 Sessions

- Socio-economic Impact
 - The immediate and anticipated longer term impacts of oil spills and associated responses, including small-scale fisheries, tourism and the subsistence way of life.
- Transformative Recovery
 - Community-focused science and how to include community wellbeing in recovery assessments.
- Proactive Preparedness
 - Building community capacity and increasing community awareness and involvement in response protocols before spills occur.

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WORKSHOP 2: DEC. 10 – 11, 2024

Thibodaux, LA



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Workshop 2 Sessions

Community-Centered Response

- Community-centered planning related to knowledge sharing, the adverse effects oil spills have on local culture, and how to plan proactively for the involvement of community members in response efforts and training for future spills.

Transformative Recovery

- Centered on developing new approaches to revolutionize mitigation techniques and recovery of key natural resources.

Proactive Preparedness

- Ways to monitor and measure community and behavioral health to assist decision-makers involved in oil spill response, including ways to incorporate these into the Incident Command System.



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WORKSHOP 3: MAR. 25 - 26, 2025

Washington, D.C.



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Workshop 3 Sessions

- Risk Communication
 - Establishing effective information exchange before, during, and after an oil spill.
- Community Engagement
 - Best practices in community-centered planning.
- Impacted Communities
 - How to ensure the needs of affected communities are prioritized.
- Response & Research Communities
 - Focus on the mental, physical, economic, and social impacts felt by responders and researchers working on oil spills.
- Prevention
 - Effective strategies, technologies, and policies aimed at preventing oils spills in the U.S.

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Key Takeaways

- Building trust with communities takes time.
- Long-term investment is key to strengthening prevention and recovery and enabling meaningful local engagement by overcoming systemic barriers.
- Communication is key.
- Proactive > Reactive.
- Oil spills result in short and long-term mental health impacts for community members, researchers, and responders.
- Investment is needed in developing next generation of oil spill scientists and responders.

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Interested in learning more?

The Proceedings of the Workshop Series, including a full account of the workshop sessions and the discussions that took place, is available to read for free online.



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Gulf-Alaska Knowledge Exchange

Learning from the Legacy of Past Oil Spills

Convened October 8–9, 2024, December 10–11, 2024, and March 25–26, 2025



Proceedings of a Workshop Series

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Next Steps

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New Webinar Series

Next Generation of Oil Spill Researchers

Join us September 17, 2026 | 2 PM ET

We are pleased to announce the upcoming [Next Generation Oil Spill Researchers Interactive Webinar series](#), a collaboration between GRP and the Natural Hazards Center. These free online sessions will capture lessons from past disasters while helping to ready researchers to study future oil spills and their impacts on people, the economy, and the environment.

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Thank You!

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*resigned prior to completion of the
workshop series

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