



# COOK • INLET • KEEPER

Protecting Alaska's Cook Inlet watershed and the life it sustains

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**JUNE 8, 2004**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
**LOIS EPSTEIN, 907.929.9371**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **MURKOWSKI ADMINISTRATION LETTING CORPORATE POLLUTERS OFF THE HOOK** *“Cops Off the Beat” Analysis Shows Many Violations, Few Penalties*

ANCHORAGE – Cook Inlet Keeper today released a report documenting significant problems in the Murkowski Administration's enforcement of environmental laws. The report's findings prompted Alaskan non-profit organizations to write a joint letter to Governor Murkowski, sent today, recommending strengthened and more balanced environmental enforcement, including focusing more on corporate polluters over individual violators. The report -- *Cops Off the Beat: Problems with Environmental Enforcement Under the Murkowski Administration* – analyzes enforcement and spill data from December 1, 2002 through January 15, 2004.

Keeper initiated the analysis after Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Ernesta Ballard made strong comments regarding the state's commitment to environmental enforcement. During a September 18, 2003, speech to the Resource Development Council, for example, Ballard said environmental “[e]nforcement is essential if we expect to maintain public confidence in our stewardship.” She also has stated that she “want[s] to assure all stakeholders that enforcement will be the predictable consequence of failure to comply.”

“The state's strong environmental enforcement rhetoric has no basis in fact. The data show that the Murkowski Administration is not fining its corporate friends when they damage Alaska's environment,” said Lois Epstein, Cook Inlet Keeper's Senior Engineer and Oil & Gas Industry Specialist.

Key report findings include: criminal fines represented only 0.2% of all penalties collected; there were no criminal fines against industry, only against individuals for car or truck emissions violations; only 7% of the enforcement actions were taken against the state's biggest industries, i.e., oil production and related activities, tourism (including cruise ships), fishing/seafood processing, logging, and mining, even though these industries have the greatest potential to pollute and represented 34% of the reported spills; the number of enforcement actions taken declined over time; the top 10 oil and hazardous substance spills did not result in fines (including 5 from oil production – 3 from ConocoPhillips and 2 from BP, and 3 from mining – 2 from Fairbanks Gold Company and 1 from Red Dog Mine which resulted in the largest spill of the covered period); and there have been only 5 fines for oil spill damages and no fines for hazardous substance damages, while there were 2,356 reported liquid spills (nearly 6 spills per day of oil and hazardous substances), with an average size of 150 gallons and with 13% of the spills greater than 50 gallons.

Cook Inlet Keeper is a member-supported nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the Cook Inlet watershed and the life it sustains. Keeper maintains offices in Anchorage and Homer. See [www.inletkeeper.org/enforcement.htm](http://www.inletkeeper.org/enforcement.htm) for the joint letter to the Governor, the *Cops Off the Beat* report, and the state databases used in these analyses.