



COOK INLETKEEPER®

PROTECTING ALASKA'S COOK INLET WATERSHED AND THE LIFE IT SUSTAINS

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 24, 2009

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Bob Shavelson, 299-3277

INLETKEEPER DETAILS DRIFT RIVER OIL TERMINAL INCIDENT

*Spill Prevention and Response Break-Downs Show that Lessons Learned
from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Don't Apply in Cook Inlet*

HOMER, AK – Cook Inletkeeper today released a timeline of events surrounding the eruption of the Mount Redoubt volcano in Cook Inlet in March 2009, including an analysis of the extreme threats posed to Cook Inlet fisheries from over 6 million gallons of oil stored nearby at the Drift River Oil Terminal. The report details numerous break-downs in state and federal spill prevention and response rules instituted after the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill in 1989, and emphasizes how everyday Alaskans were cut out of important decisions. The report – which raises serious questions left unresolved by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) and Chevron – provides important examples how future offshore and onshore oil and gas production may be regulated in Bristol Bay, the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas and elsewhere in Alaska. A copy of the report can be found at: www.inletkeeper.org/watershedwatch/redoubt2009/redoubt.htm

“We needed to create a record of what happened at the Drift River Oil Terminal in 2009, so it doesn't happen again in Cook Inlet, and so other areas of Alaska don't suffer from the very same type of complacency that brought us the *Exxon Valdez*,” said Bob Shavelson, Executive Director of Cook Inletkeeper. “From day one, we were amazed at the lack of planning, the lack of spill response capacity, and the lack of openness that continues to this day.”

Some important questions raised in the report include:

- Why did the ADEC and USCG allow Chevron to withhold from the public the volume of oil at the Drift River Terminal when Mt. Redoubt became active in early 2009, when such information is made public on a daily basis at the Valdez Marine terminal? Had the oil volume

been made public, it would have been clear prior to Mt. Redoubt's initial eruption that spill response equipment in Cook Inlet could not address a catastrophic release.

- Why did re-starting the Drift River Oil Terminal immediately after the March 22 eruption take precedence over protecting Cook Inlet's valuable fisheries? According to ADEC, only when Chevron decided to suspend operations at the facility two weeks after the first eruption did other spill prevention options (i.e. draining the oil tanks and ballasting them with water) become available that better protected Cook Inlet fisheries from a catastrophic spill.
- Why did it take Chevron nearly 4 weeks after evacuating the facility on March 22 to submit the legally-required notice of non-readiness to ADEC, affirming it could not effectively respond to a catastrophic release from the Drift River Oil Terminal? And why didn't ADEC require Chevron to include in its spill response plan the capacity to address a catastrophic release from all the storage tanks and pipelines at the facility as required by state law?
- Why has ADEC cut the public out of the process for amending the spill prevention and response plan at the facility? ADEC has characterized plan changes as "minor amendments" not requiring public notice and comment, when in fact significant plan changes have been made since before March 22.

"Commercial fishermen have followed the events surrounding the Drift River Oil Terminal for many years, because the facility sits atop our invaluable Cook Inlet fisheries" said Roland Maw, Executive Director of United Cook Inlet Drift Association. "We were extremely disappointed in the lack of information we received during the 2009 incident, and hope the state and federal agencies can open the process to allow Alaskans to help decide how best to protect our fisheries. "

"At the most basic level, we hope ADEC will reconsider its decision to cut Alaskans out of important decisions regarding the Drift River Terminal," said Shavelson. "Alaskans shouldn't have to endure expensive and protracted appeals to simply have a say in protecting our fisheries resources from the threat of more oil spills."

In a related event, the USCG announced on August 18 that it was withdrawing a proposed rule to consider tug escorts for laden single hull tankers in Cook Inlet and elsewhere. Because Chevron's plans to now reroute oil around the Drift River Terminal storage tanks will increase tanker transits to twice monthly, the USCG decision highlights the risks of navigation and potential oil spills to Cook Inlet fisheries. To see the USCG announcement, click [here](#), and to see Inletkeeper comments on the proposed rule, click [here](#).

####