

Alaska Region

The release of more than 10 million gallons of crude oil following the grounding of the EXXON VALDEZ on March 24, 1989 represents the largest oil spill ever recorded in the U.S. By early May, oil carried by marine currents had washed ashore over a widespread area. Although the heaviest oiling appears to have occurred in western Prince William Sound, other affected areas include Kenai Fjords NP and the adjacent Alaska Maritime Wildlife Refuge. In addition, oil has washed ashore on the outer coast of Katmai NP, over 250 miles from the original spill site. Oil has impacted pelagic and near-shore water columns, benthic substrate, and intertidal and supratidal coastal habitats.

The Alaska Region began wildlife, plant, and cultural resource surveys on the coastal region of Kenai Fjords on March 31, 1989, and was soon expanded to include Katmai's coast. The surveys included counts of sea birds and marine mammals, investigation of submerged cultural resources, measurement of water quality, establishment of intertidal invertebrate and beach vegetation plots, and sampling of anadromous fishes. Survey efforts later were broadened to include potential impacts to resources as a result of proposed cleanup efforts. Initial inventory efforts have evolved into detailed oil spill impact assessment work that is underway in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the USFWS and other agencies.

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Ross Kavanagh served as Finance Chairman for the 119th Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society held in Anchorage, Sept. 4-8. The theme of the meeting was "Fisheries Management Controversies: Biology, Economics, and Politics." The American Fisheries Society is the oldest scientific society in the United States and, with approximate 1,200 attendees, the Anchorage conference was the largest scientific/resource management gathering ever to be held in Alaska. The meeting was jointly sponsored by the principal Alaskan land and natural resource management agencies including the NPS, fish processors, and the oil and gas industry.

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A GIS data base has been prepared for the Anaktuvuk Pass area in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. The vegetation map for the data base was prepared using Landsat thematic mapper satellite imagery. It contains 17 land cover types and encompasses 1.5 million acres. Thematic mapper vegetation maps are also nearing completion for Cape Krusenstern National Monument and Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve.