



M/V *Selendang Ayu* Alaska Oil Spill

Responding to oil and hazardous substance releases, NOAA protects, assesses, and restores the nation's natural resources.

On December 8, 2004, the M/V *Selendang Ayu* lost power and grounded off Unalaska Island, near Dutch Harbor, Alaska in the Bering Sea. The 738 foot freighter, containing 424,423 gallons of intermediate fuel oil, drifted for 36 hours before coming ashore. Six of the 26 crew members were lost at sea during rescue operations when a helicopter crashed. That same day, the vessel broke in two, spilling more than 335,000 gallons oil into the waters surrounding the wreck, between Spray Cape and Skan Bay, some 25 air miles southwest of Dutch Harbor. The vessel also spilled approximately 60,000 tons of soybeans.

Providing cleanup support

Response operations and shoreline cleanup began immediately after the grounding, were suspended temporarily for the winter season, and then resumed the following spring. Most of the cleanup was completed during the spring and summer of 2005, but several areas required additional cleanup during the summer of 2006. At this time, the pollution response is complete and large portions of the wreck have been removed by a local salvage firm. During the active response and cleanup operations, NOAA provided:

- Site-specific weather forecasts
- Documentation of oil on shorelines, in salmonid streams, and in submerged habitats
- Oil behavior and movement data
- Information on natural resources at risk
- Evaluation of oil recovery options
- Support to minimize environmental injuries



Broken sections of the *Selendang Ayu* before sinking. The bow section is in the foreground; the stern section in the background.



Environmental assessment team surveying degree of oiling.

Assessing injured resources

As a trustee for coastal resources and marine resources, NOAA is working with co-trustees (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Alaska) and the responsible party to conduct a natural resource damage assessment. NOAA and co-trustees have prepared a preliminary analysis of the natural resources at risk and are undertaking studies to assess the magnitude of the likely injuries.

The shorelines in this area consist of gravel beaches, rocky shores, and marshes. The site is home to many species of fish, marine mammals and seabirds, including several species of concern such as the Steller's eider (federally threatened), sea otters (a proposed federally threatened species), and Stellar sea lions (federally endangered).

Resource impacts from the spill include the following:

Shoreline. Almost 470 miles of shoreline were surveyed. Of those, some 70 miles of shoreline were oiled, with 19 miles of shore requiring cleanup efforts.

Birds. Over 1600 dead birds have been collected to date; total number dead is unknown.

Fish and shellfish. Oil has been found in subtidal habitats and has contaminated commercially important fishing grounds, near the spill site. The State initially closed all fisheries in the Makushin/Skan Bay area, but all areas were subsequently reopened.

Marine mammals. Oiled sea otters were observed, six of which are known dead. The full extent of dead sea otters is unknown. Stellar sea lions and harbor seals have also been observed in the vicinity of the spilled oil.

Restoring natural resources

NOAA and co-trustees are developing a plan describing the injured resources and services and the types of restoration projects to address them. Examples of projects for past oil spills include:

- Improving seabird breeding areas
- Improving anadromous fish habitat
- Removing abandoned fishing nets
- Restoring wetlands
- Enhancing shorelines
- Improving water quality

What's Next

NOAA personnel will continue working with the vessel owner and other state and federal trustees to continue assessment of natural resource injuries, and implement on-the-ground restoration when feasible.



NOAA scientist conducting biological assessment.

NOAA's Office of Response & Restoration—Protecting our Coastal Environment

**For further information about NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration,
please visit our Web site at**

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