

## News Release



P.O. Box 95009, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98145-2009

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### **NOTICE TO COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL HALIBUT FISHING VESSELS OPERATING IN ALASKAN STATE WATERS FROM CAPE KOVRIZHKA SOUTH TO UMNAK PASS**

The International Pacific Halibut Commission, in cooperation with the M/V *Selendang Ayu* oil spill Unified Command, advises all halibut fishers operating in state waters from Cape Kovrizhka south to Umnak Pass in Area 4A to exercise caution when fishing in these waters, due to residual effects from the oil spill. The following observations are meant to aid fishers in avoiding oil contaminated waters.

Results from overflights, shoreline surveys, and water quality sampling in state waters from Cape Kovrizhka south to Umnak Pass have shown that random, widely dispersed, small tar balls may be present in these waters. Tar ball concentrations appear to be highest in Makushin Bay and in Skan Bay east of the wreck. The risk to commercial fisheries is believed to be minimal; however, the Unified Command recommends that all fishing vessel operators who operate in this area be aware of the following information:

- Aerial observations from overflights conducted from December 12, 2004 through the present have shown occasional, light sheens to be present immediately adjacent to areas of heavy oiling in Skan and Makushin Bays, particularly during spring tides.
- Shoreline surveys conducted from December 27, 2004 to February 5, 2005 have shown areas of light, moderate, and heavy oiling in Skan and Makushin Bays and isolated areas of light to moderate oiling of the shoreline from Spray Cape south to Kismaliuk Bay.
- Results from water quality sampling surveys near heavily oiled shorelines in Makushin and Skan Bays detected tarballs, smears, stains and other evidence of oil in both the water column and on the bottom longline gear set on the seafloor encountered isolated tarballs at depths ranging from 15 to 105 fathoms. No oil was observed on crab or fish caught in this area.
- The State of Alaska has closed the area from Cape Kovrizhka south to Spray Cape to all commercial fishing, except for halibut fishing. ***Commercial halibut vessels should be aware that the state's "zero tolerance" policy is in effect for seafood caught in this area. All halibut caught within the closed area from Cape Kovrizhka south to Spray Cape will require mandatory inspections by the State of Alaska prior to processing. If oil is observed anywhere on the catch, gear, or vessel, the load cannot be landed.*** A complete advisory on the seafood inspection process is available at:

[http://www.state.ak.us/dec/spar/perp/response/sum\\_fy05/041207201/fish/041207201\\_seaf\\_adv\\_01.pdf](http://www.state.ak.us/dec/spar/perp/response/sum_fy05/041207201/fish/041207201_seaf_adv_01.pdf)

- Small, randomly scattered tarballs have also been encountered in state waters from Spray Cape south to Umnak Pass. Intermittent sampling of the seafloor in these areas using longline gear rigged with sorbent snares found no evidence of bottom oiling.

Shoreline cleanup activities have been suspended through approximately April 15, 2005. When cleanup activities are resumed, the potential may exist for remobilization of oil in cleanup areas. Vessel operators should be aware of this potential when fishing in areas near shoreline cleanup sites.

Vessel operators and crew are encouraged to report an oil observation to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation at 1-800-478-9300.

For the latest information about oiling observations, visit the Unified Command website at:  
[http://www.state.ak.us/dec/spar/perp/response/sum\\_fy05/041207201/041207201\\_index.htm#oiling](http://www.state.ak.us/dec/spar/perp/response/sum_fy05/041207201/041207201_index.htm#oiling)

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Bruce M. Leaman,  
Executive Director  
Phone: (206) 634-1838  
Fax: (206) 632-2983  
Web: [www.iphc.washington.edu](http://www.iphc.washington.edu)