

The Exxon Valdez oil spill (March 24, 1989) remains a major U.S. environmental disaster. The tanker's collision with Bligh Reef released 11 million gallons of crude oil into Prince William Sound, Alaska. This caused massive wildlife deaths (sea birds, otters, seals, eagles, orcas) and decimated salmon and herring fisheries, impacting coastal economies. Cleanup, involving thousands and billions of dollars, was extensive yet incomplete; oil residues persisted for decades. The disaster spurred the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, mandating stricter regulations, including double-hulled tankers. Further information is available from NOAA, History.com, and the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council.