

News release

GREENPEACE

Haida Gwaii protests Shell's *Arctic Challenger* vessel en route to Alaska

1 June 2015 (Victoria) – Twenty-five people in kayaks and on paddleboards are protesting one of Shell's Arctic drilling vessels today as it sails by the coast of Haida Gwaii on its way north to Alaska, continuing a weekend of spontaneous protest up the Inside Passage against the oil company's Arctic ambitions.

The *Arctic Challenger* is Shell's oil spill response vessel, which will participate in exploratory drilling operations in the Chukchi Sea in July, despite the opposition of more than seven million people around the world.

Erica Ryan-Gagne, who organized the protest in Skidegate, Haida Gwaii, said:

"Shell's *Arctic Challenger* entered Haida Gwaii waters en route to drill for risky oil in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas and also near the shorelines of Canada's Yukon and Northwest Territories. It flares off spilled oil and gas with a flare boom off the front of the ship. It works by a steel dome vacuuming water, oil and gas to the surface to be burned off. Even though in 2012 testing of the containment system failed. It's just pure madness! I don't want to see the Arctic waters, our brothers and sisters in Alaska, to be the next Gulf of Mexico, or Refugio State Beach, California with another huge fail at oil spill recovery."

According to the tracking site marinetraffic.com, the *Arctic Challenger* is being tugged by the *Corbin Foss*, which passed by the Shíshálh (Sechelt) Nation on Friday night. A spontaneous protest of "kayaktivists" was organized by Candace Campo, cultural director of the Sechelt Nation, who on Thursday returned from a tour on board Greenpeace's ship *Esperanza* to raise awareness about Shell's Arctic plans and the threat of increased tanker traffic on the coast. Over the weekend, individuals along the Inside Passage continued the protest, posting signs reading "Shell No" on their lawns as the *Arctic Challenger* sailed past; some even went to meet them in small boats, bearing signs opposing Shell's Arctic plans.

Shell's Arctic drilling plans have been the source of global controversy since they announced their intentions to drill in Alaska's icy waters more than three years ago. Since then, they have sunk more than \$6 billion U.S. into the project, and the project has been plagued by a litany of mistakes, accidents, and even criminal litigation.⁽¹⁾

Earlier this month, hundreds of "kayaktivists" gathered in Seattle to protest Shell's Arctic drilling fleet. Days later, two people chained themselves to the anchor of the *Arctic Challenger*, one of them staying for three nights, to delay the vessel from leaving.

Jessica Wilson, head of Greenpeace Canada's Arctic campaign, said from onboard the *Esperanza*:

"From Victoria to Haida Gwaii, all along the Inside Passage and across the Salish Sea, people are protesting Shell's Arctic fleet with kayaks, banners, and endless determination. Coastal First Nations are standing for their coasts, backed by seven million Arctic defenders. Shell might have bought their license to destroy in Washington, but those credentials are worth nothing here."

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B-roll and interviews available for download [here](#)

Photos can be downloaded [here](#).

For more information:

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Notes:

1. <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/mar/15/shell-barred-drill-oil-arctic>