

In light of the disaster still unfolding in the Gulf, Greenpeace is calling on US Department of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to stop Shell's plans to drill for oil off Alaska's coasts this summer. Putting the breaks on Shell's Alaska drilling is a first step toward a comprehensive ban on new oil drilling in all federal waters. No part of the US coast should be threatened with oil spills, and no coastal communities should have to bear the economic and social costs that will be felt by Gulf coast communities for decades to come.

BP DEEPWATER HORIZON

OVERSIGHT:

The US Minerals Management Service did not require BP to do an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the Deepwater Horizon. Oil continues to pour into the Gulf at a rate of up to millions of gallons per day.

YEAR BUILT: 2001

RISKS:

BP described the possibility of a spill as "virtually impossible," noting that "no mitigation measures other than those required by regulation and BP policy will be employed to avoid, diminish or eliminate potential impacts on environmental resources."

Because of a Minerals Management Service finding that a large spill in the Gulf was unlikely, BP was not required to do a rigorous analysis of the potential environmental impact of the rig.

SPILL RESPONSE:

BP has attempted to control the spill by spraying highly toxic chemical dispersants that break up the oil into small droplets. This highly toxic combination poses a major threat to marine life and simply hides the extent of the spill rather than truly "cleaning" it. BP's most permanent solution to the massive leak is to drill additional wells to relieve the pressure. It is hoped these relief wells can be completed in 6-8 weeks.

Despite multiple failed attempts at other solutions, the cleanup effort in the Gulf has been largely aided by calm weather and an abundance of boats and crew working to contain the oil. In addition, the planning that's in place in the Gulf is highly developed, and the equipment on hand is extensive. For example, 417,320 feet of oil containment boom is available for immediate use in the Gulf.

SHELL FRONTIER DISCOVERER

OVERSIGHT:

MMS has approved exploration drilling in the Arctic Ocean without considering the impacts of an accident like the ongoing BP Gulf disaster or the increased difficulty of responding in the Arctic. Shell hopes to begin drilling this summer.

YEAR BUILT: 1966

RISKS:

In its 2010 Exploration Plan for the Chukchi Sea, Shell states that "a large oil spill, such as a crude oil release from a blowout, is extremely rare and not considered a reasonably foreseeable impact."

The risk of a blowout like the one that caused the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster is actually higher in the Arctic. In fact, the former head of regulatory affairs at the MMS recently testified that "well control performance for deepwater drilling was significantly better than for shallow water operations."

SPILL RESPONSE:

Shell also plans to use dispersants in the event of a spill, with the permanent solution being relief wells. However, it may be impossible for another rig to arrive and drill a relief well before the Arctic sea freezes, which would leave the spill uncontrolled until the following summer.

The ability to respond quickly or effectively to a spill in the Arctic is significantly lower than in the Gulf. Preplanning is woefully inadequate. Maps that detail the most environmentally vulnerable areas are out of date. Only 8 self-propelled vessels would be available to respond to a spill. And as an indication of how inadequate preparations for a worst-case scenario are, less than 6,000 feet of containment boom is readily available.

High and icy seas and stormy weather are typical in the Arctic. According to NOAA, "recovery rates of spilled oil in optimum situations (calm weather, in a

In spite of the many resources available for containment, efforts were brought to a near halt by 8 foot seas in the days directly following the blowout.

DAMAGE TO ECOSYSTEMS:

The continuous stream of crude oil from BP's leaking well threatens hundreds of species in the Gulf of Mexico, including critical habitat for endangered species like whales, sea turtles, and migratory birds. The ecological damage from the BP oil spill could also extend to the commercial fisheries and shrimp farms that extend along the Gulf coast. Oyster farms are particularly sensitive to oil pollution because oysters are filter feeders, and likely to ingest oil particles as well as chemical dispersants and oil-soaked plankton.

MONEY SPENT LOBBYING IN 2009:

\$15,990,000

harbor, rapid response) rarely exceed 20 percent, and response to spills in ice in remote areas is substantially more challenging. On-scene response efforts may take days to weeks to implement, and are rarely effective."

Cleaning up a major oil spill in the Arctic is impossible.

DAMAGE TO ECOSYSTEMS:

The Arctic waters of Alaska's Chukchi and Beaufort seas are home to distinctive Arctic wildlife such as polar bears, walrus, ice seals and whales, species already under threat as global warming causes their sea ice habitat to melt away. Alaska Native communities have relied on coastal resources for their culture and subsistence for millenia, putting them at ground zero if an oil spill takes place.

MONEY SPENT LOBBYING IN 2009:

\$4,900,000



Gulf oil spill
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The Esperanza
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Gulf oil spill
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Scattered drift ice is seen here, in Arctic Ocean
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