

MAINTAIN THE MORATORIUM ON COASTAL OIL DEVELOPMENT IN BC!

The Federal Government is considering lifting the thirty-five year old moratorium on oil and gas development off Canada's Pacific Coast. Coastal oil and gas development would seriously harm our marine ecosystems, fishing, and whale-watching industry through pollution and seismic testing (sonic blasts in the ocean that harm/kill marine life). More than 70 different groups ranging from tourism and fishers to First Nations and environmental groups have joined together in the Oil Free Coast Alliance and are calling on the provincial and federal governments to maintain the moratoria on any coastal oil and gas development off BC's coast. Here are some of the reasons:

- 1) 75% of respondents to the federal government's own public input process in the spring of 2004 supported keeping the moratorium in place. Only 23% supported lifting the moratorium.
- 2) Seismic testing (oil exploration) is extremely destructive to marine life (see back page).
- 3) The environmental and economic consequences of major oil spills or blowouts in Canada's most earthquake prone region would be devastating to coastal communities.
- 4) Major oil spills aside, inherent in coastal oil and gas production is daily chronic pollution, including the discharge of toxic drilling fluid, chronic oil leakages, and small oil spills that are unavoidable.
- 5) Coastal oil and gas development runs counter to Canada's Kyoto Protocol commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Hydrocarbon extraction and production accounts for almost 20% of all greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.
- 6) Few direct jobs would be created for rural communities along the coast. Foreign work crews with the necessary specialized skills would be brought in from around the world.

YOUR LETTERS COUNT!

Please let the following federal politicians know whether or not you think the federal government should ban coastal oil and gas development in BC. Be sure to include your home mailing address.

WRITE TO:

- a) Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources: Lunn.G@parl.gc.ca
- b) Maxime Bernier, Minister of Industry: Bernier.M@parl.gc.ca
- c) Prime Minister Stephen Harper: pm@pm.gc.ca
- d) Rona Ambrose, Minister of Environment: Ambrose.R@parl.gc.ca
- e) Loyola Hearn, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans: Hearn.L@parl.gc.ca

Or, write them all at: House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6 (no postage required if mailed in Canada). For more information, please visit www.bcoilslick.org or www.wildernesscommitteevictoria.org.

SEISMIC TESTING THREATENS OUR SEAS!

Industry and government have recently been pushing for seismic testing- the "exploration" phase of oil and gas development. Seismic testing (loud sonic underwater booms) used to locate oil reserves are proven to have disastrous consequences for marine mammals and ecosystems. Seismic testing uses high-pressure air guns to blast the ocean floor, sending sound waves long distances (often thousands of kilometers) through water, and causing reverberation deep within the earth.

Before the election, the Conservative party stated that they support oil exploration, which would require lifting the moratorium. However, seismic testing is one of the most destructive elements of the offshore oil and gas industry.

Seismic testing damages ecosystems in the following ways:

- 1) It drives whales away from migration routes and feeding grounds. The noise from seismic testing can hinder whale-to-whale communication, affecting their ability to navigate, catch prey, and reproduce. Whales can become emaciated when forced off their traditional feeding grounds.
- 2) Fatal strandings of beaked whales in Mexico in 1998 occurred at the same time that sonic booms were being discharged in nearby waters; in 2002 humpback whales faced similar problems in Brazil.
- 3) Seismic testing also harms or kills organisms close to blast zones. For example: female snow crab populations showed long and short-term damage including hemorrhaging and detached reproductive organs following a recent 12 day seismic experiment.
- 4) Fishing catch rates often decrease significantly while seismic testing is occurring. Also, the loud noises can damage the abilities of fish to locate food and to communicate and thus can hamper their survival.