

PRESS RELEASE

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ALASKANS CALL FOR STOP TO TOXIC OIL DUMPING IN COOK INLET

*STATE MAKES MOCKERY OF “RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT” BY LETTING OIL
INDUSTRY INCREASE TOXIC POLLUTION IN PRIME BELUGA & FISH HABITAT*

HOMER, AK - Today a coalition of groups, filed by Trustees for Alaska, pressed the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) to reconsider a final Clean Water Act permit that allows increased toxic discharges from oil and gas facilities into Upper Cook Inlet.

Congress passed the Clean Water Act in 1972 with a goal to ratchet-down and eventually eliminate pollution from the nation’s waters. ADEC, which assumed full authority to administer the wastewater and discharge permitting and compliance program for Alaska in 2012, instead turns the Clean Water Act on its head, and allows Hilcorp and other corporations to increase profits by dumping billions of gallons of toxic waste into important beluga whale and fish habitat each year.

The Cook Inlet General Permit is supposed to regulate pollution discharges from a variety of oil and gas platforms and facilities in Upper Cook Inlet. The Trading Bay Production Facility on the west side of Cook Inlet accounts for the lion’s share (more than 80%) of pollution under the permit, and will now be allowed to spew more than 740,000 lbs/year of oil & grease, more than 307,000 lbs/year of total aqueous hydrocarbons and more than 15 lbs/year of mercury.

To accommodate these massive toxic discharges, ADEC falls back on “mixing zones,” which allow polluters to avoid measuring compliance at the end of the discharge pipe, and instead allows them to mix their wastes in receiving waters before measuring compliance. For Trading Bay, ADEC increases the size of the mixing zone more than 800% from the previous permit, allowing Hilcorp to measure compliance with standards designed to protect people, fish and whales more than 1.5 miles from the discharge point.

Importantly, Trading Bay and other facilities covered by the permit dump directly into the designated Critical Habitat Area for the endangered Cook Inlet beluga whale, which is teetering on the edge of extinction.

ADEC's decision on the Cook Inlet dumping permit comes in the wake of another recent decision where the ADEC's Commissioner Jason Brune also ignored facts, science and law in issuing a Clean Water Act permit for the proposed Donlin open pit gold mine.

See the comments on the proposed permit here:

<https://inletkeeper.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-05-22-CIGP-Comment-FINAL.pdf>

The request for agency review is here:

<https://inletkeeper.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-11-08-TfA-Request-for-Informal-Review-re-CIGP-with-Attachments.docx.pdf>

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Statements from groups:

Our state government is failing Alaskans by allowing dumping of toxic pollutants into the waters where we fish and recreate. It is clear that ADEC is not looking out for our safety but instead simply allowing Outside industry to maximize profits from our Inlet before leaving the state.- Cook Inletkeeper

Backsliding of the basic water quality standards in Cook Inlet is unacceptable. Maintaining water quality standards is essential to the success of our fisheries, our economies, and our communities on the Kenai Peninsula. - Kachemak Bay Conservation Society

Healthy waters, air, and food are fundamental human rights that the State of Alaska is allowing the oil industry to violate. It is unacceptable for the oil industry to dump toxic waste into the Inlet, thereby degrading water quality and harming fish, wildlife, and our health. - Alaska Community Action on Toxics