



PRESS RELEASE

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MORE INFORMATION:

Satchel Pondolfino, Clean Water Lead

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The North Trading Bay Sheen Reinforces the Need to Dismantle Retired Infrastructure

HOMER, AK — Cook Inletkeeper calls for the relevant authorities to continue investigating the source and cause of the sheen observed in the North Trading Bay area on August 24. This incident shows the risk of allowing half-century-old oil and gas infrastructure to remain standing indefinitely in our waters. Hilcorp's Spark platform, installed in 1967 and inactive since 1992, has been identified as a probable source of the unknown pollutant. This warrants that state agencies conduct a thorough inspection of the Spark platform, its neighbors, and associated pipelines. This should include the integrity of all shut-in wells in the vicinity, if those wells cannot be ruled out as a source of the sheen.

Cook Inletkeeper applauds the citizen pilot who alerted officials to the oil sheen stretching five miles across Cook Inlet.

“This is one more reminder of why having oil and gas in our backyard is a liability to the marine ecosystems we rely on for our livelihoods and wellbeing,” said **Satchel Pondolfino, Inletkeeper's Clean Water Lead**. “Enough is enough; we have to start holding operators accountable for dismantling retired infrastructure. Hilcorp, the owner of the Spark platform and 15 of the 17 in Cook Inlet, has a well-documented business model of buying old equipment and cutting corners to increase production—a business practice that has resulted in an egregious track record of environmental and safety violations. Though the official source is still in question, this week’s spill is another example of the threat aging infrastructure poses to Cook Inlet’s fish, wildlife, and coastal communities, and of the need for owners to take responsibility.”

The State of Alaska has every authority to enforce the dismantling, removal, and remediation of old platforms but has never once required an oil and gas operator to do so, despite the risks, maintenance needs, and the fact that cleanup costs increase significantly the longer they remain inactive. Yesterday's spill is just the latest warning. As Hilcorp's abandoned infrastructure continues to rot, more leaks and spills are inevitable. These disasters are not accidents—they are the direct result of neglect, and they are entirely preventable. Dismantlement has been delayed long enough.

"Hilcorp enjoys a free pass in Cook Inlet. While most oil and gas companies pay their fair share, Hilcorp dodges state corporate income tax entirely. They get a Clean Water Act exemption, dumping toxic drilling muds and polluted water straight into Tikahtnu. To top it off, state regulators keep letting Hilcorp put off cleaning up their old, dangerous infrastructure, leaving Alaskans to shoulder the risk," said **Bridget Maryott, Inletkeeper's Co-Executive Director**.

This spill comes at a time when Cook Inlet is slated for extensive lease sales in the federal waters of the lower inlet. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) mandated six new offshore oil and gas lease sales in Cook Inlet, through 2032. While the first of these lease sales, held on March 4, 2026, raised \$0 and drew no bids, the Trump administration is proposing five additional lease sales in the Inlet, in addition to the five mandated by the OBBBA, as part of its proposed offshore drilling leasing schedule. Continuing to build out oil and gas infrastructure in Cook Inlet amplifies the risk of leaks, spills, and continued toxic dumping.

About Cook Inletkeeper: *Cook Inletkeeper is a community-based non-profit organization that advocates for clean water and lands for all, protecting Alaska's Cook Inlet | Tikahtnu watershed and the life it sustains.*

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