

**Unified Command: *M/V Selendang Ayu* Grounding****PUBLIC INFORMATION RELEASE**

M/V Selendang Ayu Oil Spill Fishery Impacts
December 23, 2004

On December 20, 2004, an *ad hoc* work group was established to review available data regarding Aleutian Islands and Bering Sea fisheries that may be impacted by the December 7, 2004 *M/V Selendang Ayu* oil spill at Unalaska Island. The group consists of experts from state and federal fishery management agencies, environmental health agencies, fisheries biologists, oceanographers, local government and fish marketing organizations.

The group has been meeting to consider all available information regarding the potential impact of the spilled oil to Aleutian Islands and Bering Sea fisheries. Information is being compiled from water quality samples, computer models, and overflight observations to determine areas at risk of oil contamination. A targeted sampling plan is being developed to determine whether oil is present in Makushin Bay, Unalaska Bay, and adjacent areas, in anticipation of the upcoming Tanner crab fishery in this region. Water intakes at local fish processing facilities will also be sampled to ensure that no oil contamination exists. Water quality sampling in at-risk fishing grounds are expected to begin as soon as the necessary vessels and equipments arrive on-scene.

Decisions regarding potential closures or delays to upcoming fishery openings will be made based on the best available information at the time. State seafood processing regulations mandate a "zero tolerance" approach to oil-contaminated seafood. Fishery managers will make decisions about fishery closures to ensure that target species, fishing gear, and processing facilities remain 100% free of oil contamination. ADEC Environmental Health personnel will actively monitor processor facilities and conduct sight and smell tests on landed species to ensure that no contaminated fish enter the seafood processing environment.

Sampling efforts will continue for as long as oil is observed to be in the vicinity of fishery management areas. Information will be made available to the public as soon as it comes available regarding the outcome of sampling efforts and the status of upcoming fisheries, including the January 15 inshore Tanner crab opening, the January 15 Bering Sea opilio crab opening, and the January 1 and January 20 Pacific cod and Pollock openings. A fisheries information link is being established on the Unified Command website at <http://www.state.ak.us/dec/selendang>

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