



FACT SHEET

November 16, 2009

Subsistence Foods Not Impacted By Oil Spill

BACKGROUND

On March 5, 2009, the fishing vessel (F/V) *Mar-Gun* ran aground within the surf zone of Staraya Artil located on the north shoreline of St. George Island. The vessel was carrying diesel fuel, and lube and hydraulic oil. Responders removed approximately 18,371 gallons of mixed oils. An unknown amount of diesel fuel spilled into the water and onto the beach.



Photograph by ADEC, March 16, 2009.

SUBSISTENCE FOOD SAMPLING RESULTS

Samples of subsistence resources were collected in late spring to measure the level of petroleum contaminants and to determine if consuming these resources would present potential health risks. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), working with the St. George Traditional Council, oversaw the sampling plan, which was developed by the Polaris Applied Sciences Inc. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Division of Public Health conducted the analysis.

Tissue samples were collected from limpets, mussels and sea urchins and analyzed for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), a class of chemicals that reflect petroleum contamination. The levels of PAHs found in mussels and other sampled subsistence resources were far below levels of concern for human health. The DHSS Division of Public Health will issue a health evaluation report on subsistence resources in the area.

Subsistence harvesters should always be aware of the dangers of paralytic shellfish poison (PSP), which is a serious health hazard. Due to PSP concerns, there is an on-going advisory in the state against the gathering and consumption of shellfish except at approved beaches. **There are no approved beaches on St. George Island.** The health hazard from PSP is much more serious than any health hazards associated with petroleum contaminants.

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