

# Craig Matthews

For those who responded to try to clean up the mess made by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, the memories are still painfully clear. While there was little that could be done to save the oceans and sea life from the ugly slick of oil, one good thing that came from that disaster was the formation of laws and rules and a process that has protected Prince William Sound and set a high bar for marine navigation in the state. Rolling back those laws in any way undermines the hard-earned wisdom that came at great sacrifice for the people and environment of this state. As climate change impacts our waters, the species already struggling to survive cannot afford another Exxon Valdez Oil Spill. We should be strengthening the laws that protect our waters, not degrading them.

The oil industry will always ask for more wiggle room when it comes to regulation and requirements. They are not in the business of protecting Alaska's waters. They are in the business of protecting their bottom line. They will say the regulations are hurting their ability to stay in business here in Alaska, but there is a point where we have to hold the line. If the oil industry cannot afford to move through Prince William Sound under the regulations put in place after the spill, so be it. It is not worth it to Alaska to risk damaging or destroying the many industries, such as fisheries and tourism, for the sake of the oil industry's plea to improve its bottom line.

Furthermore, while rolling back regulations might appease the oil industry in the short term, the administration who backs the degrading rules and processes that have protected Alaska since the spill will be on the wrong side of history.