

# Michael O'Meara

Conserve, improve, and protect Alaska's natural resources and environment to enhance the health, safety, and social well-being of Alaskans. That's the mission of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

DEC Commissioner Jason W. Brune's opinion seems that our proven oil spill prevention and response regulations and statutes are overly onerous and burdensome for the oil and gas corporations that profit from being allowed to extract our hydrocarbons. In light of that, DEC is considering ways to water down the protections which were imposed following the Exxon Valdez catastrophic fiasco.

As a fifty year Alaskan I am offended by his disregard for the welfare of our people and the natural environment most of us depend on for our physical and spiritual well being. I oppose any attempt to degrade oil spill prevention and response standards for the convenience of outside corporations intent on nothing but their own profit.

After the Exxon Valdez ran aground I was charged by the Homer's Pratt Museum Board of Directors to curate an exhibit documenting the causes, events, and lessons of the spill. In gathering facts for Darkened Waters from all parties involved -- Alaska Native People, commercial fishermen, scientists, oil industry workers, residents of coastal communities, state and federal agencies and others -- it became clear that the spill didn't need to happen. The record clearly showed that disregard of the dangers in transporting oil over water and complacency by industry, the Coast Guard, and other government officials virtually assured disaster. The lessons learned birthed the complex and effective spill prevention and response requirements that have successfully protected us from another such catastrophe for the last 31 years.

Do not increase the risk of another catastrophic spill through a return to complacency by weakening our oil spill prevention and response protocols in any way.