



U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security  
United States  
Coast Guard



Alaska Department of  
**Environmental  
Conservation**



## Unified Command: *M/V Selendang Ayu Grounding*

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Press Release

### Subsistence foods near Selendang Ayu wreck sampled for contaminants

*Samples show no levels of concern; officials issue advice to avoid potential health risks*

**April 18, 2006**— Mussels and other sampled subsistence resources in Unalaska Bay and near the Selendang Ayu wreck site do not show high levels of petroleum contamination and may be safely consumed, according to state officials.

Last summer, samples of subsistence resources in the region of the wreck were collected to assess the level of petroleum contaminants and to determine if they posed a health risk. The Selendang Ayu ran aground and broke apart near Unalaska Island between Skan Bay and Spray Cape, spilling approximately 321,000 gallons of intermediate fuel oil, 14,680 gallons of marine diesel and miscellaneous oils, and 60,000 tons of soybeans into the waters and onto nearby beaches.

Tissue samples were collected from black chitons, blue mussels, green sea urchin roe, pink salmon, pacific cod and a harbor seal and analyzed for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), a class of chemicals that reflects petroleum contamination.

Although the tests indicate that subsistence foods are safe to harvest, health officials have the following advice for avoiding any potential health risks near areas oiled from any spill:

- Do not harvest and consume foods where oil sheens can be seen or smelled on the surface or subsurface sediments or water.
- Do not collect or eat subsistence food animals that are behaving oddly or have unusual lesions.
- Avoid harvesting shellfish, like mussels, from oiled beaches, or if you see or smell oil on them. Shellfish do not remove oil from their bodies very quickly.
- Avoid harvesting chitons, limpets, and octopus from oiled beaches, and do not eat them if you see or smell oil on the animals. Although it is not known how quickly these intertidal organisms remove oil from their bodies, they are likely to be re-exposed to oil trapped in sediments.
- Eat fish that do not have oil on them and otherwise appear healthy. Finfish, like salmon, process oil quickly through their bodies.
- Eat birds and mammals that do not appear to be oiled and otherwise appear healthy. Birds and mammals also rapidly remove oil from their bodies. Check

their feet, feathers or fur for oil. If you are still concerned, avoid eating organ meats, especially the liver.

The Unified Command of the M/V Selendang Ayu grounding will conduct additional sampling of mussels near the spill site this summer to determine if PAH levels in mussels are changing over time.

“If shellfish are harvested from areas with no signs of oil on the surface or subsurface of water and sediments, PAH contamination of shellfish is of minimal risk,” said Scott Arnold, with the Alaska Division of Public Health.

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**Note:** Subsistence harvesters should always be aware of the dangers of paralytic shellfish poison (PSP), which is a serious health hazard. The PSP toxin comes from algae, a food source for shellfish like clams, mussels, and crabs. Two samples collected last summer from Skan Bay contained PSP toxin in concentrations above the allowable level for commercial sale. 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 in the Unalaska/Dutch Harbor area.