

Abstract

Oiled Wildlife Response 20 Years On: Progress, Pitfalls and a Path Forward

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The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill had huge impact on oiled wildlife response in North America and around the world. While it the largest oil spill in history a combination of factors including its' occurrence at the dawn of CNN and the "pristine" setting of Prince William Sound and it's impact on its' particularly charismatic sea otters combined to bring public sentiment and political will together to initiate legislation in the US that changed the oiled wildlife business forever. Subsequent spills in California and later Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America have all increased the public and political awareness and laid the foundation for legislation, regulation and support for increased capacity and professionalism in responding to oiled wildlife incidents. The number of organizations responding to these incidents has increased significantly in the last 20 years and several of those organizations have taken leadership roles along side more organizations that pioneered the field. This presentation will look at the changes over the last 20 years of oiled wildlife response, the current state of the field as well as seek to suggest a path forward to increased capacity and professionalism, international cooperation and organizational stability.