



Northern Alaska Environmental Center

Celebrating 35 Years as the Conservation Voice of the North

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LORD JOHN BROWNE: FIX THIS MESS BP's CEO visits Fairbanks Friday

The fallout from a major oil spill at Prudhoe Bay, leaking wells, and other safety and environmental problems plague BP's CEO during a visit this week to Alaska.

Earlier this year, a corroded pipeline between facilities at Prudhoe Bay released an estimated 200,000 gallons of crude oil onto the tundra at Prudhoe Bay. Review of the documentary record indicates that the inadequate corrosion monitoring and leak detection systems caused the spill, which was the largest crude oil spill in Alaska's North Slope oil fields history. As Lord Browne visits Alaska, Congressional Committees are conducting oversight investigations and there are on-going federal criminal investigations.

"BP's record is not green in Alaska as recent spills and leaks show," said Pamela A. Miller, Arctic Coordinator of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center.

"Messy problems like the largest crude oil spill in history on Alaska's North Slope and 57 wells leaking petroleum products are just the latest in a decades history of poor practices by BP, not isolated incidents" said Miller. "This is an unfortunate preview of just how "gentle" oil drilling operations would likely be if allowed in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's fragile Coastal plain.

Independent researcher Richard Fineberg of Ester, who prepared [a report on the March spill at Prudhoe Bay](#) recently summarized BP's pattern of poor environmental performance in Alaska in a [background report for the Alaska Wilderness League](#). "The documentary record suggests that BP does not operate the nation's largest petroleum complex in a safe and environmentally sound manner," said Fineberg.

According to Fineberg, his analyses indicate that BP's problems stem from a management culture more interested in the bottom-line than protecting the environment through use of the best available technology. "When problems are discovered," Fineberg commented, "BP always promises to do better. But promise and practice are two different things, and there is often a disconnect between rhetoric and reality in the North Slope oil fields and on Trans-Alaska Pipeline."

The March pipeline spill was from a state-regulated pipeline, however despite earlier statements about potentially fining BP millions of dollars, no fine has been announced. One reason may be the inherent conflict of interest right now between the state as regulator and the ongoing negotiations with BP and other major North Slope producers on a \$30 billion gas pipeline project. It is no surprise that damage control like full-page ads and a CEO visit was in order.

Despite industry hype about the safety of development and new technology, the Prudhoe Bay oil fields and Trans-Alaska Pipeline have caused an average of 504 spills annually on the North Slope since 1996, according to records of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

"We appreciate Sir John Browne's enlightened view that global warming is a real problem. But the oil industry in Alaska continues to dig the hole deeper by seeking to remove protections for special places like Teshekpuk Lake and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for new oil fields that would add to global warming pollution," said Miller.