

Marine Oil Spill Prevention Education Program

Protecting Our Waters, Protecting Our Future

Small oil spills continue to plague our marine environment. These spills often go unnoticed and introduce tens of thousands of gallons of persistent, toxic oil into our waters every year — often a few drops at a time. Washington Sea Grant Program is working to curb these spills and, with continued Legislative support, will share its message of “protection through prevention” with thousands of commercial and recreational boaters throughout Washington state.



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Even trace amounts of oil can threaten a fragile and fertile ecosystem of juvenile and larval organisms and undermine the very strength and vitality of thousands of species. Cumulatively, small spills can also degrade the livelihoods and recreational pursuits that depend on clean water. While multinational attention, laws and billions of public and private dollars are aimed at eliminating or responding to large catastrophic spills, small oil spills receive little attention from the media or the public. They are rarely cleaned up and few resources are allocated to prevent them.

Protection through Prevention

In 1991, Washington State created an oil spill prevention education program within Washington Sea Grant Program. This regulatory initiative was based on the wisdom that prevention is the most effective form of protection for our marine environment. WSGP has worked with industry, environmental organizations and state and federal regulatory bodies to forge a collaborative educational approach to eliminate spills.

Objectives

- Interact with industry to develop techniques and equipment that helps eliminate marine oil spills.
- Establish waste-oil and filter recycling programs.
- Educate marine users about the environmental impacts of their operations and promote sound boater stewardship practices.
- Produce informational materials to increase awareness of pollution problems and provide pollution-free alternatives.
- Establish a regional approach to spill prevention to ensure a consistent and accurate spill prevention message among agencies.
- Provide leadership to assist boat and marina operators and agency staff to establish effective spill prevention measures.





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Activities

Oil spill educational materials. Published educational and awareness materials including:

- Promotional handouts and inserts that reach tens of thousands of marine operators with spill prevention information and advocate the need for reporting spills.
- Brochures and placards to encourage safer boat repair, maintenance and fueling.
- “Spills Add Up” inserts in the *Marine Yellow Pages* and *Pilothouse Guide*.
- Spill Prevention Education Kits that have been distributed to thousands of spill-prone audiences to help eliminate oily bilge discharges.
- An effective fuel collar device to eliminate fuel splash-back and spills associated with boat fueling.

Pacific Oil Spill Prevention Education Team (POSPET). WSGP has helped form and guide POSPET to institute collaborative programs supported by agency and industry representatives from Washington, British Columbia, Oregon and California, including Washington Department of Ecology. POSPET has prompted the creation of a regional 1.800.OIL.S911 response phone number to promote spill reporting and effective response. POSPET also provides spill prevention education for the States/B.C. Oil Spill Task Force. The POSPET networking forum ensures an accurate and consistent spill prevention message throughout the region.

Pacific Coast Congress of Harbormasters (PCC). As chair of the PCC Training and Education, Eric Olsson, WSGP’s Marine Oil Spill Prevention Education Specialist, ensures that pollution prevention issues are addressed at seminars and programs. Olsson has provided spill prevention presentations that reach hundreds of harbormasters and marina managers throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Boater and Agency Education. Spill prevention training has been offered to the

majority of U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary flotillas in Washington state. Presentations have been provided to marina managers and staff to assist them in developing best management practices and in educating boaters to eliminate spill-prone operations.

Marine oil filter recycling. Used oil filter recycling programs have been successfully established at Everett Marina and Seattle’s Fishermen’s Terminal. Other ports have followed these successes and developed their own recycling facilities.

Fishing Vessel Safety. Spill prevention practices have been introduced to tribal and other commercial vessel operators at remote coastal marinas such as Neah Bay and LaPush and other coastal communities during WSGP-sponsored vessel safety programs.

Much has been accomplished over the past decade. However, before Washington’s waters are fully protected from small oil spills, much work remains to be done.

In order to continue to address the issue of small oil spills, the State of Washington needs:

- Monitoring and research on the impacts of small oil spills and the effectiveness of prevention strategies for eliminating them.
- Expanded marine user education.

Washington Sea Grant Program’s Small Oil Spill Prevention Education Program stands ready to assist.

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