

This Year You Made the Right Choice Clear

OIL SPILL MAPPING PUTS KEY INFORMATION
IN THE HANDS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES



BELUGA WHALE (*DELPHINAPTERUS LEUCAS*)

So-called canaries of the sea, beluga whales rely on their chirps, clicks, whistles, and squeals to communicate, navigate, and find food. More than just a smiling face, these sociable mammals serve as important indicators of overall marine health. As Arctic warming accelerates and sea ice retreats, oil and gas companies are gearing up to drill in prime beluga habitat. WWF's recent mapping work makes it clear just what an oil spill could mean for these whales—and for other species in the Beaufort Sea.

THIS YEAR'S SUCCESSES:

As a rapidly warming Arctic attracts mining, shipping, and oil and gas development, we're working with local communities to conserve key Arctic habitats for the wildlife and people who depend on them.

- In 2013, WWF partnered with Inuvialuit hunter and trapper committees in a first-ever "Clean Camps, Clean Coasts" stewardship campaign. Local events saw workers and volunteers remove oil drums, snowmobile parts and more than 150 bags of garbage from traditional camps on the Beaufort Sea coast.
- We're currently funding a project to compile and catalogue traditional Inuvialuit knowledge and land use information about the Beaufort Sea, creating a database that will help inform planning decisions.
- WWF helped keep people and bears safe in the Hamlet of Arviat, Nunavut, where our polar bear-human conflict mitigation efforts resulted in zero bears killed—for the second year in a row—for threatening lives and livelihoods in the community. This program, run in partnership with the hamlet and other stakeholders, is a successful model that helped inform polar bear guard training for other Nunavut communities.

LEADER PROFILE:

Karine Blatter has always had a soft spot in her heart for wildlife and nature. She and her husband support WWF's Arctic program because of their passion for protecting Canada's natural beauty. "My family loves living in the city, but our ideal vacation is to get away from everything and go into nature," says Karine. "My favourite places are those that are still untouched—like much of the Arctic. It is clear how climate change is negatively affecting this region and its wildlife. The Arctic is vulnerable and it is our responsibility as Canadians to take care of it."



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THE BIG STORY:

Scenario: June 23, 2009. A shallow-water oil well blows out in the Amauligak lease area, just north of Tuktoyaktuk. With no response, 3,000 barrels of crude oil pour into the Beaufort Sea each day for 30 days.

This is just one of 22 scenarios mapped at arctic spills.wwf.ca, an interactive website that examines how potential oil spills in the Beaufort Sea might play out. To create it, we commissioned experts to examine existing or proposed shipping routes and drilling locations, compile actual historical environmental data such as wind patterns and ocean currents, and apply knowledge of oil spill behaviours gleaned from real-life spills.

None of the scenarios they examined look good for the belugas, bowheads, polar bears, and eider ducks in the area, nor for the Inupiat, Inuvialuit, and Gwich'in communities intimately connected to this Arctic ecosystem.

Currently, the National Energy Board is considering two oil and gas applications for the Beaufort Sea. That's just the beginning. In 2012, the federal government auctioned off exploration rights to 905,000 hectares of the Beaufort—rights that were snapped up by companies keen to take advantage of increasingly ice-free summers.

By sharing our scenarios with northern communities and decision-makers, WWF is helping ensure that development in this remote and ecologically fragile environment is done right: only in the right places, with all the right precautions in place.

SEPTEMBER 2011

WWF establishes an office in Inuvik, enabling us to work more closely with local communities

FALL 2011

WWF participates in National Energy Board hearings to uphold the highest safety standards for offshore drilling in the Canadian Arctic

MAY 2012

The federal government places 905,000 hectares of the Beaufort Sea up for bids for offshore energy exploration

SEPTEMBER 2013

Imperial Oil, ExxonMobil and BP submit a joint application to drill offshore in the deep waters of the Beaufort Sea

JULY 2014

WWF launches a website modelling 22 oil spill scenarios in the Canadian Beaufort Sea

SUMMER 2014

WWF experts travel to Inupiat, Inuvialuit, and Gwich'in communities to share our research