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***Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Case Has Implications for Cleanup in San Francisco Bay**

San Francisco, CA (February 27, 2008) – Today the U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments on the case surrounding the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. In 1987, the tanker *Exxon Valdez* spilled tens of millions of gallons of Alaskan crude oil into Prince William Sound. The Court will hear arguments from *Exxon* about why it should not have to pay the \$5 billion liability award imposed by an Anchorage jury in 1994. The High Court’s decision is relevant for oil spill prevention and cleanup in San Francisco Bay.

“The issue is whether companies will be held sufficiently responsible for the environmental and public health damage caused by their vessels,” said Sejal Choksi, Program Director for San Francisco Baykeeper. “Fuel-laden oil tankers traverse San Francisco Bay every day; if *Exxon* avoids responsibility for the tragic and preventable 1987 accident, that would significantly increase the risk of corporate irresponsibility the next time the Bay Area has an oil spill.”

Among other claims, *Exxon* has argued that an 1818 maritime case known as the *Amiable Nancy* insulates ship owners from the damages incurred by the plundering activities of their crew while at sea. That case hinged on the fact that ships of that era typically left port for years at a time with no contact with the vessel owner; today’s modern communications obviously create changed circumstances.

“The *Exxon Valdez* oil spill showed that oil is considerably more toxic in the long term than scientists previously thought,” said Alaska-based Prince William Soundkeeper Jennifer Gibbons. “The once-lucrative herring fisheries of Prince William Sound are now gone, and twenty years after the spill, along hundreds of miles of coastline, you can still scoop up oil with your fingers.”

Through countless appeals and legal maneuvering, *Exxon* lawyers whittled down the original \$5 billion jury verdict to \$2.5 billion, and *Exxon* is now asking the Supreme Court to disallow that award under U.S. maritime law and the Clean Water Act. In their Supreme Court filing, plaintiffs described the amount as “about three weeks of *Exxon*’s current [1994] net profits.” In 2007, *Exxon* recorded the highest profits of any U.S. corporation ever, pulling in \$40.6 billion – or more than \$1,287 of profit for every second of 2007.

The total dollar value of damage caused by San Francisco’s Cosco Busan spill has yet to be calculated. The 53,000 gallon oil spill from the Cosco Busan container ship on November 7, 2007 was the worst ship-related spill in the San Francisco Bay in nearly two decades and was responsible for injuring and killing thousands of birds and for fouling popular beaches and tidal pools. Cleanup costs quickly exceeded the \$61.8 million liability limits set by federal law, and long-term restoration costs have yet to be assessed. The impact of the spill on herring, the Bay’s last commercial fishery, is still unknown.

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For background information on the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, visit: [www.waterkeeper.org](http://www.waterkeeper.org).

Founded in 1989, **San Francisco Baykeeper** is the Bay’s pollution watchdog, using science and advocacy to reform policy and enforce clean water laws. [www.baykeeper.org](http://www.baykeeper.org). **Waterkeeper Alliance** is the fastest growing and most effective protector of clean water because we act locally and organize globally. On more than 170 waterways around the world local Waterkeepers are on patrol, standing up to polluters and enforcing your right to clean water. Waterkeeper Alliance connects and supports these grassroots advocates and fights for clean water worldwide.