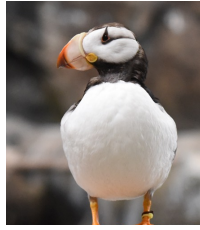


How does an oil spill impact food safety and security?



The Oil Spill Recovery Institute (OSRI) is supporting research on food safety and security following an oil spill in Alaska. Food includes fish, shellfish, mammals, birds, and plants that are harvested for commercial, recreational, subsistence, and personal use.

WE WANT TO HEAR DIRECTLY FROM ALASKA COMMUNITIES!

What are your main concerns if an oil spill occurs near your community or harvest area?

Have oil spills impacted wild foods or food security in your community?

After spills in the past, how did you decide if foods were safe to harvest?

What information would help you to make harvest decisions?

Nuka Research and the Aleutians and Bering Sea Islands Initiative are seeking partners to help distribute a short online questionnaire, provide expert input, or invite community representatives to a presentation and discussion.

The purpose of this project is to identify research ideas or other suggestions that would help improve decision making, our understanding of risks and impacts, or communications related to food safety and security after an oil spill.

For more information, please contact:

Sierra Fletcher – sierra@nukaresearch.com.

Limited funds are available to compensate for your time in support of this project.



OIL SPILL RECOVERY INSTITUTE
CORDOVA, ALASKA

Here's some of what we know...

... but we want to hear from you.

This information is being provided to help start the discussion.

We invite corrections, additional thoughts, perspectives, and research suggestions!

How might an oil spill impact food safety and security?

- Oil may contaminate food items and people who consume them may become ill
- Oil contamination may reduce access to harvests or reduce harvests
- Consumers may have to replace wild foods with store-bought substitutes
- Disruption of cultural practices (including non-food harvests or traditions associated with harvests and sharing)
- Mental health impacts

Who decides if harvested foods are safe after an oil spill?

After a known spill, particularly a larger spill, state and federal agencies may work together and with Tribal and local authorities to decide on the appropriate action.

Harvesters also make their own decisions – either based on their own observations or concerns, or on information shared with them.

How do agencies and their partners make food safety decisions?

It depends on the situation, including what spilled and how much, where, and whether subsistence, commercial, personal use, or recreational resources affected. Often working with local and Tribal authorities, agencies may base decisions or recommendations on:

- Known or assumed presence of oil in the area
- Seeing or smelling oil on food species
- Inspection of fishing gear, vessels, tenders, or processors for signs of oil
- A risk assessment approach to determining whether food species are contaminated enough to be unsafe for people to eat (this requires information and assumptions both about the quantity and type of contamination as well as about the population consuming the food)

What happens if harvested foods are unsafe after an oil spill?

Depending on the resource and the spill event, agencies and their partners may:

- Issue an advisory (watch for oiling, limit consumption, avoid certain foods, etc.)
- Close access to an area due to ongoing response activities
- Close a fishery, require vessel/gear inspections, or ban commercial sale of harvested products from a certain area

How are food safety risks communicated?

- For commercial operations, communications are usually from the regulating agencies
- Broader community communications from local or Tribal authorities, health authorities, or government agencies may be through radio, posted signage, social media, or other means