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Supreme Court Examines Exxon Valdez Spill

Tanker Spurred 11 Million Gallons Of Crude Into Prince William Sound

POSTED: 12:56 am PST February 26, 2008
UPDATED: 5:12 am PST February 27, 2008



CORDOVA, Alaska -- It's been almost 19 years since the tanker Exxon Valdez ran aground at Alaska's Bligh Reef.

The vessel leaked 11 million gallons of crude into the rich fishing waters of Prince William Sound.

In 1994, an Anchorage jury awarded victims \$5 billion in punitive damages.

That amount has since been cut in half by other courts on appeals by Irving, Texas, -based Exxon Mobil.

Now some folks in Cordova, Alaska, are looking to the U.S. Supreme Court -- which will hear arguments Wednesday from Exxon on why the company should not have to pay punitive damages.

Scores of Cordova residents are among almost 33,000 plaintiffs who could see the \$2.5 billion judgment taken away by the high court.

Exxon contends it should not be liable for the actions of the Exxon Valdez skipper, Joseph Hazelwood, when the supertanker ran aground.

Prosecutors said Hazelwood was drunk, but he denied it and was acquitted of the charge in criminal court.

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