



For Immediate Release

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California Oil Spill Funding Bill Approved by Senate

1.5 cents increase per barrel of oil will fund prevention and response measures

Sacramento, CA – Finally, the California Office of Spill Prevention and Response – part of the Department of Fish and Game – is set to get an increase in funding from oil companies doing business in the state. AB 1112 passed the California Senate and Assembly today and is on its way to Governor Brown's desk to be signed into law.

California oil spill prevention and response programs had been facing cuts next year, prompting Assemblymember Jared Huffman to author AB 1112 to raise fees by 1.5 cents on the price of a barrel of oil. Oil companies currently pay one nickel per barrel of oil. In the twenty year history of the California Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR), the fees to support the program have been increased only once, from four to five cents in 2002, when the agency was facing staffing cuts.

"The tragedy of the Gulf Coast oil spill – the worst environmental disaster in US history – serves as a fresh reminder that preventing oil spills is a huge priority in California," said Assemblymember Huffman. "This is a critically important bill that will increase oil spill prevention oversight and maintain solvency of the state fund that supports oil spill prevention programs."

OSPR was facing imminent staffing cuts due to the funding shortfall, says Deb Self, Executive Director of San Francisco Baykeeper, which sponsored the bill after receiving grim financial reports as a member of the agency's Technical Advisory Committee. "The need for a robust oil spill program has never been greater. Now that we've seen the results of the BP Gulf oil disaster, we know what the stakes are here on San Francisco Bay." In addition to securing the agency's funding, the bill requires stricter oversight of ships transferring fuel on the open water. The bill was co-sponsored by Pacific Environment.

Baykeeper has been active in improving oil spill response on San Francisco Bay since the 2007 *Cosco Busan* spill that oiled hundreds of miles of Bay shoreline and killed thousands of birds. Baykeeper helped pass seven oil spill bills in 2008 that required better prevention efforts, more boom and quicker response times – but came with no increase in funding for OSPR.

"We know that oil spills can have a devastating impact on sea lions, harbor seals, migrating birds, local endangered shorebirds and the struggling herring and leopard shark populations," added Self. "California's programs to prevent and respond to oil spills simply must be fully funded."

With a barrel of oil now costing around \$100, environmentalists say the passage of AB 1112 is a victory over oil companies that fought the meager increase, despite reporting billions of dollars in profits. "It seemed almost ideological to me," said Self. "We worked closely with the Western States Petroleum Association to craft a bill that would provide new funding along with tight financial controls, but even then, WSPA still tried to kill the bill."

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San Francisco Baykeeper is the Bay's pollution watchdog, using science and advocacy to enforce clean water laws and hold polluters accountable. Baykeeper represents the nonprofit sector in oil spill planning efforts throughout the state. For more information, visit us at www.baykeeper.org