

## **Incident history of the Nestucca barge (May 20, 2010).**

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The Sause Brothers Ocean Towing Co. cargo barge, Nestucca, that broke loose from the tug Miki Hana on May 19, 2010, once was a fuel barge that played a critical role in Washington environmental history.

### **1988 Nestucca barge oil spill**

In the early morning hours of December 23, 1988, the fuel barge Nestucca spilled 231,000 gallons of heavy fuel oil along Washington's outer coast, offshore to the entrance to Grays Harbor.

### **Tow line breaks near Grays Harbor**

The incident occurred when the Sause Brothers Ocean Towing Co. tug, Ocean Services, lost its tow of the Nestucca after the line broke after crossing the Grays Harbor bar. To try and retrieve the tow and keep the Nestucca off the Ocean Shores jetty, the tug captain backed into the starboard bow of the barge to get two crew members onto the barge to re-establish the tow line.

### **Collision causes significant oil spill**

Unfortunately, the collision between the Ocean Services and Nestucca ripped a gash in the barge, causing heavy fuel oil to spill. While the bulk of the oil washed ashore near Ocean Shores, the spill harmed wildlife and fouled beaches as far south as Oregon and north to Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Patches of oily sheen were reported as far west as Dungeness Spit.

### **Spill devastating to area seabirds**

The spill also killed or injured an estimated 56,000 seabirds in the area. Once a seabird is coated with oil, their feathers no longer act to repel the cold effects of sea water. The birds also ingest the toxin when they preen their feathers in an attempt to remove the oil.

### **1988 spill defines Washington's current spills program**

Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire was Director for the Washington Department of Ecology when the Nestucca spill occurred. The spill helped define Washington's current spill prevention, preparedness, and response strategy.

### **Pacific State-British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force formed**

Among the first actions was the creation of the Pacific States-British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force to determine how best to share spill response resources, build on lessons learned from spill incidents, identify risks, and prevent spills. The first meeting was held on March 23, 1989, the day before the Exxon Valdez catastrophe in Alaska.

## **Washington Legislature passes critical spill prevention, preparedness, and response laws**

In 1989, the Washington Legislature passed legislation enabling the state to seek compensation from spillers for damages to the public's natural resources caused by oil spills.

In 1990, state lawmakers passed the first set of oil spill preparedness laws for companies handling and shipping oil in Washington waters.

In 1991, the Legislature adopted a comprehensive bill establishing vessel and oil-handling facility spill prevention laws and created the 5 cent barrel tax on oil imported into Washington to pay for the new activities.