

Story last updated at 1:33 p.m. Thursday, August 22, 2002

## Pipeline remains troublesome task for BP

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Seawatch

**THE ENGINEERS AT BP AMOCO** will head back to the drawing board after a second attempt to clean out an abandoned section of **Cook Inlet** pipeline failed. Crews from the oil conglomerate attempted to pressurize the line Tuesday morning, which runs from the Anna Platform on the west side of **Cook Inlet** to the area off Nikiski Point, in order to test it for leaks. Unfortunately the crews from BP as well as those from the 12 **Cook Inlet** Sill Prevention and Response Inc. vessels in the area reported seeing several slicks of oil on the surface.

The presence of oil, even in apparently small amounts, meant that BP's original plans to flush the pipeline with a "pig" made of gel and foam were on hold once again. A pig is a nontoxic foam and gel mixture used to squeeze residual oil from abandoned lines. In June, preparations to run a pig through the line were halted when preliminary steps produced leaks. Last week the pipe was hot-tapped and a vacuum pump produced more than 20 barrels of oil and another 300 barrels of oily water. The sheen produced Tuesday were reportedly spread over a fairly long corridor.

BP spokesperson Paul Laird said that after about 15 minutes, an oil sheen was detected on the surface of the **inlet**, indicating the pipe was too leaky to proceed with the plan to send in the pig.

"We determined, along with (the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation) and the Coast Guard that there are leaks in the line, and we won't be able to repair them," Laird said.

The line was last in use in 1974, when Amoco was operating the Anna Platform. When BP took over the line as part of its merger with Amoco, it was mistakenly believed the line was more or less clean, according to Laird. BP will now have to use a backup plan to get the remaining oil out of the line. Laird said BP plans to suck the remaining oil in the line, how much of which is unknown, out of high points in the line using vacuum trucks attached to the pipe. Laird said the cost of the project is expected to be in the \$3.5 to \$4 million range.

**COOK INLET SPILL PREVENTION** and Spill Response Inc. had 12 boats on hand to skim and soak up the small amounts of oil that escaped the pipeline through several leaks. CISPRI General Manager Doug Lentsh said the oil slicks were so thin that most of the bigger pieces of equipment were not needed.

**Cook Inlet Regional Citizen's Advisory Council** Director of Operations Mike Munger went out on an overflight of the **inlet** Tuesday evening and saw no evidence of any serious oil spills.

"We tracked the entire **inlet** from below Kenai to up past the Tyonek platform, and we saw absolutely nothing," Munger said.

Lentsh, who was in the CISPRI command center, said that the response crews got in a good day's work even though not all the vessels got involved in the effort. Eight of the 12 vessels were commercial fishing vessels, predominantly seining boats. "It was an opportunity to prepare for a planned spill and get out there and get some of the commercial fishermen involved," Lentsh said. "But we still got a chance to exercise and task force a little bit. It was a very valuable day all the way around. Seiners participating in the effort were likely making between \$1,000 and \$1,500 depending on their boat and experience.

*Homer News reporter Chris Bernard and Peninsula Clarion reporter Matt Tunseth contributed to this column.*