

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 11, 2008

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Governor Schwarzenegger supports oil spill cleanup legislation for marine wildlife and inland rivers and streams

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Today Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger announced his support for a package of oil spill cleanup bills, including legislation to establish a cleanup program for inland oil spills and legislation to improve the state's ability to rescue wildlife during oil spills. The three bills that the Governor will be supporting represent a portion of a larger package of oil spill cleanup bills introduced into the legislature this year as a response to the lessons learned in the devastating Cosco Busan spill.

The inland oil spill proposal had been part of AB 2912, a bill that was not taken up in May in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. With the support of the Governor, the inland oil spill proposal will be revived by amending the provisions into AB 2911—a bill to improve the state's efforts to save oil-soaked wildlife and recover polluted land and water after a spill. With the inclusion of the inland oil spill program, AB 2911 will represent a step forward in the effort to protect California's fish and wildlife from destructive oil spills.

“Governor Schwarzenegger's support for establishing an inland oil spill program has restored our hope that California will finally get a much-needed comprehensive inland oil spill cleanup program in the 2008 legislative session,” said Josh Basofin, California representative for Defenders of Wildlife. “Between the reality check that we got from the recent Cosco Busan spill and the fact that billions of gallons of oil are stored and transported across California's inland waters, delaying the implementation of a cleanup program could be dangerous, irresponsible and a disservice to the state. Defenders is happy to see that Governor Schwarzenegger is not willing to take any chances here and is being proactive about protecting our waters, wildlife and habitat.”

“In 2007, the amount of oil spilled into the state's creeks, rivers and lakes was over nine times the volume of the Cosco Busan oil spill into San Francisco Bay, with only a small fraction of the cleanup effort,” said Linda Sheehan, executive director of the California Coastkeeper Alliance. “Oil spilled into our local waterways has significant and long-term effects. AB 2911 takes on this problem by increasing penalties on inland oil spills and making the chain of command for enforcement and cleanup clear.”

The new amendments to AB 2911 revives efforts by Defenders and the California Coastkeeper Alliance to create an inland oil spill program by giving the Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) clear authority to respond to inland oil spills, initiate cleanup and enforcement actions, and assume incident command authority. While this legislation is an important step forward, there remains a need to find a more stable funding source for this program, including the creation of a separate Trust Fund and Administrative Fund and an increase in the maximum penalties for oil spills from \$50,000 to \$500,000.

“This oil spill legislation is still an important first step toward protecting our fish and wildlife from devastating oil spills, and we look forward to continuing to work with Governor Schwarzenegger's office to create the most complete, most effective program we can to protect California's inland waterways and

wildlife,” said Basofin. “We also urge the Governor to continue to work with the authors of the other pending oil spill bills to enact the most comprehensive improvements to our oil spill response system.”

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Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. With more than 1 million members and activists, Defenders of Wildlife is a leading advocate for innovative solutions to safeguard our wildlife heritage for generations to come. For more information, visit www.defenders.org.

The California Coastkeeper Alliance provides a statewide voice for safeguarding California’s waters, and its world-renowned coast and ocean, for the benefit of all Californians. Member organizations are Klamath Riverkeeper, Humboldt Baykeeper, Russian Riverkeeper, San Francisco Baykeeper, Monterey Coastkeeper, San Luis Obispo Coastkeeper, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, Ventura County Coastkeeper, Santa Monica Baykeeper, Orange County Coastkeeper and its Inland Empire Waterkeeper chapter, and San Diego Coastkeeper. See www.cacoastkeeper.org.