



LOIS WOLK

ASSEMBLYWOMAN 8TH DISTRICT

News

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Governor signs Wolk legislation to strengthen oil spill prevention and response
Bill improves response to inland oil spills, rescue and treatment of oiled wildlife

SACRAMENTO—Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger today signed into law legislation by Assemblywoman Lois Wolk (D-Davis) to strengthen the state’s prevention and response to inland oil spills, enhance the state’s oiled wildlife search and rescue collection for both inland and marine spills, and increase enforcement and fines for polluters.

“With enactment of AB 2911, California will be stronger and better prepared in the future to protect our citizens and our environment from the effects of oil spills,” said Wolk. “I want to thank the bill’s cosponsors, Audubon California, California Coastkeeper Alliance, and the Defenders of Wildlife, for their commitment to see this bill signed into law. I also commend the Governor for the leadership he has shown on this issue, and applaud him for recognizing how critical it is to pay the same level of attention to oil spills in our state’s inland waterways as to those in our coastal waters. Coastal spills grab the headlines. But inland spills are more common and threaten public health and safety by contaminating the water we drink, as well as our rivers, creeks, marshes, and the Delta.”

Each year, billions of gallons of oil are stored and transported across inland waters of the State, posing a significant risk of spills and harm to the environment, state water supplies and public health and safety. In 2004, a ruptured pipeline in Solano County spilled 103,000 gallons of diesel directly into the Suisun marsh, a critical part of the Bay-Delta estuary ecosystem that supports this state’s commercial salmon fishery.

According to data collected by the State Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) and state Office of Emergency Services (OES), there are more than twice the inland oil spills as there are marine spills. Yet the State responds to less than one third of inland spills reported. By strengthening the State’s preparedness and ability to respond to inland oil spills, Wolk’s Assembly Bill 2911 will enhance public safety and protection of the State’s water quality.

“Last year half a million gallons of oil were spilled in or next to inland waterways, over nine times the size of the November 2007 Cosco Busan oil spill in the San Francisco Bay,” said Linda Sheehan, Executive Director of the California Coastkeeper Alliance, a coalition of 12 Waterkeepers statewide, and one of the groups cosponsoring AB 2911 along with Audubon California and the Defenders of Wildlife. “Unlike Cosco Busan, which generated international attention and Congressional response, inland spills like these occur each and every year. AB 2911 will help reverse that trend.”

The bill will also help the State meet the best achievable standard of care for oiled wildlife in the

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event of future oil spills by enhancing the state's Oiled Wildlife Recovery Network's field operations capacity, and expanding recruitment and training of wildlife specialists and volunteers to assist in oiled wildlife rescue.

"Cosco Busan was a wake up call. It demonstrated to us how underequipped we are in California to have a properly trained and prepared community of volunteers to bring speedy relief to wildlife," said Dan Taylor, Audubon California's public policy director. "AB 2911 will make a significant improvement in volunteer readiness and being able to respond to future spills. It will make the birds of the Pacific Flyway far safer from the risk posed by oil spills in our state's waterways. This is a great example of people working together to reduce a significant threat to wildlife. We commend Assembly Member Wolk, the legislature and Gov. Schwarzenegger for their leadership and support for this important measure."

The Governor issued a release shortly after he signed Wolk's AB 2911, part of a package of bills to improve the state's oil spill prevention and response, saying:

"California's coastline and waterways are a national treasure, and this package of legislation will help us better protect and preserve our natural resources for future generations."

See the Governor's press release at: <http://gov.ca.gov/press-release/10671/>

Some facts on Wolk's Assembly Bill 2911:

- Makes responsible parties pay for inland oil spill response, clean up, and restoration.
- Gives the State Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) clear jurisdiction over response to off-highway inland oil spills into surface waters to improve coordination and increase efficiency during cleanup operations.
- Gives OSPR the authority to levee fines and penalties for inland oil spills, as for marine spills.
- Takes effect January 1, 2009.

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