

State plans \$21 million winter cleanup

The state has announced a \$21 million winter oil spill cleanup plan designed to continue the work left by Exxon Corp., which pulled out of Prince William Sound last month.

The plan also calls for work to prepare for next spring's cleanup and help for Alaskans facing emotional and economic damage caused by the last March's spill.

"Most of us know there's plenty more that has to be done to restore both the environment and people's lives," said Gov. Steve Cowper. "That's what we're proposing in this plan."

The plan, for which the state will seek reimbursement from Exxon, includes beach cleanup, tracking and monitoring oil during the winter, protecting fish hatcheries and the formation of a team of health professionals to help Alaskans cope with spill-related problems.

"Every day the oil causes more damage to beaches, fisheries, animals and Alaskans. We won't stop our ef-



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orts until everything that is humanly possible is done to minimize the damage from this disaster," Cowper said.

The state announced the winter plan at a Valdez news conference on the day Exxon completed its shutdown of cleanup activities — Sept. 15.

The plan is an effort to combine several state agencies headed by the Department of Environmental Conservation.

According to the plan, work will be coordinated with the Coast Guard, Ex-

xon and overseen through existing state oil spill offices in Valdez, Seward, Homer and Kodiak.

The state will seek reimbursement from Exxon or pay for it with a \$6 million grant financed through the state 5 cent-per-barrel Oil and Hazardous Substance Release Response Fund.

More than 40 sites have been selected to study the weathering of oil including 22 in Prince William Sound, seven in Seward, 10 in Homer and several in Kodiak.

According to state estimates, some 147,000 barrels of oil remain unaccounted for and much of that remains in the water and below beach surfaces.

Next spring's cleanup, whether Exxon participates, will focus on removing oil that remains after the winter, according to the state.

DEC has allocated up to \$14 million for its winter operations, including the technology review and scientific studies.

