

For Whales' Sake
By Jackie Hildering

Spilt Whales

A “bight” = a bend in a coast forming an open bay.

“Robson Bight” = an area in Johnstone Strait, N. Vancouver Island, that is acknowledged critical habitat for BC’s northern resident (inshore, fish-eating) killer whales. These killer whales have the unique social behaviour of rubbing themselves on black, smooth stone beaches and are believed to rub in the Robson Bight area most frequently. The Bight is also a key feeding location.

To be “in the bight” = logging term meaning to be in a position of danger.

So, forgive the play on words but, through government inactivity, we humans are putting the killer whales “in the bight” in Robson Bight.

Remember the Robson Bight diesel spill of August 20th, 2007? The logging equipment that toppled off a barge and caused the initial spill is still at the bottom of the Reserve, 8 months later.

Initially, our government chose only to have a mathematical report done to determine if the equipment was intact. The conclusion of Ontario based *BHT Fleet Technology* was: “The calculations undertaken indicate a very high probability that the tanker truck diesel tank will have crushed well before the truck reached the bottom.”

Were it not for public and NGO pressure, there may not have been the subsequent submersible investigation by Nuytco Research that proved that the fuel truck, with its load of some 10,000 litres of diesel, is very much intact, upright and corroding.

The government has not acted on the advices given in Nuytco’s technical report. It is a certainty that the fuel truck will release its load into Robson Bight if it (or the fuel) is not removed.

The killer whales are typically in the area as of June. Therefore, attempting removal from June into late autumn would create disturbance and risk for the whales. Our weather is so unpredictable after this period, the next opportunity for removal would not be until Spring 2009. What an enormous gamble. Will the “time bomb” go off when the whales are in Robson Bight are or won’t it? Even if the whales are not in the area, why invite another spill?

Public pressure is urgently needed folks.

See www.earthlingenterprises.ca for a summary of action opportunities, underwater footage of the equipment and further background information.

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