Kodiak Villages React To SCOTUS Exxon Ruling

Friday, 27 June 2008

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/080627.exxon_natives.mp3{/audio}

Casey Kelly/KMXT

This week’s Supreme Court decision to reduce punitive damages in the Exxon Valdez oil spill case comes as a blow to many in the Alaska Native communities around Kodiak that were affected by the spill. KMXT’s Casey Kelly has more.

Herman Squartsoff is a subsistence hunter and fisherman in Ouzinkie. He says back in 1989 oil was everywhere on Spruce Island. Today, he says, the effects of the spill can still be seen.

(Squartsoff 1 :12s “…so it’s still around.”)

Squartsoff is upset that the Supreme Court’s ruling limited the amount of punitive damages that Exxon must pay, especially now that the price of fuel in Ouzinkie is approaching 7 dollars a gallon.

(Squartsoff 2 :14s “…the face with this thing.”)

He says the spill created psychic wounds in some communities that will never heal.

(Squartsoff 2 :18s “…except for a few people.”)

Jack Wick is a former commercial fisherman and a member of the Larsen Bay Tribal Council. He says the spill did irrevocable damage to his community.

(Wick 1 :05s “…now there’s only fifty.”)

Wick says most of those who left were commercial fishermen who lost their salmon market after the spill. He says many of those who stuck around are trying to make a go of it doing something else.

(Wick
2 :09s “…business for sport fishing.”)

And
although he’s disappointed in the court’s ruling, he says he wasn’t really surprised by the decision.

(Wick
3 :10s “…have too much of chance.”)

Wick says there
won’t be much that he can do with the reduced settlement he’ll receive besides pay a few bills.

I’m Casey Kelly.

###