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Alaska Ocean Observing System to conduct intensive scientific tests in Prince William Sound

This summer, gliders, drifters and underwater vehicles will ply Prince William Sound in an effort to collect scientific data in the 2-week field test called *Sound Predictions 2009* (www.aoos.org). Prince William Sound, the site of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, draws a variety of activities including sport and commercial fishermen, cruise ships, recreational boaters and oil tankers on their way to and from the Valdez oil terminal. To enhance navigation safety and garner a better understanding of ocean circulation and ecosystem processes, researchers are deploying scientific technologies into the Sound to test the accuracy of ocean observation models and their ability to effectively predict weather, wind, currents, and waves.

This 2-week field experiment will be launched with a press conference and public event in Anchorage on July 16 and a public event in Valdez on July 28. Then between July 19th and August 3rd, researchers from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Oil Spill Recovery Institute in Cordova, among other research groups, will deploy high-tech tools and begin collecting real-time data to put computer models to the test. Results will be provided through the Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS), a research consortium that delivers both real-time information and long-term trends about Alaska's ocean conditions and marine life.

"The need for accurate predictions is underscored by 2009 being the 20th anniversary of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in the Sound," states Molly McCammon, AOOS Executive Director.

During the experiment, oceanographers will cruise the Sound on transect lines to profile the temperature and salinity of the water column from top to bottom. They'll also deploy a Slocum glider and other free-roaming underwater vehicles that will collect continuous measurements of temperature and salinity, as well as other oceanographic factors. Shore-based radar systems will provide maps of surface currents in real-time.

Alaska's new Center for Ocean Science Education Excellence (COSEE) is developing "Gazing at the Sea" podcasts from scientists and community members and lesson plans for a children's book, **Pete's Wild Ride** about Alaska currents, ocean circulation, and the potential effects of climate change on these aspects of Alaska's seas.

For more information about the field experiment, the faces behind the scenes, and ocean observing facts, go to the AOOS website at www.aoos.org.