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San Francisco Chronicle

EDITORIAL

Longest aftermath Exxon Valdez litigation drags on

Wednesday, March 5, 2008

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Do you remember the Exxon Valdez disaster?

Don't worry if you can't. It was a long time ago. Nineteen years. The Soviet Union was still intact - so intact that the word glasnost hadn't even been spoken. Apartheid was still the rule in South Africa. The World Wide Web was nothing but a twinkle in an engineer's eye.

So as you can see, much has happened to fade our memories of just how awful the Exxon Valdez spill truly was. The spill is arguably the worst man-made environmental disaster to have happened at sea. Eleven million gallons of oil were spilled in one of North America's most pristine environments. Many beaches remain oiled and toxic today.

And Exxon is hoping that our memories have faded so much that we won't ask them to pay any punitive damages at all. After all, who really suffered here? A few otters? Some birds? A couple of Alaskans?

It's a true feat of injustice that Exxon has managed to delay its day of reckoning so long, but it is now arguing before the Supreme Court that it would serve no "public purpose" for it to pay \$2.5 billion in punitive damages.

Outrageous. We'd like to know what Exxon believes its public purpose as a company is. The Supreme Court may just force Exxon to provide a \$2.5 billion answer.

This article appeared on page B - 8 of the San Francisco Chronicle

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