

by oil spills. After hatching, the larval herring are concentrated near the surface of the water where they tend to be carried about passively by currents. The arrival of oil along the shoreline during the spawning season would in all likelihood cause a mass mortality of eggs and larval herring through asphyxiation and contamination. Prolonged exposure to oil may permanently damage the herring spawning beds of eel grass with resulting long term effects on the herring population. Herring spawning occurs around the San Juan Islands, the southern Gulf Islands and the White Rock-Boundary Bay area. The immediate restrictions to fishing in the presence of oil could, if the conditions persist, produce severe hardship to the herring industry, whilst the major impact of ecological effects would be felt three to four years later with a continuing cycle of recurrences.

Subtidal Organisms

The present commercial landed value of clams and oysters in British Columbia is one million dollars. As mentioned previously the intertidal zone is particularly vulnerable to oil contamination, and the industry in a region affected by a spill could be completely disrupted both by direct mortality of the harvest or through the impairment of the flavour.

Water Management Service,
Department of the Environment,
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