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GULF OF MEXICO DISASTER CONCERNS CANADIANS – COULD IT HAPPEN IN CANADA’S ARCTIC?

Tuesday, June 8 is World Oceans Day

Vancouver, B.C. – The Vancouver Aquarium reminds Canadians World Oceans Day is Tuesday, June 8. World Oceans Day is an annual, UN-designated day to raise awareness of how we each play a role in protecting our oceans for future generations.

In Canada, the Vancouver Aquarium leads ocean conservation with a 54-year history of research and education based on ocean conservation and direct action programs for Canadians from coast to coast.

As the struggle to stop the flow of oil into the Gulf of Mexico continues, Canadians are asking whether such a disaster could happen in Canada’s Arctic. It is estimated that the Arctic region holds up to 13 percent of the world’s undiscovered oil and up to 30 percent of its natural gas deposits. Canada’s National Energy Board has decided to review Arctic safety and environmental offshore drilling requirements in the wake of the blowout in the Gulf.

“Canadians and others in the developed and developing world continue to rely heavily upon fossil fuels. The Arctic appears to be home to a lot of it,” says Eric Solomon, Director of Arctic Programs, Vancouver Aquarium. “Unfortunately, we still know very little about the Arctic environment and the wildlife that depend upon it, making it difficult to predict what the impacts would be if a spill occurred in our northern waters.”

We look back to the 1970s for the most recent significant studies of oil spill impacts in Arctic ice environments. Those studies suggested that under-ice oil spills, in addition to direct harmful effects on wildlife, could change the dynamics of ice formation and movement.

“The Arctic ice is the foundation upon which its fragile ecosystem is based,” Solomon continues. “This is a strong example of how our lack of scientific understanding of the Arctic environment and the life it supports is greatly hindering our ability to manage it effectively.”

Canada’s accredited zoos and aquariums are engaging Canadians in supporting the preservation of biodiversity in our Arctic. As part of the United Nations’ International Year of Biodiversity, members of the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA), like the Vancouver Aquarium, are focused on raising awareness of Canada’s Arctic and its global importance. Learn more at www.ourarctic.ca

About World Oceans Day The United Nations designates June 8 as the annual World Oceans Day. It is an opportunity to learn about our world ocean and our personal connection to it. World Oceans Day raises awareness of the crucial role the ocean plays in our lives and the important ways people can protect our shared world ocean. For more information, visit www.worldoceansday.org

About Vancouver Aquarium The Vancouver Aquarium is a global leader in connecting people to our natural world, and a self-supporting, non-profit association dedicated to effecting the conservation of aquatic life through display and interpretation, education, research, and direct action. Learn more at www.vanaqua.org.

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