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(Exxon) had an oily chip on their shoulder that they didn't want knocked off."

Exxon shipped eighty percent of the solid waste from the oil spill to Oregon landfills. Lewis said.

"It's easy to think of Alaska as that big ice cube up north, but Alaska is in your back yard," Lewis said. "You've got a lot of its sold waste here in Oregon."

As a result of the oil spill, 10,000 people went to Alaska to help clean up. The workers lived in trailers stacked two deep on barges, each barge holding approximately 2500 people, Lewis said.

Lewis said residents of Valdez and the nearby town of Cordova were devastated when their homes and communities were invaded by the oil spill and the workers.

"Prince William Sound hasn't seen 10,000 people since the beginning of time," Lewis said.

One of the biggest tasks associated with cleaning up the spill was picking up animals killed by the oil, Lewis said. At least 36,000 birds and 1,000 otters were killed.

Hundreds of bald eagles were killed, and many that survived abandoned their nests. Lewis said this will have a big effect on the future population of bald eagles.

Lewis also said humpback

whales and killer whales were seen surfacing right after the spill.

"It was very difficult to tell the oily rocks from the oily animals," Lewis said. "One of the biggest problems of recovering animals was figuring out what they were."

Lewis said the otters are very susceptible to damage from oil because their fur acts as an insulation and floatation device. The oil ruins their fur and kills them.

When cleaning up the spill, Lewis said Exxon wanted to use dispersants that take the oil off the surface of the water, but do not get rid of the oil.

"Dispersants throw the oil into the food chain much faster than if it's skimmed off the surface," Lewis said.

Alaska abandoned the oil spill on September 15 because of winter. In an effort to continue the cleanup during winter, Lewis said money has been given to the communities of Prince William Sound.

"We have a community based approach which works better than bringing in the Coast Guard or Dan Quayle to clean it up," Lewis said.

"The coastline of Prince William Sound stretches all the way around the world," Lewis said. "This kind of thing could happen anywhere."

Law identifies truly organic foods State sets labelling limits on produce

By Tony Lewis
Emerald Contributor

Organic food buyers can soon be sure that produce sold as 'organic' is truly organic and not fraudulently labeled, thanks to a state law that takes effect Jan. 1.

The Organic Labeling Law, passed this summer by the Oregon State Legislature in the shadow of last spring's scare about the health effects of Alar sprayed on apples, requires that any food sold in Oregon as 'organic' must meet strict new standards.

"It's a very good law for Oregon consumers," said Galen Smith and Cynthia Beal, owners of Red Barn Groceries, a Eugene store that sells organic produce.

"Organic" is now broadly defined in Oregon law as being grown without pesticides, synthetic fertilizers or other synthetic chemicals, but no law exists to regulate compliance with this definition.

"Without regulation there's been an incredible surge of fraud" that has accompanied the recent increase in demand for organic food, said Robert DeSpain, co-author of the new law and general manager of Organically Grown Inc.

The new law is intended to protect consumers from misleading labeling and to limit the organic food market for the true organic farmers, DeSpain said.

He also said that the new law

is needed because the current definition of 'organic' does not allow for some synthetic chemicals that conform to organic farming practices.

The law's solution to this definition problem makes this law special.

"It's a benchmark law. Nobody in the country has a law like this," said Yvonne Frost, certification director for Oregon Tilth. Oregon Tilth is Oregon's largest certifier of organic farms.

Instead of defining 'organic' in terms of what may not be used, the new law lists the fertilizers, pest and weed controls that may be used by farmers.

The law also requires that farmers must not have used any unlisted pesticides for two years or any unlisted fertilizers in the land for one year prior to planting, if the food is labeled organic. In 1991, the standards raise to three years for pesticides and two years for fertilizers.

No state standards now exist that regulate the land that organic food grows in. Organic farm certifiers like Oregon Tilth, however, do have land use regulations and most stores that sell organic food have their own requirements.

If the stores buy food from farmers that are not certified, however, they must trust the farmer's account of pesticide and fertilizer use, said Red Barn owner Beal.

The new law limits these uncertainties by requiring growers

to register with the state if they intend to sell organic food. It also requires growers to keep records for five years of what has been added to the soil. These records can be requested by the Oregon Department of Agriculture at any time.

Farmers who violate the law can be fined up to \$15,000 for each violation. Organic farm certifiers now have no recourse against farmers who violate certification standards except to revoke the certification, Frost said.

The law also requires that organic food not have more than 10 percent of pesticide residue levels allowed by the Food and Drug Administration and Environmental Protection Agency.

Smith and Beal expressed enthusiasm for the new law but said that a few loopholes do exist.

The largest loophole involves food brought in from other states. Out of state food that is labeled 'organic' does not have to meet the new Oregon standards, only standards of recognized organic certifiers from the state of origin.

For example, if an organic farm certifier from California requires that soil must not have been sprayed with pesticides for one year, one year fewer than Oregon's requirement, then the California produce may still be labeled 'organic' in Oregon.

Beal said because of this loophole she will identify where the produce was certified organic.

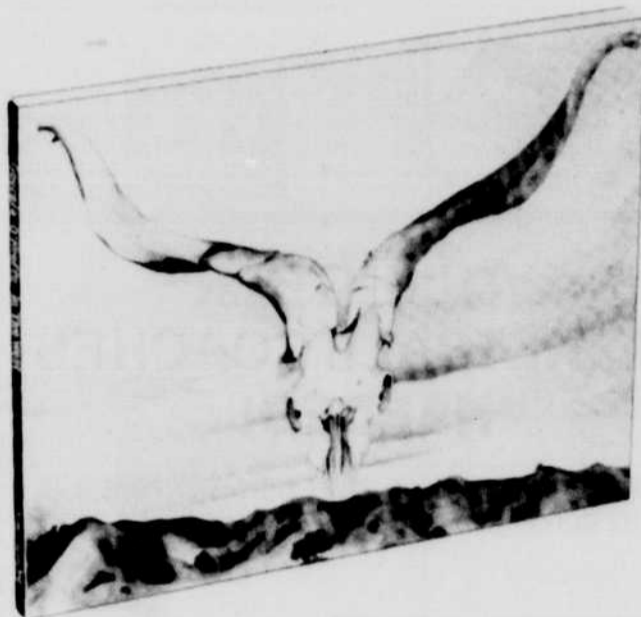
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