Session 54: Bridging Oil Spill Science and Response to Protect Freshwater Energy Corridors

As a major consumer and transit route for crude oil and refined products, the Laurentian Great Lakes region supports energy needs both regionally and globally. While the risk of oil spills in freshwater ecosystems has increased, they have historically been understudied worldwide. However, recent funding from Natural Resources Canada's Multi-Partner Research Initiative (MPRI) and the United States Coast Guard Great Lakes Oil Spill Center of Expertise (GLCOE) has catalyzed an acceleration of collaborative freshwater oil spill science. This momentum has yielded cutting-edge tools, technologies, and science designed to safeguard global freshwater resources from the impacts of oil spills. However, scientific breakthroughs are only as effective as their real-world application. To realize the true global impact of this work, research must seamlessly transition to end-users on the front lines of spill response. This session bridges the gap between academic research and operational emergency management. Presenters will highlight recent advancements in freshwater spill science, response technologies, and ecological risk assessments, while addressing the operational needs, communication gaps, technology transfer challenges, and regulatory hurdles faced by responders. To conclude, a one-hour panel discussion featuring environmental emergency managers will explore actionable strategies for integrating research into active incident response frameworks. By aligning scientific output with practitioner needs, this session will offer scalable models for freshwater ecosystem protection applicable to critical waterbodies worldwide.

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