



# Deepwater Horizon: An Ongoing Environmental Disaster

*The BP Deepwater Horizon blowout took a massive toll on our environment and the region's wildlife and communities. For three months after the initial explosion, millions of gallons of crude oil and thousands of tons of methane spewed from the sea floor. Eleven people were killed and dozens more injured. Five years later, we are still suffering from the effects.*



## Wildlife devastated

- ▶ The disaster killed or injured more than 25,000 dolphins and whales in the Gulf, along with tens of thousands of sea turtles. Oil contaminated the nesting beaches of 15,000 hatchling sea turtles along the Gulf Coast. In the years since, the lingering contamination has increased the occurrence of dolphin and sea turtle strandings, death and disease.
- ▶ The oil killed fish including blackfin tuna, blue marlin, mahi-mahi, sailfish, red snapper and the already overfished bluefin tuna—reducing current populations and limiting their reproductive capacity for the future.
- ▶ The spill killed at least 700,000 birds, and potentially more than 1 million. More than 100 species were affected including one-third of all laughing gulls in the Gulf region and 12 percent of the Gulf's brown pelicans, which had been removed from the endangered species list just months before the spill.

## The Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf Coast fouled

- ▶ At least 116 million gallons of petroleum poured into the Gulf leaving a multi-million gallon “bathtub ring” of oil across more than 1,200 square miles of sea floor. Zooplankton, a key basis of the marine food web, were poisoned by the oil and related chemicals. Those toxins have accumulated through the entire food web, where they will continue to poison marine life for years to come.
- ▶ More than 1,000 miles of shoreline from Texas to Florida were contaminated—including 600 miles of beaches and ecologically crucial marshes and mangroves. Many of these areas are still devastated by oil hidden under sand or sediment that becomes exposed by storms and unusual tide flows.



▲ *Oiled Kemp's Ridley turtle.*

## Oil remains in the environment

*Spilled oil is impossible to clean up entirely. What remains persists in the environment, causing harm for years—perhaps as long as a century. Efforts to clean up the spilled oil inflicted their own damage.*

*Chemicals used to dissipate Deepwater Horizon's massive oil slicks were toxic to marine microorganisms, damaging the food web and damaging recreational and commercial fishing. Those dispersants along with the spilled oil, and the substances released during the burn off of spilled oil—including dioxin, the most toxic chemical in existence—can harm human health by disrupting the immune and reproductive systems and even cause cancer.*

*Freshwater from Mississippi River impoundments released in an effort to keep oil from flooding coastal marshes, killed Eastern oysters and harmed oyster growth and reproduction. In 2014, Eastern oyster harvests in the Gulf were still “one of the lowest on record.”*



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- ▶ In 2013, at least three tar mats were discovered on Louisiana beaches, one covering a quarter acre and weighing 40,000 pounds. Tar balls were found on the Mississippi coast in early 2014, a month after a tar mat was uncovered at a Florida beach. And tar balls on Alabama beaches are still present to this day and will remain for many years.

## Damage reached far beyond the Gulf Coast

- ▶ Methane released from the spill caused as much global warming pollution as is produced by 1.3 million vehicles in a year.
- ▶ Migratory birds poisoned by oil carried toxic chemicals across the country. As far away as Minnesota, white pelicans laid oil-contaminated eggs in their breeding grounds after returning home from their Gulf of Mexico wintering areas.
- ▶ In Tennessee, evaporation from the oil created a cloud of minuscule airborne tarballs, exposing local residents to pollutants linked to heart and lung disease.

## You drill you spill

- ▶ The Gulf of Mexico, home to most of the United States' primary offshore drilling operations, has suffered, on average, one spill larger than 100,000 gallons every other year since 1964.
- ▶ Every continent where offshore drilling happens has suffered pollution from major spills.
- ▶ Technological improvements do not necessarily reduce the risk. Nearly all offshore spills—337 of 341 in the Gulf of Mexico from 1964 to 2012, or 98.8 percent—were caused by weather, equipment failure, human error, or “external forces” such as “anchors, trawls, construction operations or mudslides.”

## Save our coasts: No offshore drilling

To protect the environment, human health and the coastal economy from the dangers of offshore drilling, we are calling on the Obama administration to put a moratorium on any new offshore drilling and to phase out current drilling operations. Specifically, the administration should:

- ▶ Abandon its plans to allow offshore drilling in the Atlantic Ocean.
- ▶ Reverse its proposed expansion of drilling leases in the Gulf of Mexico.
- ▶ Stop granting permits for new offshore drilling operations in the Arctic and in all U.S. waters.



▶ Top: The oil slick in the Gulf. Lower: The Deepwater Horizon oil spill containment effort.

## » Take action

*BP has claimed billions in tax write-offs for the clean-up and damages in connection with the Deepwater Horizon catastrophe. Enough is enough. Don't let BP write off the disaster again.*

*Sign the petition: [bit.ly/1057mIT](http://bit.ly/1057mIT)*

Photos below: NOAA, U.S. Coast Guard, NOAA, LAGOSHEP

Green whale; oil-covered gull; dolphins; oil-covered pelican.



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