

Drilling Is Tragic For Marine Life

Our coasts are home to stunning wildlife and incredible beaches, from the Georgia Barrier Islands to the Outer Banks to the Chesapeake Bay. Unfortunately offshore drilling is putting our natural heritage and marine life at risk. On 'good' days, drilling kills and injures wildlife and threatens human health and the economy. When they happen (which is all too frequently) major disasters such as the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon blowout are catastrophic.

Above: John Spade under Creative Commons license. Circle photo: Sara Francis, U.S. Coast Guard. Below: LAGOHEP.

The Deepwater Horizon drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico. »



Bird populations at risk from drilling

- ▶ Sea birds are attracted to offshore drilling platforms by lights, burning flares and human food that can be scavenged. Birds are killed or injured after colliding with the structures, becoming contaminated with oil and related chemicals, and even being burned by flares.
- ▶ Roughly 200,000 migratory birds are killed each year near offshore drilling rigs in the Gulf of Mexico. They often fly circles around platforms for hours at a time, exhausting themselves or colliding with platforms or other birds.
- ▶ Birds' feathers can get coated with oil, preventing them from being able to keep warm and reducing their ability to float.

Food chain disrupted

- ▶ Each year, U.S. offshore drilling rigs are responsible for dozens of spills of crude oil, natural gas liquids, diesel and hydraulic fluids into the environment.
- ▶ Oil breaks down into components that accumulate through the food chain, poisoning whales, dolphins, turtles, birds, fish and shellfish.
- ▶ Oil and related chemicals may also damage the immune and reproductive systems of exposed birds, fish and shellfish, lowering populations of affected species and denying food to the predators that depend on them.



▲ Brown pelican coated in oil from a spill.

You drill, you spill

The Gulf of Mexico, home to most of the United States' offshore drilling operations, has suffered one spill larger than 100,000 gallons every other year on average since 1964.

The 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon disaster was estimated to have killed or injured more than 25,000 dolphins and whales, along with "tens of thousands" of sea turtles, 80,000 birds and untold numbers of fish and shellfish.

Technological improvements do not necessarily reduce the risk. 98.8 percent of offshore spills in the Gulf of Mexico from 1964 to 2012 were caused by weather, equipment failure, human error or "external forces."



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way to a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

Whales and dolphins endangered

- ▶ The search for undersea oil and gas uses seismic airguns that fire bursts of sound at least as loud as a jet engine every few seconds for days or weeks on end. These bursts are audible underwater as far as 2,500 miles away, harming and even killing sea animals.
- ▶ Marine life may be deafened, have their communication sounds drowned out by airguns, or be driven away from locations they would otherwise inhabit, including crucial breeding grounds. As many as 138,000 Atlantic whales and dolphins are projected to be injured or killed by the use of seismic airguns in the Atlantic offshore drilling regions, according to U.S. government research.
- ▶ Tragically, these projections also include injuring or even killing as many as nine North Atlantic right whales, an endangered species with only 450 individuals left alive.

Save our coasts: No more drilling

Offshore drilling puts our oceans and coastal economy at risk—we know that when you drill you spill. To protect our environment and marine life, the Obama Administration should:

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

Until we have a total ban on drilling, the Obama Administration should:

- ▶ Undertake full environmental protection reviews at all offshore drilling locations, as a federal commission recommended in 2011.
- ▶ Bring American offshore drilling practices up to, and ultimately beyond, the protections afforded by international environmental protection standards.
- ▶ Require offshore drilling operators to provide financial guarantees that companies—not taxpayers—will pay in full for cleanups when the inevitable disasters happen.



▲ Top: Bottlenose dolphins. Middle: Right whales. Lower: The Deepwater Horizon oil spill containment effort.

» Take action

Currently, the Obama Administration is considering a proposal to open the Atlantic coast to offshore drilling. Please join us in telling the Obama Administration, "Save our coasts, no offshore drilling."

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Oil-covered Kemp's Ridley Turtle. 

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