



BP Deepwater Disaster: Fact Sheet

The facts:

- A BP oil rig blew up in the Gulf of Mexico and is spilling about a quarter million gallons of oil every day.
- The oil could quickly devastate the ecosystems in the Gulf—including bottlenose dolphins, sperm whales, sea turtles, and tuna. If that happens, coastal communities that depend on fishing and tourism could be devastated as well.
- The only reason companies like BP are allowed to behave so irresponsibly is that their lobbyists are basically writing our energy policy. That has to change.
- Over the past year, the President and the Congress have pushed to open MORE areas along the coast for oil drilling, which would expose those communities to more drilling.
- Senators and members of Congress need to wake up, crawl out of the pocket of Big Oil, and place a ban on new offshore drilling.

Short slogans for signs or banners:

SAVE OUR COASTS
BAN OFFSHORE DRILLING
CONGRESS: NO MORE DRILLING
NO DRILL = NO SPILL

Frequently Asked Questions

What happened?

On April 20, 2010, a British Petroleum (BP) offshore oil rig exploded, killing workers on the rig and spilling tens of thousands of barrels of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico. BP's Deepwater Horizon oil well, located 5,000 feet below the ocean's surface, is now leaking between 5,000 – 60,000 barrels (210,000 – 2,520,000 gallons) of crude oil into Gulf Coast waters each day.

Who's responsible?

The rig was owned and operated by a company called Transocean and leased to BP. These companies are both responsible for the disaster, and BP will be required to pay all costs associated with the cleanup of the spill.

But the deeper problem is that our nation remains addicted to fossil fuels—and that responsibility lies at the feet of our leaders in government. They can avoid another disaster like this one by taking bold action to ban new offshore drilling and begin a clean energy revolution.

How bad is it?

The spill is estimated to be more than 130 miles long and 70 miles wide, and will impact the coastlines of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. The continuous stream of crude oil from BP's leaking well threatens hundreds of species in the Gulf, including critical habitat for endangered species, such as whales, sea turtles, and migratory birds.

According to The Times-Picayune, the threatened area is a vital wintering or resting spot for more than 70 percent of the nation's waterfowl. According to Associated Press reports, damages from the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill could exceed \$1 billion dollars

Unless BP's oil well is closed quickly, it could soon become more destructive than the Exxon Valdez, and will far exceed the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill that led to a moratorium on offshore drilling.

How close is it to being fixed?

The US military and BP are attempting a number of approaches to contain the spill. Floating "booms" are being laid out to contain the oil and prevent it from making its way into highly sensitive areas. They are also burning small amounts of the oil. Using remote operated submarines, they are trying to fix the valve that should have prevented the blowout in the first place. They are also lowering a heavy dome that's meant to trap the oil and allow them to pump the oil safely out. And soon, they will begin to drill additional holes in the well that will relieve the pressure and allow them to close it. So far, none of these approaches has been successful. Oil is approaching the shore and the well continues to gush at least 210,000 gallons every day.

What animals are affected?

The Gulf Coast is home to pristine ecosystems and some of the nation's most prized wildlife refuges and conservation areas. The Gulf of Mexico provides habitat for hundreds of species, and each year, approximately five million migratory birds make their way through the region. According to The Times-Picayune, the threatened area is a vital wintering or resting spot for more than 70 percent of the nation's waterfowl including the brown pelican, Louisiana's state bird. In addition, many endangered species rely on Gulf waters, and fragile populations of North Atlantic bluefin tuna, four species of sea turtles, six whale species, sharks, and dolphins are in the spill's impact zone.

What is Greenpeace doing about it?

Greenpeace is mobilizing to hold BP and other corporate polluters accountable, to demand solutions from Congress, and to bear witness to the environmental destruction unfolding on the Gulf Coast.

Greenpeace's team on the Gulf Coast is documenting the disaster from the air, sea and ground. Greenpeace has brought a scientist with decades of experience studying oil spills and other experts to provide independent analysis of the environmental impacts of the drilling disaster.

What can I do to help?

Write a [Letter-to-the-Editor](#). Call your Senator to vote for a ban on new offshore drilling and to help begin a real clean energy revolution in America. Anything less, and we can expect more disasters just like this one. Volunteers in the Gulf region interested in helping respond to the oil spill can go to <http://www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com> or call 1-866-448-5816 for details about volunteering.